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# Making the Esoteric Public: The Ninth Panchen Lama and the Trans-ethnonational Rituals of the Kālacakra Initiations in Early Twentieth-Century East Asia<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The *Kālacakratantra* is an early eleventh-century esoteric treatise that belongs to the highest class of *tantras*, the unexcelled *yoga-tantras* (S: *niruttara-yoga-tantra*)<sup>3</sup> and is believed to be the last *niruttara-yoga-tantra* to appear in India.<sup>4</sup> The *tantra* spread to Nepal and Tibet under the promulgation of Piṇḍo and his disciple Atiśa, as well as Nāropa, and became highly influential in Tibetan Buddhist traditions, especially with the Jonang and Gelug traditions.<sup>5</sup> In the Kālacakra tradition, an initiation (S: *abhiṣeka*; T: *dbang/dbang bskur*) is an essential ritual in which a qualified teacher confers the authority and ability to practice a certain tantric method.<sup>6</sup> It can be understood as a process of purification, a rite of passage into a superior spiritual path, an empowerment of potencies, and a type of healing for both worldly and mental distresses.<sup>7</sup>

Since May 1954, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has conducted thirty-four Kālacakra initiations outside of Tibet. The most recent initiation, which had 200,000 people in attendance, was carried out in January 2017 in Bodhgaya, India.<sup>8</sup> All of these thirty-

<sup>1</sup> This paper was first written by Daigengna Duoer for a graduate seminar on the *Kālacakratantra* taught by Dr. Vesna A. Wallace in fall, 2017 at the University of California, Santa Barbara. A version of this paper was presented under the title, “The 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama and Kālacakra Initiations in Inner Mongolia” on January 30, 2018, for the New Directions in Mongolian Buddhism Conference held at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I am extremely grateful for Dr. Wallace’s continuous support and guidance for this research project. I am also very much thankful for all the helpful comments that I have received from Dr. José I. Cabezón, Dr. Matthew King, Dr. Uranchimeg Tsultem, Dr. Brian Baumann, Dr. Rory Lindsay, and Dr. Sangseraima Ujeed on this project.

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<sup>3</sup> For non-English terms used in this paper, “S” refers to Sanskrit, “T” refers to Tibetan, “C” refers to Chinese, “M” refers to Mongolian, and “J” refers to Japanese.

<sup>4</sup> Vesna A. Wallace, *The Inner Kālacakratantra: A Buddhist Tantric View of the Individual* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 1014.

<sup>6</sup> Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, “The Kālacakra Empowerment as Conducted by Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche,” in *As Long as Space Endures: Essays on the Kālacakra Tantra in Honor of H. H. The Dalai Lama*, ed. Edward A. Arnold (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2009), 415.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Hopkins, *Kālacakra Tantra Rite of Initiation: For the Stage of Generation* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications, 1999), 67-68.

<sup>8</sup> The Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, “Introduction to the Kalacakra,” <https://www.dalailama.com/teachings/kalachakra-initiations>. (accessed January 7, 2020).

four initiations were attended by thousands of people from various parts of the world. The Kālacakra initiations have become not only popular tantric rituals for global Tibetan Buddhist communities, but also major international events that promote world peace and religious freedom.

However, the first Kālacakra initiation that was given to large diverse public audiences outside of Tibet was conducted not by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, but by the Ninth Panchen Lama at the turn of the twentieth century. Nine such Kālacakra initiations were given by the Ninth Panchen Lama from 1928 to 1936. Tens of thousands of attendees from Inner Mongolia, Republic of China, and parts of Amdo, such as Mongol lords and princes, Chinese politicians and war lords, foreign dignitaries, distinguished Buddhists from various transnational traditions, celebrities, socialites, university students, as well as thousands of interested individuals, all flocked to the rituals.

Using newspaper, periodical, and biographical sources, the first part of this paper reveals some of the details of these Buddhist rituals and shows that the Ninth Panchen Lama's Kālacakra initiations were not only open to diverse audiences of the public, they were also groundbreaking in their embrace of modern technologies such as print media for advertising and fundraising. Some of these media platforms promoted Buddhism, while others served as public arenas for critical discussions on religion. Modern transportation systems, radio communication, and film were utilized to assist ritual operations and documentation. Robust commercial activities around the Kālacakra initiations even took place, such as the vending of the rituals' photographs and various types of religious commodities from Tibet. Non-monastic women of various cultural and social backgrounds also emerged in these sources as avid donors and passionate participants of these public Tibetan Buddhist rituals.

The second part of the paper asks, why did the Ninth Panchen Lama perform these Kālacakra initiations outside of Central Tibet and to such diverse public audiences? What does it mean to perform this esoteric tantric ritual multiples times in public to audiences made up of mostly non-Tibetans and non-monastics? Why was this esoteric ritual made public? Can the Kālacakra initiation, a tantric ritual that places high importance on the vows of secrecy, be allowed to be performed to a mass audience? Furthermore, why were these nine Kālacakra initiations performed by the Ninth Panchen Lama so well-received by the general public outside of Tibet? What does this say about the role Tibetan Buddhism, especially the institution of Gelug Buddhism, played in the post-imperium spaces of modern East Asia?

This paper argues that in the precarious ruins of post-Qing East Asia, the Ninth Panchen Lama in exile performed these Kālacakra initiations in places where religious and political capitals were highly saturated, so that old lineages and priest-patron bonds can be maintained. For the Mongol patrons of the Lama, the Kālacakra initiations in Inner Mongolia created rituals spaces which facilitated the preservation

of the imagined community that is the Mongols, who were bound by lineages through the myth of Śambhala as described in the *Kālacakratantra*. This sharing of ethnonational communal experiences through rituals helped to gather, centralize, and mobilize these nomadic groups of people for political change. For the Chinese patrons of the Republican government, the publicity of the Kālacakra initiations were useful in promoting ethnic harmony between the “five nationalities” (C: *wuzu gonghe* 五族共和), especially between the Tibetans, Mongols, and the Han. However, as this paper shows, there was also at the same time a popular desire for the continuity of Buddhist history and tradition, as well as a market for the messianic message contained in the *Kālacakratantra*, especially in desperate times of war, natural disasters, political instabilities, and increasing global conflict.

Through examining the Ninth Panchen Lama’s nine Kālacakra initiations performed outside of Tibet between 1928 and 1936, this paper unveils that Tibetan Buddhism, especially Gelug Buddhism, was highly transregional, trans-ethnonational, and even international at the turn of the twentieth century. On the one hand, the Ninth Panchen Lama actively pursued religious and political activities beyond Tibet, which allowed for the maintenance of old lineages while enabling the forging of new alliances. On the other hand, Tibetan Buddhism was involved in a larger pan-Asian tantric revival movement propelled by modern Chinese Buddhists and Japanese Buddhists who were motivated to “rediscover” the “lost *tantras*” in Tibetan Buddhism. On top of this, the Ninth Panchen Lama and the Gelug Buddhist institution enjoyed considerable international coverage by travelers, journalists, and academics from the West, who followed Tibet and its religious institutions closely in their geopolitical analyses of pre-WWII East Asia.

This paper shows that while the diverse audiences of the Kālacakra initiations had creative agencies to interpret and participate in the rituals in ways that were relevant to them, this paper also suggests that the rituals themselves had agencies of their own – they held affective power that was able to evoke various types of imaginations and interpretations of religion in their recipients. Tantric texts such as the *Kālacakratantra* and its associated practices provided metanarratives using Buddhist cosmology to explain suffering, war, disorder, and even imperialism in the post-imperium instabilities of modern East Asia.

Finally, this paper presents the Kālacakra initiations as case studies of how Tibetan Buddhist rituals functioned as public spheres that facilitated public discourse on religion and modernity. As the Kālacakra initiations became controversial topics of fascination and denunciation through the power of print media, the Buddhist ritual served as a location for public debates on the role of religion in politics, and the place of faith in the processes of modernization.

### The 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama (1883-1937) in Exile:

The Ninth Panchen Lama was born as Samdrub Gyatso on February 19, 1883 in the Brum Gasha village in the Dakpo region of southeastern Tibet.<sup>9</sup> He was selected out of three possible reincarnations of the Eighth Panchen Lama.<sup>10</sup> In 1888, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama presided over the tonsure ceremony for Samdrub Gyatso and bestowed upon him the religious name Jétsun Lozang Thubten Chökyi Nyima Gélèk Namgyel Pelzangbo (T: Rje-btsun blo bzang thub bstan chos kyi nyi ma dge legs rnam rgyal dpal bzang po).<sup>11</sup> In 1892, the Ninth Panchen Lama was enthroned at the Tashilhunpo monastery and took novice vows under the regent of Tibet, Demo Khutukhtu (T: De mo ho thog thu).<sup>12</sup> A few years later in 1902, the Ninth Panchen Lama took monastic vows with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in Lhasa.<sup>13</sup>

The young Panchen Lama was only in his early twenties when the British invasion led by Colonel Francis Younghusband came to his doorsteps in 1903. The era marked by imperialist ambitions and global-scale warfare had begun and Tibet was not exempt. The Qing hegemony that had been a major patron to the Tibetan Gelug Buddhist institution for centuries also struggled with foreign invasions and after a series of unsuccessful reforms, collapsed under the weight of the Xinhai Revolution in 1911. In the ruins of the post-imperium, the Republic of China (ROC) declared itself as a sovereign state under the leadership of its first president, Sun Yat-sen, and his political party, the Kuomintang (KMT). Soon after the fall of the Qing empire in 1911, Outer Mongolia declared independence, followed by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama declaring independence for Tibet.<sup>14</sup> However, the new Republic of China continued to recognize non-Han groups and regions as part of the ROC state. Tibet, along with Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Manchuria were claimed as part of the ROC territories. Tibetans, Mongolians, Uyghurs and Hui Muslims, and Manchus were recognized alongside Han Chinese as the official five nationalities and languages of the state.

In 1923, due to disputes with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama over taxation imposed on Tashilhunpo, the Ninth Panchen Lama left Tibet and began more than a decade of exiled travel in Inner Mongolia and the Republic of China. When he arrived in

<sup>9</sup> Fabienne Jagou, *The Ninth Panchen Lama (1883-1937): A Life at the Crossroads of Sino-Tibetan Relations*, trans. Rebecca Bissett Buechel (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2011), 205.

<sup>10</sup> Jagou, 205.

<sup>11</sup> Jagou uses the name “Jétsun Lozang Chökyi Nyima Gélèk Namgyel Pelzangbo” (Tib: Rje-btsun blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma dge legs rnam rgyal dpal bzang po), 205; *The Treasury of Lives* uses “thub bstan chos kyi nyi ma,” <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/thub-bstan-chos-kyi-nyi-ma/3822>; the BDRC uses these name variants: chos kyi nyi ma, blo bzang thub bstan chos kyi nyi ma, thub bstan chos kyi nyi ma, chos kyi nyi ma dge legs rnam rgyal, paN chen 06 blo bzang thub bstan chos kyi nyi ma, paN chen 09 blo bzang thub bstan chos kyi nyi ma (he is sometimes referred to as the Sixth Panchen Lama, but mostly commonly referred to as the Ninth Panchen Lama), <https://www.tbrc.org/#!/rid=P215>.

<sup>12</sup> Jagou, 205.

<sup>13</sup> Jagou, 205.

<sup>14</sup> Jagou, 205.

Beijing in January 1925, he gave a speech read by Lozang Gyeltsen at the National Reconstruction Conference (C: *shanhou huiyi* 善後會議). The speech denounced internal disputes within the ROC government over power struggles and suggested the “collaboration of the five nationalities” (C: *wuzu gongzhu* 五族共助).<sup>15</sup> This was the first time that the Panchen Lama had used the ROC’s rhetoric of the “Five Races under One Union” (C: *wuzu gonghe* 五族共和) in public. In the following months of the same year, the Panchen Lama gave a series of Green and White Tārā and Amitāyus initiations at Mount Wutai, as well as in Beijing, Hangzhou, and Shanghai.<sup>16</sup> In August 1925, he was given the title of “Propagating Righteousness and Spreading Salvation” (C: *xuancheng jishi* 宣誠濟世) by the ROC government through the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission to commemorate his efforts at spreading the dharma outside of Tibet.<sup>17</sup>

By the end of 1929, eight Offices of the Ninth Panchen Lama had opened in the ROC, Inner Mongolia, Manchuria, and India with the support of the ROC government. They are located in Nanjing (capital city of the ROC government in South China), Beijing (today’s Beijing, in North China), Chengdu (in Sichuan), Fengtian (today’s Shenyang, in Manchuria), Xining (in Qinghai), Xilinhot (in Inner Mongolia), Taiyuan (in Shanxi), and Darjeeling (in India).<sup>18</sup> According to two correspondences sent from the Office of the Panchen Lama in Nanjing to the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, the purpose of setting up these offices was due to the Panchen Lama’s concern for “national security and the suffering of the Tibetan people,”<sup>19</sup> as well as a wish to “collaborate with comrades on the revolution front and pursue the liberation of the Tibetan people.”<sup>20</sup> It is also clear from the document that more and more Tibetans were traveling outside of Tibet and that these offices would provide satellite support. In the *Manifesto of the Establishment of the Office of the Panchen Lama in Nanjing* (C: *banchan zhujing bangongchu chengli xuanyan* 班禪駐京辦公處成立宣言) written by the Office in Nanjing, it is stated that the offices of the Panchen Lama had three main goals:

<sup>15</sup> Chinese Tibetan Studies Center and The Second Historical Archives of China 中國藏學研究中心，中國第二歷史檔案館合編，*Jiushi Banchan neidi huodong ji fanzang shouzu dang’an xuanbian* 九世班禪內地活動及返藏受阻檔案選編 [Selections of Archival Materials on the Ninth Panchen, His Activities in the Mainland, and Obstacles Returning Tibet] (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe, 1992), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Jagou, 206.

<sup>17</sup> Chinese Tibetan Studies Center and The Second Historical Archives of China, 5.

<sup>18</sup> The Office of the Panchen Lama in Nanjing 班禪駐京辦公處，“Banchan gedi bangongchu yilanbiao” 班禪各地辦公處一覽表 [A Chart for the Various Offices of the Panchen Lama], *Xizang Banchan zhujing bangongchu yuekan* 西藏班禪駐京辦公處月刊1(1929), in *Minguo Fojiao qikan wenxian jicheng* 民國佛教期刊文獻集成 [Complete Collection of Republican-Era Buddhist Periodical Literature], ed. Huang Xianian 黃夏年 (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan, 2006), Vol. 30: 58. The multi-volume source *Minguo Fojiao qikan wenxian jicheng* will be referred to as MFQ in this paper.

<sup>19</sup> C: *guofang zhi dianwei, zangmin zhi jiku* 國防之艱危·藏民之疾苦

<sup>20</sup> C: *lianhe geming lichang shang zhi tongzhi, yiqiu Xizang minzu zhi jiefang* 聯合革命立場上之同志，以求西藏民族之解放；Chinese Tibetan Studies Center and The Second Historical Archives of China, 6-7.

1. to collaborate with the ROC in carrying out the “Unity of the Five Nationalities” (C: *wuzu gonghe* 五族共和), which meant unity between the Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Hui Muslims<sup>21</sup>; and campaigns of dispelling invasions from “aggressive neighbors” (C: *qianglin* 強鄰);<sup>22</sup>
2. to help and lead the people of Tibet in ethnic equality towards self-determination and autonomy (C: *zijue, zizhi* 自決, 自治);
3. to protect and preserve the religion of Tibet in order to spread the rightful spirit of Buddhism for world peace.<sup>23</sup>

It is unclear if these were the words of the Panchen Lama himself or if he had any participation in writing them, since the correspondences and manifesto were composed in Chinese. In any case, the strategic choice of locations for these offices alone signal not only the spreading influence of the Panchen Lama outside of Tibet, but also the diplomatic planning that the ROC had in mind for the widely respected Tibetan Buddhist monk.

In June 1931, the Ninth Panchen Lama was appointed by the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission as the “Propagation Ambassador for the Western Frontiers” (C: *xichui xuanhua shi* 西陲宣化使), as well as the “Protector of the State and Propagation Master of Extended Wisdoms” (C: *huguo xuanhua guanghui dashi* 護國宣化廣慧大師).<sup>24</sup> The term used for “propagation” is *xuanhua* 宣化, in which the character *xuan* 宣 can be understood as “promotion and propagation” of ideas and practices; and *hua* 化 can be understood as carrying the connotation of “edification,” “instruction,” or even “enlightenment.” As for the “Western Frontiers,” the title refers to the frontier territories to the west of the ROC, which is comprised of places such as Qinghai (Amdo), Xikang (Kham), and Tibet.<sup>25</sup> The appointment thus conveys both the type of duty and the geographical range within which the duties shall be carried out for the Panchen Lama as understood by the ROC government.

In a directive document issued by the ROC government in 1931, the specific duties and restrictions for the Panchen Lama as the Propagation Ambassador for the Western Frontiers were listed as follows:

1. It is appropriate for the Ambassador to promote and instruct the *Dharma* and approved messages of the government<sup>26</sup> for lamas, monasteries, and

<sup>21</sup> The term “Hui” 回 in the rhetoric of the “Five Races under One Union” mainly refers to the Hui Muslims of Western China, but it also includes the Uyghurs (回疆) in Xinjiang.

<sup>22</sup> This is mainly a reference to the Japanese invasion.

<sup>23</sup> This manifesto was published in the first monthly periodical issued by the Office of the Panchen Lama in Nanjing. See *Xizang Banchan zhujing bangongchu yuekan* 西藏班禪駐京辦公處月刊(1929), in MFQ Vol. 30: 17.

<sup>24</sup> Chinese Tibetan Studies Center and The Second Historical Archives of China, 26.

<sup>25</sup> Chinese Tibetan Studies Center and The Second Historical Archives of China, 26.

<sup>26</sup> One important message from the ROC government that was to be delivered throughout the nation and especially in the frontier regions was the Three Principles of the People 三民主義, a political doctrine developed by Sun Yat-sen.



common Buddhists. However, if the Ambassador has opinions about the administration of Qinghai (Amdo) and Xikang (Kham), he must not directly intervene and should consult with the ROC government and the respective governments of the two provinces.

2. The Ambassador may choose appropriate places to set up administrative offices with two staff members dispatched by the central government to help out with propagation matters.
3. The Ambassador's office may have three departments, namely: secretarial, propagational, and educational. The allotted number of staff and hiring process will be decided separately [by the government].
4. The Ambassador may send individual promoters to the local monasteries in Qinghai and Xikang for goodwill and edification.
5. The Ambassador may have his own security team for the protection of safety. The team leader may be chosen by the Ambassador. The coaching staff will be chosen by the central government. Weapons, ammunition, radio communication, and automobile transportation will be provided by the central government.
6. The monthly allowance for the Ambassador's administration is 15,000 *yuan*. The security team's monthly allowance is also 15,000 *yuan*. Both will be paid by the central government.
7. The annual salary of the Panchen Lama is 120,000 *yuan*, paid monthly by the central government. All personal spending and living costs of attendants and disciples [of the Panchen Lama] will be deducted from the annual salary. All hospitality expenses<sup>27</sup> must discontinue.<sup>28</sup>

It is not difficult to see that the political and financial freedom of the Propagation Ambassador for the Western Frontiers was rather restricted. Although the Panchen Lama's duties as the Propagation Ambassador for the Western Frontiers did not include propagation and instruction for the northern frontiers of Inner Mongolia, the Lama's ties with the Mongols there overrode much of this job description. Most of the religious rituals performed by the Panchen Lama during his years outside of Tibet were performed in Inner Mongolia, where Gelug Buddhism had deep roots and influence for centuries.

The disregard for the duties of the Propagation Ambassador described by the ROC regime indicates that the Panchen Lama was less interested in what the new Republic had planned for him and more interested in continuing and strengthening old lineages and bonds. As we will see below, most of the propagation and teaching activities that the Panchen Lama did engage in were neither in Qinghai nor in Xikang,

<sup>27</sup> C: *zhaodai fei* 招待費

<sup>28</sup> Chinese Tibetan Studies Center and The Second Historical Archives of China, 27.



but rather in Inner Mongolia, Beijing, and Hangzhou, places where religious and political capitals were highly saturated.

### The 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama and the Kālacakra initiations:

During his years of exile outside of Tibet, the Ninth Panchen Lama performed numerous tantric initiations. According to Fabinne Jagou, two hagiographies of the Panchen Lama enumerate eighteen tantric initiations given to the public.<sup>29</sup> They are nine Kālacakra initiations and nine long life initiations (five Amitāyus, three Tārā, and one uncertain).<sup>30</sup> Amongst these rites, the Kālacakra initiations were particularly well-attended by not only Buddhist donors but also citizens from various parts of society. The nine Kālacakra initiations also received considerably more media coverage in newspapers and periodicals. The table below summarizes the details of these initiations.<sup>31</sup>

No	Location	Date	Number of Attendees	Patrons
1	Yangwang monastery; Qorcin Banner; Jerim League, Inner Mongolia <sup>1a</sup>	April 15-22, 1928 <sup>2a</sup>	70,000-170,000 <sup>3a</sup>	Prince Darhan <sup>4a</sup>
2	Jastu monastery; Qorcin Banner; Jerim League, Inner Mongolia <sup>5a</sup>	July, 1928 <sup>6a</sup>	80,000-84000 <sup>7a</sup>	Prince Jasaqt <sup>8a</sup>
3	Beizi monastery; Heshigten Banner; Juu Uda League, Inner Mongolia <sup>9a</sup>	April 15, 1929 <sup>10a</sup>	70,000 <sup>11a</sup>	Chief of the ten leagues <sup>12a</sup>
4	Lands on the Üjümücin Banner; Shilingol League, Inner Mongolia <sup>13a</sup>	August 1930 <sup>14a</sup>	50,000-90,000 <sup>15a</sup>	Prince Sönam Rabtan <sup>16a</sup>
5	Beile monastery; Üjümücin Banner; Shilingol League, Inner Mongolia <sup>17a</sup>	July 1932 <sup>18a</sup>	37,000 <sup>19a</sup>	Prince Yondonwangchug <sup>20a</sup>
6	Hall of Supreme Harmony; Forbidden City; Beijing <sup>21a</sup>	October 21-24, 1932 <sup>22a</sup>	100,000 <sup>23a</sup>	Duan Qirui <sup>24a</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Jagou, 65.

<sup>30</sup> Jagou, 65.

<sup>31</sup> In this table, I am consulting three different sources with slightly different information on the nine initiations. The three sources are: “The Nine Kālacakra Initiations Constructed by the Master Panchen during His Visits in the Mainland,” published in the monthly periodical of the Propagation Ambassador for the Western Frontiers Office. See “Banchan dashi li neidi hou gongjian jiuci miaode shilun jingang fahui [biaoge]” 班禪大師蒞內地後共建九次妙德時輪金剛法會[表格] [The Nine Kālacakra Initiations Constructed by the Master Panchen during His Visits in the Mainland], Xichui xuanhuashi gongshu yuekan 西陲宣化使公署月刊 1(7/8)(1936):190; Fabienne Jagou, *The Ninth Panchen Lama (1883-1937): A Life at the Crossroads of Sino-Tibetan Relations*, trans. Rebecca Bissett Buechel (Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 2011), 259; and Zhang Yun 張雲, *Piaobo zhong de foye: jiushi Banchan neidi huodong de qianqianhouhou* 漂泊中的佛爺：九世班禪內地活動的前前後後 [A Wondering Buddha: Activities of the Ninth Panchen Lama in the Mainland] (Beijing: Zangxue chubanshe, 2002), 83.

7	Lingyin Temple; Hangzhou <sup>25a</sup>	April 28-29, 1934 <sup>26a</sup>	70,000 <sup>27a</sup>	Dai Jitao, Wang Yiting, Qu Wenliu, Zhang Xiaolin <sup>28a</sup>
8	Kumbum monastery; Amdo <sup>29a</sup>	August 13, 1935 <sup>30a</sup>	50,000 <sup>31a</sup>	Dai Jitao and the Abbot of the Kumbum monastery <sup>32a</sup>
9	Labrang monastery; Amdo <sup>33a</sup>	July 4, 1936 <sup>34a</sup>	60,000 <sup>35a</sup>	The Fifth Jamyang Zhépa and Huang Zhengqing <sup>36a</sup>

<sup>1a</sup> Jagou, 259. Both the monthly periodical of the Propagation Ambassador for the Western Frontiers Office (PAWFO) and Zhang provide the same location at the Yangwang monastery in the eastern league (東盟楊王廟/河戈吐蘇馬).

<sup>2a</sup> Jagou, 259. PAWFO and Zhang: April 15, 1928.

<sup>3a</sup> Jagou records 70,000, while PAWFO and Zhang records 170,000.

<sup>4a</sup> Jagou p.259; PAWFO and Zhang: Prince Yang Sangqiao (親王楊桑巧)

<sup>5a</sup> Jagou p.259; PAWFO and Zhang: Zhasatu Abu Monastery in the eastern league (東盟札薩圖阿布寺)

<sup>6a</sup> PAWFO, 190; Zhang, 83. Jagou records June 1928.

<sup>7a</sup> Jagou records 80,000, while PAWFO and Zhang records 84,000.

<sup>8a</sup> Jagou p.259; PAWFO and Zhang: Princes of the ten banners of the eastern league (東盟十旗王公).

<sup>9a</sup> Jagou p.259; PAWFO and Zhang: Beizi monastery of the Xilingol league (錫林果[郭]勒盟貝子廟, 江龍)

<sup>10a</sup> Jagou p.259; PAWFO, 190; Zhang, 83.

<sup>11a</sup> PAWFO and Zhang: 70,000. No numbers are cited in Jagou.

<sup>12a</sup> Jagou p.259; PAWFO and Zhang: League leader, Prince Sónam Rabtan and princes of the ten banners (索盟長及十旗王公)

<sup>13a</sup> Jagou, 259; PAWFO and Zhang: the grasslands in front of the West Üjümücin Prince's residence (西烏珠穆沁王府對面大草場).

<sup>14a</sup> Jagou, 259; PAWFO, 190; Zhang, 83.

<sup>15a</sup> PAWFO cites 90,000; Zhang cites 50,000; no numbers are cited in Jagou.

<sup>16a</sup> Jagou, 259; PAWFO and Zhang: League leader, Prince Sónam Rabtan (索盟長).

<sup>17a</sup> Jagou, 259: "on the lands of the Üjümücin Banner"; PAWFO and Zhang: Beile monastery of Suiyuan (綏遠貝勒廟/巴達哈拉蘇馬).

<sup>18a</sup> Jagou, 259; PAWFO, 190; Zhang, 83.

<sup>19a</sup> PAWFO and Zhang cites 37,000; no numbers are cited in Jagou.

<sup>20a</sup> PAWFO and Zhang: Prince Yondonwangchug and various Banners of the Ulanqab League (雲王及烏盟各旗).

<sup>21a</sup> Jagou, 259; PAWFO and Zhang: Hall of Supreme Harmony, Beijing (北平[京]太和殿).

<sup>22a</sup> Jagou, 259; PAWFO: August 1932; Zhang: October 1932. News reports from various media sources confirm that the Beijing initiation took place from October 21 to 25 in 1932.

<sup>23a</sup> PAWFO and Zhang: 100,000; no numbers are cited in Jagou.

<sup>24a</sup> Jagou and Zhang: Duan Qirui. PAWFO: Duan Qirui, Zhu Qinglan, Wu Peifu, and many other lay practitioners (段祺瑞, 朱慶瀾, 吳佩孚等十方居士).

<sup>25a</sup> Jagou, 259; PAWFO, 190; Zhang, 83.

<sup>26a</sup> PAWFO and Zhang Yun: April 15, 1934. Jagou reports: May 13-15, 1935. However, most Chinese newspaper sources report that the Panchen Lama did not arrive in Hangzhou until after April 25, 1934; see "Shilun jingang fahui xiaoxi: Hangzhou shiwusuo jinxun: Banchan juejing nianwuriliu qijie lai-hang" 時輪金剛法會消息: 杭州事務所近訊: 班禪決定廿五日起節來航, Cihang huabao 慈航畫報 41(1934), 1. Most sources say that the initiations took place on the days of April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. See invitation sent by the Panchen Lama's Hangzhou office: "Gechu zhi baojing fashi han: Hangzhou shi-lun jingang fahui lai-han" 各處致寶靜法師函: 杭州時輪金剛法會來函 [A Correspondence to Master Baojing from the Hangzhou Kālacakra Initiation], Hongfa shekan 弘法社刊 25(1934), 142-143.

In the *Kālacakrantra*, “initiation” (*abhiṣeka*) has multiple facets: it means “to cleanse and purify defilements; to authorize students to hear about and cultivate the tantric paths and to achieve special feats; to empower the attainment of beneficial qualities; to set potencies for attaining levels of the path and the fruits of those paths; to sprinkle water; to pour potencies and cast seeds into the mental continuum of the initiate; to convey a new style of behavior and its attendant releases from distorted states; and to cause initiates to be endowed with a blissful mind.”<sup>32</sup> In short, “initiation” in the Kālacakra tradition can be understood as a process of purification, a rite of passage into a superior spiritual path, an empowerment of potencies, and a type of healing for both worldly and mental distresses.

The first five Kālacakra initiations were performed by the Ninth Panchen Lama in Inner Mongolia at the requests of Mongol aristocrats and local princes who continued to have jurisdiction and autonomy over their lands even after the establishment of the Republic of China. Tens of thousands of Mongols were attracted from nearby banners and leagues to attend these initiations. Given the relative low population density of Inner Mongolia, this was a very generous turnout. The donors comprised of local political leaders of banners and leagues, but the most important donors were probably Prince Sönam Rabtan (C: Suo *wang* 索王) and Prince Yondonwangchug (C: Yun *wang* 雲王), as well as Prince Demchugdongrub (C: De *wang* 德王), who was junior to the older generation of Mongol royalties, but who would later become instrumental in the autonomous movements in Inner Mongolia.

The fifth Kālacakra initiation given at the Beile monastery<sup>33</sup> in the Üjümücin Banner even attracted the attendance of the great Mongol Buddhist master, Kanjurwa Khutukhtu, who travelled for days to reach the ceremony.<sup>34</sup> According to an article by A.T. Steele published in *The New York Times* on June 17, 1934, Reverend Stuart Gunzel

<sup>32</sup> Hopkins, 67-68.

<sup>33</sup> M: Buyan badarayuluṣi sūme, also known as Beile-yin Sūme; C: Beile miao 貝勒廟 or Bailing miao 百靈廟

<sup>34</sup> Jagou, 73.

<sup>27a</sup> PAWFO and Zhang: 70,000; no numbers are cited in Jagou.

<sup>28a</sup> Jagou, 259: Dai Jitao; PAWFO: Wang Yiting, Qu Wenliu, Zhang Xiaolin, and lay practitioners from the north and south provinces (王一亭, 屈文六, 張嘯林及南北各省居士); Zhang Yun: Wang Yiting, Qu Liuwen (王一亭, 屈文六等).

<sup>29a</sup> Jagou, 259; PAWFO, 190, Zhang, 83.

<sup>30a</sup> Jagou and Zhang: August 13, 1935. PAWFO: August 2, 1935.

<sup>31a</sup> PAWFO and Zhang: 50,000; no numbers are cited in Jagou.

<sup>32a</sup> Jagou, 259: Dai Jitao; PAWFO and Zhang: Abbot of the Kumbum monastery and its entire monastic population

<sup>33a</sup> Jagou, 259; PAWFO, 190, Zhang, 83.

<sup>34a</sup> PAWFO and Zhang: July 4, 1936. Jagou, 259: July 14, 1936. News reports in 1936 also use the date July 4 for the Labrang initiation.

<sup>35a</sup> PAWFO and Zhang: 60,000. No numbers are cited in Jagou.

<sup>36a</sup> PAWFO, 190; and Zhang, 83.

of the Evangelical Alliance Mission was able to participate in this specific ceremony during his stay with Prince Demchugdongrub. Steele quotes Gunzel that the visit of the Panchen Lama was one of the biggest events of that year, which lasted for about six weeks. The Panchen Lama stayed at the palace of Prince Demchugdongrub and during that period the Prince's residential area became "a mecca for devout pilgrims from all parts of Mongolia." Followers of the Buddha *Dharma* came even beyond the border from Outer Mongolia and from the leagues in Manchukuo to pay their tribute to the Panchen Lama and to take part in the elaborate religious services. Gunzel also reports that Prince Demchugdongrub did "not pass up the opportunity to strengthen his prestige through the medium of religion." It was also during this time that the Prince began constructing, at considerable cost, a special residence and temple for the visiting Panchen Lama, which took at least three years to build.<sup>35</sup> According to Sechin Jagchid, who was an attendant to the Prince Demchugdongrub at the time, the initiation took place in the open air on the vast grasslands; the Panchen Lama was seated on a throne raised on a platform and was surrounded by thousands of monks and lay people sitting cross-legged on the ground. It was said that the teachings of the Lama were at times inaudible, but the audience was captivated and attentive, nonetheless. The attendees felt that hearing the sounds of the ritual instruments alone would mean that they have been blessed by the initiation.<sup>36</sup>

More information about the sixth Kālacakra initiation in Beijing can be subtracted from media coverage. According to a news report published in the periodical *Mongolia Tibet Newsletter*<sup>37</sup> in 1932, the ritual began at six in the morning on October 21, 1932 in the Hall of Supreme Harmony situated at the center of the Forbidden Palace in Beijing. Important members of the government and the army in the Beijing and Tianjin areas were present, as well as citizens from various walks of life. Mongol princes and commoners, along with lamas and monks, as well as foreign dignitaries were all part of the huge audience numbering at 100,000.

The major donors of the ritual and the Panchen Lama were, in order: Duan Qirui (段祺瑞), Wu Peifu (吳佩孚), Zhu Qinglan (朱慶瀾), Sun Chuanfang (孫傳芳), Wang Yitang (王揖唐), Zhao Hengti (趙恆惕), Tang Xiangming (湯薊銘), Wang Jiuling (王九齡), Wu Chaoshu (伍朝樞), Zhang Xueliang (張學良), Wu Guangxin (吳光新), Cao Rulin (曹汝霖), amongst others.<sup>38</sup> These donors were probably named in the order of prominence and political influence. Out of the ones mentioned in the

<sup>35</sup> A. T. Steele, "Life in Mongolia Lacking in Luxury: American Missionary Found Teh Wang's Palace Far from Comfortable," *The New York Times*, June 17, 1934. E8.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Hyer and Sechin Jagchid, *A Mongolian Living Buddha: Biography of the Kanjurwa Khutughtu* (Albany: State University of New York, 1983), 135-136.

<sup>37</sup> C: Mengzang xunkan 蒙藏旬刊

<sup>38</sup> "Mengzang shijian: Beiping shilun jingang fahui zhuiji: shilun jingang fahui xizai jiuji daochang" 蒙藏時間：北平時輪金剛法會追紀：時輪金剛法會息災救劫道場 [Mongolia Tibet Time: Reports on the Kālacakra Initiation in Beijing: The Ritual of the Disaster Subduing Kālacakra Initiation], *Mengzang xunkan* 蒙藏旬刊, 33(1932), 17.

list published in the news article, nine out of twelve had crucial posts in the Republic of China's military.<sup>39</sup>

The most important donor and organizer of the ritual was Duan Qirui, who was not only one of the most powerful warlords and political leaders in China after the fall of the Qing empire, but also an extremely devoted practitioner of Buddhism. Duan commanded the Beiyang army and served as the premier to the ROC on four occasions. He was also instrumental in the success of the Kālacakra initiation in Hangzhou. All of these mentioned donors were said to have been granted Kālacakra initiations by the Panchen Lama.<sup>40</sup>

The Buddhist ritual also drew a lot of international attention. The acting chairman for the Sino-Japanese Esoteric Buddhism Research Committee<sup>41</sup> and Japanese Shingon monk, Tanaka Seijun (田中清純), was granted a front seat position not far from the Panchen Lama inside the Hall of Supreme Harmony. According to his accounts, he was accommodated amongst other monastics while the majority of other attendees sat on the ground outside the hall in the vast square of the Palace. There were so many people participating that the crowd seemed “like a [dark] cloud.” Tanaka also remarked on the uniqueness of this occasion: “...although during emperor Qianlong's reign, respected lamas from Tibet were invited to lead Buddhist rituals [in the Forbidden Palace], for more than two hundred years an event on this scale and pomp has never been held, especially one that is open to commoners, politicians, and students all at the same time.”<sup>42</sup>

Many attendees at the Kālacakra initiation in Beijing were also non-monastic women. In an issue of the periodical *Great Asia Pictorial*, a witness of the initiation remarked that in addition to hundreds of pious elderly women who attended the ritual, there were also many young, fashionable “modern girls” (*C: modeng xiaojie* 摩登小姐) who not only took part in the ceremony, but also fought each other for “blessings” – it was said that they wrangled each other in order to get sprinkled with the “holy water” administered by the Panchen Lama during the ritual.<sup>43</sup> The Japanese

<sup>39</sup> Donors of the ritual that were involved in the military were: Duan Qirui, Wu Peifu, Zhu Qinglan, Sun Chuanfang, Wang Yitang, Zhao Hengti, Tang Xiangming, Zhang Xueliang, and Wu Guangxin. Wang Jiuling was mainly a politician; Wu Chaoshu was a foreign minister and Cao Rulin was involved in foreign affairs.

<sup>40</sup> Mengzang xunkan, 33(1932), 19.

<sup>41</sup> J: chūnichi mikkyō kenkyūkai 中日密教研究会; C: zhongri mijiao yanjiuhui 中日密教研究會

<sup>42</sup> Tanaka Seijun 田中清純, *I shūkyō nichishi shinzen* 依宗教日支親善 [Sino-Japanese Friendship Through Religion] (Shizuoka Kiyomizudera, 1933), 21, published in Shiryōshū: Senjika “Nihon Bukkyō” no kokusai kōryū 資料集：戦時下「日本佛教」の国際交流 [Collected Documents: Interwar Japanese Buddhism and International Relations], compiled by the Ryukoku University Asian Buddhism and Culture Research Center, Interwar Japanese Buddhism and International Relations Research Team (G1, UB, S2) 龍谷大学アジア仏教文化研究センター「戦時下「日本仏教」の国際交流」研究班 (G1, UB, S2) 5 (2019), Vol. 10.

<sup>43</sup> “Shilun jingang fahui zhi huaxu” 時輪金剛法會之花絮 [Highlights of the Kālacakra Initiation], *Daya huabao* 大亞畫報, November 2, 1932, No. 337.

Shingon monk Tanaka Seijun have commented on this as well; he was surprised that “young women” were prostrating so piously with their whole bodies on the ground.<sup>44</sup>

Reports also tell us about the rules for attending the Kālacakra initiation in Beijing. First, attendees must be well-groomed and enter with tickets. Second, homage must be paid upon requirement; smoking, snickering, spitting, and shuffling are forbidden. Third, ritual objects, such as herbs and flowers from Tibet and red ritual blindfolds were to be handed out and their uses instructed on site. Fourth, attendees must be orderly when leaving their seats. Lastly, the Kālacakra root *mantra* (C: *shilun genben zhou* 時輪根本咒) was to be chanted for future rebirths in the kingdom of Śambhala.<sup>45</sup>

The report also describes the ritual process. The Panchen Lama performed purification rituals and began the creation of the ritual *mandala* as early as on October 9, 1932, ten days before the official ritual started. It was said that it took nine days to complete the sand *mandala*. Starting on the 21<sup>st</sup>, the Lama taught for four days, accompanied by both an interpreter and printed translations in the form of pamphlets. The transmission initiation took place from two to five in the afternoon, preceded by initiations for the generation stage, followed by one day of *homa* ritual and three days of initiations for the completion stage. The total cost of the entire ritual was said to be 60,000 *yuan*,<sup>46</sup> which was a considerable amount compared to the average cost of living in 1930s China.

At the end of the ritual, the Panchen Lama gave a speech about the purpose of the rite. He said, “...the various disasters and misfortunes of the nation were caused by sentient beings’ ignorance about morality and karma,” and he wished that the attendees “...will keep in their hearts the compassion for the salvation of the nation and its people; not to be selfish.” He ended with the remarks, “Religion and politics must proceed together in ruling the nation and stabilizing peace for its people.”<sup>47</sup> This was one of the earliest accounts from the Panchen Lama on the Kālacakra initiations that he performed outside of Tibet. The idea that these initiation rituals are performed as both moral edification for the citizens of the nation and in hope for peace and stability in times of national distress, also emerged frequently in public discussions on the Tibetan rituals, as we will see in the context of the Kālacakra initiation in Hangzhou.

The Kālacakra initiation in Hangzhou was not the most attended, as compared to the other initiations performed in Inner Mongolia and Beijing, however, it was definitely one that enjoyed the most exposure in media. Many newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals in China widely publicized the event and closely followed the Panchen Lama’s travels and religious activities in China. Different from how the initiations in Inner Mongolia and Beijing were reported, comments on the

<sup>44</sup> Tanaka, 21.

<sup>45</sup> Mengzang xunkan, 33(1932), 17.

<sup>46</sup> Mengzang xunkan, 33(1932), 18.

<sup>47</sup> Mengzang xunkan, 33(1932), 19.



Hangzhou initiation were rather diverse in opinion – while Buddhist publications enthusiastically advertised the tantric empowerment ritual, other more non-religious periodicals remained highly critical. This created an interesting arena of public discourse on religion and modernity.

The initiation began on April 28, 1934 at the Lingyin temple in the city of Hangzhou. The entire ritual took seven days to complete and involved a similar ritual procession to that of the Beijing ritual.<sup>48</sup> The event was extremely well-advertised with posters, banners, and signs plastered throughout the city of Hangzhou and especially in the more commercial areas; information about the ritual was printed on street lamp boxes that lit up the city at night; even buses were decorated with bills about the empowerment rite.<sup>49</sup> It was reported that many of these signs promoted the event with the slogans: “great merits; protect the nation” (C: *gonghong huguo* 功宏護國), and “benefit the nation; subdue disasters” (C: *fuguo xiaozai* 福國消災).<sup>50</sup> While the event was open to the public, it was heavily guarded with armed police.<sup>51</sup> For the general public, it seemed that admission tickets or mandatory donations at either one *yuan* or ten *yuan* were required to enter the grounds of the temple, which also allowed the admitted attendee to have an ancestor tablet set up in the main hall where the Kālacakra initiation was to be performed.<sup>52</sup>

The railway department of the Republic of China and the lines that ran between Beijing, Suiyuan (Inner Mongolia), Tianjin, and Shanghai were responsible for the transportation of the Panchen Lama.<sup>53</sup> Similar to the management of the Kālacakra initiation in Beijing, the organizers for the Hangzhou event were also mainly comprised of chief politicians and social elites, such as Wang Yiting (王一亭),<sup>54</sup> Qu Wenliu (屈文六),<sup>55</sup> and Zhang Xiaolin (張嘯林).<sup>56, 57</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Shanghai Buddhist Studies Publications 上海佛學書局, “Shilun jingang fahui zhuanhao” 時輪金剛法會專號, *Foxue banyuekan* 佛學半月刊(1934), in *Minguo mizong qikan wenxian jicheng* 民國密宗期刊文獻集成 [Complete Collection of Republican-Era Esoteric Buddhist Periodical Literature], ed. Yu Ruihua 于瑞華 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2008), Vol. 41: 366. The multi-volume source *Minguo mizong qikan wenxian jicheng* will be referred to as MMQ in this paper.

<sup>49</sup> Hu Shuibow 胡水波, “Shilun jingang fahui xunli” 時輪金剛法會巡禮 [Attending the Kālacakra Initiation], *Xinsheng zhoukan* 新生週刊, Vol. 1:14 (1934), 269-270.

<sup>50</sup> Hu, 270.

<sup>51</sup> Hu, 270.

<sup>52</sup> Bing 冰, “Shilun jingang fahui gongfeng ji” 時輪金剛法會躬逢記 [Attending the Kālacakra Initiation], *Shehui zhoubao* (Shanghai) 社會週報 (上海), Vol.1:6 (1934), 110.

<sup>53</sup> “Xiaoping: Shilun jingang fahui” 小評: 時輪金剛法會 [Comments: The Kālacakra Initiation], *Shehui xinwen* 社會新聞, Vol. 7:1 (1934), 1.

<sup>54</sup> Wang Yiting was also known as Wang Zhen 王震; prominent businessman, artist, and Buddhist patron in Shanghai.

<sup>55</sup> Qu Wenliu was also known as Qu Yingguang 屈映光; politician and Buddhist.

<sup>56</sup> Zhang Xiaolin was a well-known mob boss in Shanghai.

<sup>57</sup> “Banchan dashi li neidi hou gongjian jiuci miaode shilun jingang fahui [biaoge]” 班禪大師蒞內地後共建九次妙德時輪金剛法會 [表格] [The Nine Kālacakra Initiations Constructed by the Master Panchen during His Visits in the Mainland], *Xichui xuanhuashi gongshu yuekan* 西陲宣化使公署月刊 1(7/8)(1936):190.



In a pictorial issue covering the event and its attendees, photographs of the main organizer Wang Yiting, as well as those of Dai Jitao (戴季陶)<sup>58</sup> were printed.<sup>59</sup> The same pictorial also featured photos of the Panchen Lama during the initiation. One photo depicts an elderly woman dressed in a white robe praying beside the Panchen Lama – the caption says this was the mother-in-law of Wang Jingwei (汪精衛)<sup>60</sup>.<sup>61</sup> Foreign dignitaries such as Matsumura Yūzō (松村雄藏) from the Hangzhou Japanese Consulate and professors from the Université de Paris were also said to have been present.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to politicians, members of various Buddhist communities in south China, and foreign dignitaries, the Hangzhou initiation also drew attention from movie stars and cultural celebrities. A weekly magazine named *Linglong*, which was mainly marketed towards “modern” young women in the urban centers, reported that Hu Die (胡蝶) and Xu Lai (徐來), two of the most popular actresses in 1930s Chinese cinema, were scheduled to attend the Kālacakra initiation in Hangzhou.<sup>63</sup> Both of these women were prominent socialites and enjoyed incredible public interest both on and off the silver screen. In addition to celebrities that represented the “modern female,” esteemed performers of traditional arts were also on the guest list of the Buddhist empowerment. The same source reported that Mei Lanfang (梅蘭芳), the “Queen of Peking Opera,” was to attend the Buddhist ritual and to give theatrical performances during the initiation along with the two movie stars Hu Die and Xu Lai.<sup>64</sup>

Donations to the Kālacakra initiation in Hangzhou were encouraged in various popular print media months before the ritual took place. The organizers of the initiation urged the Republican government, members of the army, civil servants of various provinces, institutions, and Buddhist organizations to contribute financially for the “peace praying” services administered by the Panchen Lama.<sup>65</sup> According to the

<sup>58</sup> Dai Jitao was the president of the Examination Yuan 考試院院長 and prominent Buddhist patron. On Dai Jitao and his Buddhist activities, see Gregory Adam Scott, “The Buddhist Nationalism of Dai Jitao,” *Journal of Chinese Religions*, 39:1 (2011), 55-81.

<sup>59</sup> Xu Yanying 徐雁影, “Shilun jingang fahui zhong suojian: shilun jingang fahui zhong zhong lama songjing qingxing” 時輪金剛法會中所見：時輪金剛法會中眾喇嘛誦經情形 [Witnessing the Kālacakra Initiation: Lamas Chanting Sutras during the Kālacakra Initiation], *Liangyou 良友*, 89 (1934), 26.

<sup>60</sup> Wang Jingwei was a politician for the KMT and later collaborator with Japanese imperialists.

<sup>61</sup> Xu, 26.

<sup>62</sup> “Banchan lianri dengzuo shuofa” 班禪連日登座說法 [The Panchen Lama Teaches Dharma for Days], *Shen bao 申報*, May 9, 1934. No. 7.

<sup>63</sup> “Haolaiwu huaxu: Hu Die Xu Lai jiang canjia shilun jingang fahui” 好萊塢花絮：胡蝶徐來將參加時輪金剛法會 [Hollywood Highlights: Hu Die and Xu Lai will be attending the Kālacakra Initiation], *Linglong 玲瓏*, Vol.4: 14 (1934), 890.

<sup>64</sup> *Linglong*, Vol.4: 14 (1934), 890.

<sup>65</sup> Kālacakra Initiation 時輪金剛法會, *Shilun jingang fahui cuoyao 時輪金剛法會撮要* [Summaries of the Kālacakra Initiation], in *Minguo shiqi fojiao ziliao huibian 民國時期佛教資料彙編* [Compilation of Buddhist Archival Materials of the Republican-Era], ed. Tian Qi 田奇 (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2010), Vol. 13: 444. The multi-volume source *Minguo shiqi fojiao ziliao huibian* will be referred to as MFZ in this paper.

donor lists published (possibly for the visibility of merit-making) in booklets made to commemorate the historic Buddhist ritual, there were more than 6,000 named individuals who donated to the initiation, many of them were in fact women.<sup>66</sup> Out of the 71,197 *yuan* collected from all the donations, 10,000 *yuan* was donated by Cheng Linsheng (程霖生);<sup>67</sup> 4,000 *yuan* was donated by Du Yuesheng (杜月笙);<sup>68</sup> another 4,000 *yuan* was donated by Zhang Xiaolin (張嘯林).<sup>69</sup> These three were the most prominent donors of the event and were listed conspicuously in the ritual-related publications.

On the other hand, the cost of the rite was quite significant. The total cost of the Kālacakra initiation in Hangzhou was 68,376 *yuan*, which included expenses for ritual implements (6,889 *yuan*), Buddhist images and texts (8,937 *yuan*), precious mineral substances for the sand mandala (2,636 *yuan*), offerings to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (1,966 *yuan*), print media (3,134 *yuan*), transportation (4,533 *yuan*), amongst others. The largest expenditure was offerings (26,843 *yuan*) made to the Panchen Lama (4,000 *yuan*) and his retinue of monks (4,000 *yuan*), which also included gifts, meals, accommodations, and the construction of the Panchen Lama's residence at the Yonghe Temple in Beijing (2,400 *yuan*).<sup>70</sup> Subtracting the expenses of the ritual from the total amount of donations received, 2,820 *yuan* was the remainder amount. According to the donation lists, this leftover amount was to be spent on printing Buddhist texts such as the *Lamrin chenmo* (C: *pu ti ci di dao* 菩提次第道), as well as on commissioning and consecrating a bronze statue of Sitātapatrā (C: *bai san gai* 白傘蓋), a popular Vajrayana Buddhist deity that offers protection against supernatural danger.<sup>71</sup>

According to a news report published in *Shenbao* on May 17, 1934, the Kālacakra initiation in Hangzhou began on April 28, 1934 in the main hall of the Lingyin Temple. The Panchen Lama was seated inside on a raised platform and was accompanied by his monastic disciples. Purification rituals were performed on the first day and teachings about the *Kālacakratantra* were taught. On the second day, the Kālacakra *mandala* was revealed, followed by a *tsam* dance. The third day involved more teachings and received thousands of attendees arriving on frequently scheduled buses coming from various parts of the Zhejiang province. On the fourth day, it was said that the Panchen Lama retired to his private practices and received only the donor Dai Jitao and his family. Monks from the Lingyin Temple gathered exclusively for the Panchen Lama's teachings on the fifth day and chanted *sūtras*. On the sixth day, Dai Jitao invited the Panchen Lama and his retinue to a banquet attended by more than forty major politicians of the Zhejiang province, as well as the major donors of the Kālacakra initiation. The Panchen Lama taught publicly three times in

<sup>66</sup> MFZ Vol. 13: 475-660.

<sup>67</sup> Cheng Linsheng was a real estate tycoon in Shanghai.

<sup>68</sup> Du Yuesheng was a famous mob boss in Shanghai.

<sup>69</sup> MFZ Vol. 13: 475.

<sup>70</sup> MFZ Vol. 13: 475-660.

<sup>71</sup> MFZ Vol. 13: 659-660.

the next few days and received many members of the international audience: twenty-four members from the American Navy Young Men's Christian Association, the secretary to the Governor-general of Annam, the vice-president of the Bank of Hanoi, and the Ngachen Khutukhtu and his retinue of fifty monks. The *abhiṣeka* ceremony took place on the thirteenth and fourteenth of May and was attended by more than 20,000 individuals. The initiation ritual was interpreted and translated by Liu Jiaju from Tibetan to Chinese and was filmed by the Mingxing film company. *Homa* was performed on the seventeenth and the Kālacakra *mandala* was sent away on the eighteenth, marking the completion of the entire Kālacakra initiation ceremony.<sup>72</sup>

Similar to the initiation that took place in Beijing, many women, both monastic and lay, participated avidly in the Kālacakra empowerment rituals in Hangzhou. According to a witness who attended the event on April 29, 1934, Buddhist nuns and pious elderly women even prepared glass bottles beforehand for taking home some of the barley grains scattered by the Panchen Lama in the ritual; young women on the other hand, fit the “blessed millets” in their purses.<sup>73</sup> On the last day of the Kālacakra initiation, the Panchen Lama reportedly performed the higher initiations and blessed many attendees by touching their heads.<sup>74</sup>

Another account published in the *National Zhejiang University Magazine* paints a lively picture of the various kinds of activities that took place at the site of the Kālacakra initiation in Hangzhou: lamas from Tibet were seen trading *mālā* prayer beads and incense, photographers took memorabilia photos and sold them to the attendees, hosts from the local tea houses hailed for customers, and farmers from outside of the city vended water chestnuts for coppers.<sup>75</sup> The same student source further discloses that the ritual was communicated through radio communications equipped at the Lingyin temple; regular announcements about the procedures of the initiation as well as translations of the Panchen Lama's teachings were broadcasted to the public audience through loudspeakers in Chinese.<sup>76</sup>

One unique aspect of the Hangzhou Kālacakra initiation was its commercialization – in addition to well-promoted donation drives and advertisements about the ritual, memorabilia items and ritual-related merchandise were sold. In the special issues of the *Buddhist Studies Bi-Monthly* dedicated to the Hangzhou Kālacakra initiation, merchandise such as photographs of the Kālacakra *mandala* used in the ritual, Buddhist images made in Tibet, “authentic” Tibetan saffron, as well as chebulic myrobalan fruits

<sup>72</sup> “Zai hang juxing zhi shilun jingang fahui yuanman” 在杭舉行之時輪金剛法會圓滿 [The Kālacakra Initiation in Hangzhou Completed in Success], Shen bao 申報, May 17, 1934, No.8.

<sup>73</sup> Hu, 270.

<sup>74</sup> Bing, 110.

<sup>75</sup> Qiang Sheng 強生, “Shilun jingang fahui zai lingyin” 時輪金剛法會在靈隱 [The Kālacakra Initiation at Lingyin], Guoli Zhejiang daxue xiaokan 國立浙江大學校刊, 173(1934), 1805.

<sup>76</sup> Qiang, 1805.

from the Himalayan region were advertised alongside information about the ritual.<sup>77</sup> The items are described as “efficacious” and “necessary” for attendees of the ritual and interested practitioners of tantric Buddhism. For example, although photographs of the Kālacakra *mandala* costed one *jiao* per copper-plate print and four *jiao* per original, they were “necessary for attendees in general but more necessary for attendees who attended late”.<sup>78</sup> “Authentic” saffron from Tibet was priced at three *yuan* per box (18.9 grams); the ad explains that it could be used both for “making offerings to the Buddha and as medicinal ingredients.”<sup>79</sup> “Tibetan green fruits” (C: *Xizang qinguo* 西藏青果) or chebulic myrobalan fruits shipped directly from the Himalayas were sold at five *jiao* per box; consuming these fruits were encouraged before attending the ritual to “cleanse the mouth.”<sup>80</sup> For those who wished to offer incense at the temple where the Kālacakra initiation took place, “authentic Tibetan incense” was recommended and can be bought through various venders of Buddhist goods.<sup>81</sup>

From August 13 to August 15 in 1935, the eighth Kālacakra initiation performed by the ninth Panchen Lama was held in the Kumbum Monastery in Amdo. The Panchen Lama had just finished his tour in Inner Mongolia, north, and south China, and was preparing for his official return to Tibet. The patrons of the initiation were said to be the abbot of Kumbum and the monastic population there; the ritual reportedly drew around 50,000 attendees, including both the entire monastic population at Kumbum and many lay attendees from nearby.<sup>82</sup> A news article published in *The New York Times* on February 14, 1936 describes the event: “Half a million tribesmen, gathered from all parts of Tibet, Mongolia and West China amid Oriental pomp and magnificence, have paid tribute at the famed Kumbum Monastery, near here, to the Panchen Lama.” The American photographer and journalist Harrison Forman was quoted saying that the “Living Buddha” planned to travel to Lhasa within a few weeks, whence he was exiled eleven years ago by the Dalai Lama. The article also reports that an unnamed high Chinese official arrived at the Kālacakra initiation with 500 Chinese troops at the height of the ceremony.<sup>83</sup> It is unclear who this individual might be, although Jagou notes that Dai Jitao was one of the major donors of the Kumbum initiation.<sup>84</sup>

In June of the following year, the Panchen Lama was invited by the Fifth Jamyang Zhépa (T: Bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan) and his older brother, Losang Tséwang (T: Blo bzang tshe dbang; also known as C: Huang Zhengqing 黄正清), who was

<sup>77</sup> Shanghai Buddhist Studies Publications 上海佛學書局, “Shilun jingang fahui zhuanhao” 時輪金剛法會專號, *Foxue banyuekan* 佛學半月刊78(1934), in *MMQ* Vol. 41: 348-371.

<sup>78</sup> *MMQ* Vol. 41: 348.

<sup>79</sup> *MMQ* Vol. 41: 353.

<sup>80</sup> *MMQ* Vol. 41: 355.

<sup>81</sup> *MMQ* Vol. 41: 357.

<sup>82</sup> Zhang, 81-82.

<sup>83</sup> “500,000 in Tribute to Panchen Lama: Oriental Tribesmen Gather to Pay Homage to Spiritual Leader of Tibet,” *The New York Times*, February 14, 1936, 10.

<sup>84</sup> Jagou, 259.

the *chakdzö* (T: *phyag mdzod*), or treasurer to the Jamyang Zhépa, to stay at the Labrang Monastery in Amdo.<sup>85</sup> In July 1936, the Ninth Panchen Lama performed his last Kālacakra initiation at Labrang for a public audience made up of monastics and laities who traveled from other parts of Tibet and Mongolia totaling at 60,000 people.<sup>86</sup> Photographs taken on site at the ritual show that the courtyard of the monastery was completely filled with tens of thousands of sitting and standing attendees, many of whom seem to be non-monastic. Women and small children can also be spotted.<sup>87</sup>

The Kālacakra initiation at Labrang began on the fourth of July in 1936 with the construction of the sand Kālacakra *mandala*, which allegedly took ten days. On the fourteenth, initiations were performed, and teachings were given; it was said that all who were present to hear were able to be reborn in Śambhala. On the eighteenth, many attendees offered money and precious items to the Panchen Lama and a celebratory feast was held. The Kālacakra *mandala* was ritually taken down on the twenty-first, wrapping up the entire initiation ritual which took eighteen days to complete.<sup>88</sup>

### **Tibetan Rituals Outside of Central Tibet:**

From the above descriptions of the nine Kālacakra initiations performed by the Ninth Panchen Lama in Inner Mongolia, Beijing, Hangzhou, and Amdo between 1928 to 1936, we can see that these were highly popular and public events. This series of Kālacakra initiations were offered with a high frequency of almost once every year, and yet each event was attended by tens of thousands without fail, even in places like Hangzhou where Tibetan Buddhism was not traditionally practiced.

Questions that we need to ask are these: Why were most of these initiations performed outside of central Tibet? Why were the Kālacakra initiations so well-received, especially outside of its usual ritual context? This paper argues that the reasons are twofold: first, the Panchen Lama was exiled from Tibet since 1923 due to disputes with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.<sup>89</sup> Due to being exiled, the Panchen Lama had no choice but to conduct all of his religious practices outside of central Tibet. Second, most of the Kālacakra initiations were performed outside of Tibet because they were requested by donors and patrons who resided outside of Tibet. These different donors came from different backgrounds and religious traditions, and they were in different kinds of priest-patron relationships with the Panchen Lama. This section will look at some of these relationships in detail.

<sup>85</sup> Zhang, 82.

<sup>86</sup> Zhang, 82.

<sup>87</sup> “*Qinghai shilun jingang fahui*” 青海時輪金剛法會 [The Kālacakra Initiation in Qinghai], *Zhonghua* (Shanghai) 中華(上海), 55(1937), 34.

<sup>88</sup> *Zhonghua* (Shanghai), 55(1937), 34.

<sup>89</sup> On the disputes between the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and the Ninth Panchen Lama, see Fabienne Jagou’s *The Ninth Panchen Lama (1883-1937): A Life at the Crossroads of Sino-Tibetan Relations*, trans. Rebecca Bissett Buechel (Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 2011).

Since 1923 until his death in 1937, the Ninth Panchen Lama was displaced from his seat in Tashilhunpo and had to travel extensively across East Asia. Conflicts with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama over taxation and further complications brought on by the British invasion prevented him from returning to central Tibet. The Manchu rulers of the Qing empire and loyal patrons of the Tibetan Gelugpa institution were no longer in positions of power after the establishment of the Republic of China, and the Mongol allies to the north in Outer Mongolia became anti-religion socialists in the newly founded nation-state of Mongolian People's Republic. The only possible patrons of the Panchen Lama's Gelugpa tradition outside of the Tibetan regions were in Inner Mongolia and amongst the higher echelons of the Nanking government.

The Mongols have been patrons of Gelugpa Buddhism since the sixteenth century. As one of the most important *tantras* for the Gelugpas, the *Kālacakratantra* and its affiliated traditions have been dominant in the Mongolian regions since the late seventeenth century.<sup>90</sup> Kālacakra temples and *dratsangs* (monastic colleges) were built and Kālacakra teachings were introduced throughout the Mongolian regions. New Kālacakra *dratsangs* were being built even as late as the 1930s, such as the one in the Buyan-I ündüsülegči sūme in Alashan.<sup>91</sup>

Furthermore, Kālacakra teachings and the legend of Śambhala continued to spark interests amongst the Mongols well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The history and prophesy of the victorious kingdom described in the *Kālacakratantra* was included in Mongolian historical works such as the chronicle *Bolor toli* (*Crystal Mirror*), written between 1834-1837 by Jimbadorji.<sup>92</sup> Here, the history of the Mongols were fused with the history of Śambhala – Chinggis Khan became part of the lineage that can be traced to the first king of the legendary kingdom, Sucandra, who was also part of the larger Buddhist lineage that can be traced back to the historic Buddha.<sup>93</sup> There were also numerous wish-prayers composed by various Mongolian authors in hopes of better rebirths in Śambhala.<sup>94</sup> The Buryat Ganzhurba Gegen Danzan Norboev (1887-1935) even wrote a new guidebook to the mythical kingdom of Śambhala in 1927.<sup>95</sup>

In addition to these new textual materials produced by the Mongols through continued interests in the *Kālacakratantra*, there was also the embodiment of the Kālacakra teachings in public performances. In 1830, a *tsam* dance that enacted the “war of Śambhala” (M: *Śambala-yin dayin*) was performed at the Qamar-un Keyid

<sup>90</sup> Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz, “Visualizing the Non-Buddhist Other: A Historical Analysis of the Śambhala Myth in Mongolia at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” *Cross-Currents*, 31(2019): 36.

<sup>91</sup> Kollmar-Paulenz, 36.

<sup>92</sup> Kollmar-Paulenz, 37.

<sup>93</sup> Kollmar-Paulenz, 39.

<sup>94</sup> Kollmar-Paulenz, 37.

<sup>95</sup> Kollmar-Paulenz, 36.



Monastery.<sup>96</sup> Public performances such as this one allowed non-monastic Mongolian Buddhists who did not have access to texts and teachers to be involved in the messianic messages of the *Kālacakratantra*. Other types of visual representations were also common, such as *thangkas* that depicted the narratives of the apocalyptic battle in the *Kālacakratantra* between the Buddhist king of Śambhala, Raudracakrin, and his non-Buddhist enemies.<sup>97</sup>

The Kālacakra practices in Mongolia were important to the Mongolian national, religious, and cultural identities. The idea of an imagined community that is the Mongols, who are the descendants of Chinggis Khan and the children of the mythical kingdom of Śambhala, was crucial to the Mongols of both Outer and Inner Mongolia, especially during the political turmoil of the twentieth century.

On top of that, according to the legends described in the *Kālacakratantra*, the prophesied twenty-fifth king of Śambhala will be a reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, who will accede the throne in 2327 AD and become victorious in protecting the *Dharma* when “barbarians” attack to threaten the transmission of Buddhism in the world.<sup>98</sup> For the Mongols, the Ninth Panchen Lama, the lineage holder who will be reincarnated into the future savior king of Śambhala, was more than the perfect master to carry out Kālacakra initiations. This would partially explain why the five Kālacakra initiations performed by the Ninth Panchen Lama in Inner Mongolia attracted so many attendees who would travel for days just to attend the ritual, despite the rather low population density of the region at the turn of the twentieth century.

Another dimension of the Kālacakra initiations in Inner Mongolia was how public enthusiasm for the Buddhist ritual was utilized in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Movement, spearheaded by the Mongol Prince Demchugdongrub, who was also a major organizer and donor of the Kālacakra initiations that took place in Inner Mongolia. According to his biography written by Sechin Jagchid, who worked closely with Prince Demchugdongrub for many years, one of the main reasons for inviting the Panchen Lama to give Kālacakra initiations at the Beile Temple was because his ritual presence was believed to have the ability to gather and unite Mongol princes and leaders from various leagues and banners.<sup>99</sup> In other words, the Kālacakra tradition carried considerable affective value for the Mongols. By using this once-in-a-life-time auspicious event that most Mongols would want to attend as invitation, Prince Demchugdongrub would be able to mobilize the decision makers of the various banners and leagues to gather together to discuss the political future and sovereignty of Inner Mongolia in an era shadowed by uncertainty and colonial

<sup>96</sup> Kollmar-Paulenz, 37.

<sup>97</sup> Kollmar-Paulenz, 38.

<sup>98</sup> Jagou, 70.

<sup>99</sup> Zhaqi Siqin 札奇斯欽[Sechin Jagchid], *Wo suo zhidao de De wang he dangshi de Neimenggu* 我所知道的德王和當時的內蒙古[The De wang I knew and the Inner Mongolia of that Time] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2005), 100.



invasions. Such an opportunity would be extremely vital for the preservation of political autonomy of the Inner Mongolians at the time, especially since the region was encroached between hostilities and pressures from socialist Outer Mongolia, Republican China, and the Japanese Empire all at the same time. In a sense, the rituals could have doubled as a ruse to camouflage political subversion for the Inner Mongolians against these foreign aggressions.

On the other hand, politically and economically powerful donors of the Kālacakra initiations in the Republic of China, such as Duan Qirui, Dai Jitao, and Wang Yiting, did not necessarily invite the Panchen Lama out of a shared sense of tradition and lineage based on the Chingissid pedigree. Although the Manchu rulers of the Qing empire officially endorsed Tibetan Gelug Buddhism, it was not popularized outside of the imperial circles and certainly not amongst the Han Chinese Buddhists. The *Kālacakratantra* was also not translated nor included into the Chinese Buddhist canon at this point. However, being aware of the Panchen Lama's status and influence amongst the Tibetans and the Mongols, especially after witnessing the popular reception of the Kālacakra initiations in Inner Mongolia, the Chinese donors saw potential in the highly revered Lama to “propagate” the Nanjing government's policies to the ethnic minorities at the frontiers and to “edify” them of the necessity of pledging allegiance to the new republic.

In an issue of the *Office of the Panchen Lama in Nanjing Monthly* published in October 1929, an immediacy of having the Panchen Lama carry out *xuanhua* (propagation and edification) missions in Inner Mongolia was expressed:

...Soviet Russia, using its red imperialism, has violently invaded Mongolia, causing its independence. Incidents on the Chinese Eastern Railway [show] that Outer Mongolians have been driven by Soviet Russia to disturb Inner Mongolia, hoping that they will assimilate. The Panchen [Lama] has been a guest to the north for a while, because the religious customs of Inner Mongolia is similar to those of Tibet. The invasions of the reds and the whites are one and the same. Saving Tibet is saving Mongolia... [The Panchen Lama's] tour in Inner Mongolia on the one hand promotes policies of the central government, propagating the Three Principles of the People, teaching them about the Republic, and enlightening them on current affairs. On the other hand, [the Panchen Lama] propagates religion, instructing [the Inner Mongolians] on the causes and effects of karma, encouraging them to follow the *Dharma* and the commands of the central government.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>100</sup> The Office of the Panchen Lama in Nanjing 班禪駐京辦公處, “Banchan quandao hou neimeng zhi qingkuang” 班禪勸導後內蒙之情況 [The situation in Inner Mongolia after the Panchen Lama's Persuasions], *Xizang Banchan zhujing bangongchu yuekan* 西藏班禪駐京辦公處月刊 Vol. 1, 3+4(1929), in MFQ, Vol. 30: 199.

This shows that the Nanjing government was more than conscious of the Panchen Lama's political potentials in mobilizing not just the Tibetans, but also the Mongols, in their geopolitical strategies. However, a closer look at the primary source materials produced by the Chinese organizers of the Kālacakra initiations reveals that they were also equally interested in the soteriological aspects of the Buddhist ritual.

In a pamphlet compiled by the organizing committee for the Kālacakra initiations entitled, "Summary of the Kālacakra Initiations," the main organizer and donor, Duan Qirui explains his reasons for holding the ritual:

...The past twenty years has been marked by more than enough humans conflicts; it is now followed by natural disasters spreading in more than ten provinces, starving and drowning millions of people... Thinking about this, [I realize that] the sentiments of heaven and the affairs of men have always been linked. In the past, when disaster and tragedy occur, all would reflect together for ways of salvation. There are many examples of this in the history chronicles. Even countries in Euro-America often turned to religion and prayer during times of national distress... The Panchen *guoshi*<sup>101</sup> [has prophesied] when he arrived in the old capital (Beijing), that he fears for four complications and one flooding in the future. When asked, the master said that the past cannot be undone, but the future can [still] be protected.<sup>102</sup>

Duan then goes on to speak about the specific protective and soteriological functions of the Kālacakra initiations: "If the Kālacakra ritual is performed to release the souls of the dead, it would ensure that the unassisted spirits will be reborn in the kingdom of Śambhala. This corresponds exactly with the wishes of the Buddha."<sup>103</sup> For the living attendees of the initiation, the Kālacakra ritual is even more potent:

Any sentient being of the six realms with the right karma who meditates in concentration within forty *li*<sup>104</sup> of the initiation, will be initiated even without entering the *mandala* and will be reborn in the kingdom of Śambhala. For those with the fortunate karma to be present at the initiation, just by listening to the sound of the bells and seeing the Kālacakra *mandala*, can be reborn as a Buddha even without any knowledge of the *Dharma*.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Guoshi 國師 is an honorific title meaning "State Preceptor" given to the Panchen Lama.

<sup>102</sup> Kālacakra Initiation 時輪金剛法會, Shilun jingang fahui cuoyao 時輪金剛法會撮要 [Summaries of the Kālacakra Initiation], in MFZ, Vol. 13: 436-437.

<sup>103</sup> MFZ, Vol. 13: 437-438.

<sup>104</sup> One li 里 is roughly 500 meters.

<sup>105</sup> MFZ, Vol. 13: 438.

Duan also contrasts the expedience of the Kālacakra tradition to the Pure Land tradition in China, further illustrating the superior potency of the Kālacakra Initiation in an age marked by unprecedented instabilities:

For the Pure Land [tradition], the *Sukhavatī* of Amitābha Buddha is hundreds of thousands of billions [*li*] away. The guiding process must be done in one to seven days without an unbalanced mind. Besides, our lives are usually murky towards the end, the mind easily disturbed, let alone in moments of death. It is not easy to sit peacefully in tranquility. How many of us can have the conviction to wait in calmness for the guidance of the Buddha?<sup>106</sup>

According to Duan, who served four times as the premier of the new modern nation-state of the Republic of China under the Nanjing government, the Kālacakra Initiation also possessed potentials for solving problems that modern science did not:

The *tantra* has extraordinary functions and purposes. It is sublime and cannot be compared to our human mind consciousnesses... It is beyond science and the humanities. Amongst other religions and philosophies, it is something that dissolves all matters of the universe in the past, present, and future. It is relied upon for all problems and predicaments.<sup>107</sup>

The arrival of the Ninth Panchen Lama in China was considered by Duan as an extremely fortuitous opportunity:

The *Kālacakratantra* has not been translated into Chinese and is not transmitted without a teacher. It is not something that common *ācāryas* can easily teach, either. Now, we are fortunate to have the Panchen *guoshi* arrive from the frontier tens of thousands of *li* away to perform the *Dharma* ritual. The *ācārya* attends to the Han and the Mongols right here beside us. This is due to our *karma*.<sup>108</sup>

In a special issue dedicated to the Kālacakra initiation in the *Buddhist Studies Bi-Monthly*, the ritual event is described as “rare as one drop of water in the ocean.” The periodical then lists three merits of the initiation:

One, out of all the Buddhist traditions, the esoteric lineage promises the fastest and the most meritorious results. On top of that, the *Kālacakratantra* is considered the most supreme in esoteric Buddhism. It is unparalleled and the most mysterious. It is foreseeing and potent.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup> MFZ, Vol. 13: 438.

<sup>107</sup> MFZ, Vol. 13: 438-439.

<sup>108</sup> MFZ, Vol. 13: 436-437.

<sup>109</sup> Shanghai Buddhist Studies Publications 上海佛學書局, “Shilun jingang fahui zhuanhao” 時輪金剛法會專號, Foxue banyuekan 佛學半月刊78(1934), in MMQ Vol. 41: 359.

Secondly, the initiation was considered to be a historic opportunity:

Although the Panchen Lama was invited to preside over rituals during Qianlong's reign in the Qing, it was mainly for rituals such as Cakrasamvara empowerments.<sup>110</sup> Superior *tantra* empowerments such as the Kālacakra initiation that can protect the nation while subduing disasters was only performed for the first-time [in China proper] last year in Beijing and this year in Hangzhou.<sup>111</sup>

Thirdly, the public nature of the Kālacakra initiation was considered to be karmically auspicious:

In the Tibetan esoteric Buddhist tradition, the *Kālacakratantra* is considered to be the fourth-class *tantra* and the most important *tantra* of the *niruttara-yoga-tantras*.<sup>112</sup> Only the Panchen Lama has the ability to perform its initiations... this kind of initiation was rarely performed in public even in Tibet. Due to the Panchen master's compassion, this initiation is performed in public for the convenience and benefit of all sentient beings. There are no restrictions; all can benefit.<sup>113</sup>

The same periodical also featured writings about the timeliness of Buddhist teachings in 1930s Republican China. One passage quotes the Panchen Lama saying, "Politics and religion must proceed together and are not contradictory. The immediate mission of religion is to teach morality and karma."<sup>114</sup> The text elaborates, "Karma is truth. Discussing politics from the point of view of karma, politics is karma."<sup>115</sup> The view that Buddhist teaching is indeed very much relevant to the new modern nation-state and even global affairs is elucidated:

Various universities in Germany have been teaching Indian and Tibetan philosophy. The British and French governments have been translating many Sanskrit and Tibetan canonical texts and compiling dictionaries for more than a decade... The British, the French, and the Germans are inquisitive nations; they do not consider Indian culture as unusable; they value it. The Japanese Meiji Restoration was not biased against Buddhism; they revitalized it. Dozens of sectarian universities publish periodicals regularly. The literary circle raised more than two million [yen] to compile the *Taishō* canon. Their Buddhist statues, ritual implements, and attires have elegance.

<sup>110</sup> C: Shangle jingang fa 上樂金剛法

<sup>111</sup> MMQ Vol. 41: 360.

<sup>112</sup> C: Di si ji wushang mizong zhi shouyao 第四級無上密宗之首要

<sup>113</sup> MMQ Vol. 41: 360.

<sup>114</sup> MMQ Vol. 41: 378.

<sup>115</sup> MMQ Vol. 41: 378.

Their [affiliated] companies hold tens of millions of capitals. No one has discredited them as ‘superstitious’... [Our] magnificent *Kanjur* canon,<sup>116</sup> on the other hand, shines brightly in the world, as if decorated with precious jewels. It is limitless. Because the Westerners are trapped by the mysteries of science and are constantly baffled, therefore they attempt to seek a way out from Sanskrit and Tibetan texts. [We] possess such treasures and yet we do not recognize [their value]. Why do we starve ourselves as such?<sup>117</sup>

The view that Buddhist teachings, especially wisdom contained in the Tibetan canons are not superstitious but are important for a modern nation-state to recognize as critical cultural heritage was echoed in a speech given by Gao Erdeng (高爾登),<sup>118</sup> at the press conference for the *Kālacakra* initiation in Hangzhou. He said:

Buddha *Dharma* is active; it is not passive. It is engaged with the world, and not detached. The teachings of the Buddha are for the entire nation and society to step into a virtuous cycle. They teach people to use the spirit of self-sacrifice and bravery to fight the *asura* demons... The Buddha’s teachings preserved in the *Kālacakratāntra* are especially complex and detailed. They encourage engaged lives and use the wisdom of science to inspire people.<sup>119</sup>

It is clear that the motivations behind the *Kālacakra* initiations in the Republic of China were not completely political in nature; there were actually very strong interests in the soteriological benefits that the ritual can offer, as well as recognitions of the *Kālacakratāntra* as important cultural heritage. Many sources show that the Chinese donors and participants not only shared a fascination with the esoteric Tibetan Buddhist ritual, many of them also agreed that Tibetan Buddhism was in fact, *the* much-needed savior and revitalizer for the long-lost Chinese esoteric Buddhist traditions.

After the fall of the Qing empire in 1911, many notable Buddhists, such as the monk Taixu, became influential in revitalizing and modernizing Buddhism in China through reforms such as more engaged practices and the use of modern print media. At the same time, there was an interest in reviving Chinese esoteric, or tantric Buddhism, whose transmission was believed to have been weakened or even lost since the tenth century. To do this, many Chinese Buddhists first looked to Japan, where the traditions and practices of medieval Chinese esoteric Buddhism was supposed to be best-preserved. As the relationship between the two countries worsened increasingly after imperial Japan’s continued invasions and occupations on Chinese territories, many Chinese Buddhists began to turn to Tibet in their search for the lost *tantras*.

<sup>116</sup> C: *longzang* 龍藏

<sup>117</sup> MMQ Vol. 41: 378-383.

<sup>118</sup> Gao Erdeng was a politician and military commander for the ROC.

<sup>119</sup> MMQ Vol. 41: 362.

In 1915, the Empire of Japan demanded to have the freedom to build Buddhist temples in China in the Twenty-One Demands.<sup>120</sup> This created an outrage amongst the Chinese Buddhist communities, who thought that it was offensive for Japanese Buddhism, the disciples of Chinese Buddhism, to proselytize their practices back to China.<sup>121</sup> The Japanese Buddhists, especially those of the Shingon school, argued that although Japanese Buddhism developed from Chinese Buddhism, tantric Buddhism has been preserved and thriving in Japan, while it has been long lost in China.<sup>122</sup> As a result, many Chinese monks went abroad to Japan to study and in the following decades contributed to a tantric revival movement. With increasing aggression from the Empire of Japan in the 1920s and 1930s, many Chinese Buddhists found instead Tibetan tantrism to be the perfect answer to their revival campaign, especially since the Tibetan tradition was believed to be more closely related with lineages in Indian tantrism, and that Tibetan Buddhism possessed texts on the higher *yoga-tantras* such as the *Kālacakratāntra* while the East Asian esoteric traditions did not.

In addition to the Ninth Panchen Lama, the Seventh Changkya Khutukhtu Lobsang Pelden Tenpe Dronme (T: Lcang skya blo bzang dpal ldan bstan pa'i sgron me), the Mongol lama Bai Puren (C: Bai Puren 白普仁), the Norlha Khutukhtu (T: Nor lha ho thog thu), and Gongkar Rinpoche (T: Gangs dkar) were all distinguished lamas of the Gelug tradition that were active in China at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>123</sup> During their stays in China, they not only performed countless rituals and teachings for avid donors, they also helped to establish education centers to cultivate those interested in Tibetan Buddhism, such as the Bodhi Study Center (C: *Puti xuehui* 菩提學會) established in 1935 in Shanghai with the Panchen Lama as the president.<sup>124</sup> Such centers taught the Tibetan language and translated many texts from the Tibetan canons into Chinese.<sup>125</sup>

At the same time, there were also many Chinese monks who traveled to various monastic colleges in Tibet to study, such as Dayong (大勇), Fazun (法尊), and Nenghai (能海).<sup>126</sup> They established education institutions and translated many key texts from the Tibetan Buddhist canons into Chinese to help promote Tibetan Buddhist studies in China. In 1924, Dayong created the Tibetan Language College (C: *Zangwen xueyuan* 藏文學院) in Beijing and managed to send more than thirty of his students to study at the Drepung monastery in Tibet.<sup>127</sup> Fazun, who was fluent in Tibetan and a

<sup>120</sup> J: Taika nijūikkajō yōkyū 對華21ヶ条要求; C: Dui hua ershiyitiao yaoqiu 對華21條要求

<sup>121</sup> Lai Yonghai 賴永海, *Zhongguo Fojiao tongshi* 中國佛教通史 [History of Chinese Buddhism] (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2010), Vol. 15, 373.

<sup>122</sup> Lai, 373.

<sup>123</sup> Lai, 382.

<sup>124</sup> Lai, 383.

<sup>125</sup> Lai, 383.

<sup>126</sup> Lai, 384.

<sup>127</sup> Lai, 385-386.

prolific writer, translated more than two hundred texts from Tibetan, including major canonical texts in the Gelug tradition such as the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*.<sup>128</sup> He also translated the *Abhidharma Mahāvibhāṣā Śāstra* from Chinese (C: *Da piposha lun* 大毗婆沙論) to Tibetan.<sup>129</sup>

Nenghai was another influential Chinese tantric master of this period; he studied in Tibet, translated texts, and spent more than thirty years teaching and propagating Tibetan Buddhism in China. After years of work, he developed the Jinci Temple (近慈寺) in Chengdu into a one-of-a-kind Buddhist monastery that is bilingual (teaches both in Tibetan and in Chinese) and comprehensive, embracing both exoteric teachings of the Chinese Buddhist traditions and the esoteric teachings of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions.<sup>130</sup>

Going back to the questions posed at the beginning of this section that asked why most of the Panchen Lama's nine Kālacakra initiations were performed outside of central Tibet, and why they were so well-received outside of their usual contexts, I hope it has been made apparent that it was mainly because the donors who requested these initiations were outside of central Tibet. For the donors in Inner Mongolia, the Kālacakra initiations renewed their faith in the shared myth of Śambhala and gave them opportunities to congregate communally. For the donors in the Republic of China, they saw political potential in the Panchen Lama to unit ethnic minority groups on the frontier through shared faith, but they were equally invested in the soteriological benefits that the Kālacakra initiations can provide as well. This invested interest in the Tibetan tantric practices was part of a larger tantric revival movement that was gaining momentum in 1920s and 1930s China.

As for the motivations of the Ninth Panchen Lama in accepting the donors' requests and performing these series of Kālacakra initiations, Fabienne Jagou suggests that it could be for the purpose of "honoring his debts with the Tibetan government."<sup>131</sup> Although this might be true, it has been shown in previous discussions of the donor lists that the large amounts of donations were often balanced off by the considerable costs of these Kālacakra initiations. Most of the donation money instead went to the local economy. The Panchen Lama and his retinue did receive compensations for the religious services, but it remains unclear if these compensations were to be paid as taxes owed to Lhasa. Jagou also argues that in addition to the possibility that the Panchen Lama was giving the Kālacakra initiations out of altruistic goals, "he could also take advantage of these large gatherings to find supporters who could help him return to Tibet, and through the power of the Kālacakra let his cause be known to a

<sup>128</sup> Lai, 387.

<sup>129</sup> Lai, 387.

<sup>130</sup> Lai, 388.

<sup>131</sup> Jagou, 71.



larger audience.”<sup>132</sup> This seems to be the most appropriate reading, as we will see when we explore the public features of the Kālacakra initiations and how making the esoteric public in fact was able to increase considerable political, social, and religious capital and visibility for the Panchen Lama to prepare him for his return to Tibet following the death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama as a well-connected leader.

### **Making the Esoteric Rituals Public:**

The nine Kālacakra initiations performed by the Ninth Panchen Lama were allegedly the first higher *yoga-tantra* initiations held outside of central Tibet. Tantric initiations of that nature were also widely understood to be rarely performed to the public even in Tibet. Why was this ritual based on the highest level of *yoga-tantra* performed to such large audiences? Why were they so well-received by the masses? Are esoteric rituals like the Kālacakra initiation theoretically allowed to be given to large public audiences? In this section, we will look at the public dimensions of the Kālacakra initiations and explore what making the esoteric public entails. But first, we will briefly discuss what “public” means.

Jürgen Habermas conceptualized the term *Öffentlichkeit*, or “public sphere” in his seminal work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962).<sup>133</sup> The German term *Öffentlichkeit* can be understood as carrying the connotations of openness, public, and publicity. For Habermas, public spheres emerged as places for public discourse from Western European bourgeoisie societies. They may be conceived “...as the sphere of private people come together as a public.”<sup>134</sup> In *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (1999), G.A. Hauser adds that, “A public sphere may be defined as a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgement about them.”<sup>135</sup> In addition, the public sphere may be potentially subversive. As Habermas has pointed out, once congregated as a public, the people “...soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves...”<sup>136</sup>

Although both theorists are writing about the “public sphere” based on their observations of the bourgeois society in the West, the idea can still be useful to help us understand the public presentations of the nine Kālacakra initiations, especially the idea that “public spheres” are places and instances that enable popular engagement, discussion, and debate. Habermas’ observation on the subversive potential inherent

<sup>132</sup> Jagou, 71.

<sup>133</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>134</sup> Habermas, 27.

<sup>135</sup> G. A. Hauser and Thomas W. Benson, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 61.

<sup>136</sup> Habermas, 27.

in the creation of public spheres are also insightful. For our purposes of exploring the Kālacakra initiations, we can take “public” (adjective) as both a characteristic of the “public sphere,” as well as the congregation and association of individuals (noun), or as Hauser puts it, “the interdependent members of society who hold different opinions about a mutual problem and who seek to influence its resolution through discourse.”<sup>137</sup>

In our case of the Kālacakra initiations, they can be considered as events involving the public in the public sphere in the sense that they were open to the general population; they involved the gatherings of individuals and groups to negotiate matters of mutual interest and to participate in collective discourse. The Panchen Lama’s Kālacakra initiations were performed to a general and modern audience for the first time, and they created new types of spaces where politics and religion can be practiced towards the achievement of mutual interests. They were public also because they engaged with widely circulated modern print media, film, radio, modern transportation, and popular culture to promote visibility, relevance, and influence. In this aspect, the Kālacakra initiations were made public through not only texts and images, but also sound and film that were directed at a mass audience. Finally, the Kālacakra initiations were also public in the sense that they engendered a considerable amount of debate that went beyond the controls of the authorities – in other words, the esoteric rituals became places of public discourse.

But why were these rituals made public? What does the publicity entail?

In the Republic of China, the Kālacakra initiations were organized by military and political elites to be public for the optics of ethnic unity between the “five nationalities”; for donors to display their merits; for the spectacle of a Buddhist ritual on a national scale that advocated public morality; and for rallying the public against aggressive enemies, such as imperialists from Japan and the West. For the Ninth Panchen Lama, the Kālacakra initiations’ publicity meant validation and accumulation of political, religious, and social capitals; the visibility created by the public gaze allowed him to draw attention from, and form networks with, potential donors and allies so that he could return to Tibet with more political leverage.

Additionally, through commercial advertisements (of the initiations and related merchandise) in print media and public notices installed around the cities, the publicity and openness of the Kālacakra initiations contributed significantly to the local economies of the hosting sites. From the donor lists of the initiations we can see that, besides the larger and more established shops that were commissioned to supply Buddhist images and offerings, there were also many smaller vendors and artisans who profited from the events.<sup>138</sup> The public sphere of the Kālacakra initiations thus has an essential public economic expression that must not be overlooked.

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<sup>137</sup> Hauser, 32.

<sup>138</sup> MFZ Vol. 13: 475-660.

It is also interesting to see that regardless of what the donors and the Panchen Lama's political stakes were in the Kālacakra initiations, the general attendees and the media did indeed express a considerable interest in the religious expressions of the Kālacakra initiations. Many members of the audience attended on their own without official invitations and even traveled for days just to be in proximity to the ritual. The question then is: what attracted tens of thousands of people of various ethnicities, nationalities, and social backgrounds to attend the Kālacakra initiations?

The answer to that question seems to lie in the messianic message contained in the *Kālacakratantra*, as well as a popular desire for the continuity of Buddhist (mythic) history and tradition. What drove tens of thousands of attendees to participate in the Kālacakra initiations was perhaps that many of them felt connected to both the apocalyptic future that the *tantra* describes and the promising solutions that the Panchen Lama can offer, especially in desperate times of war, disasters, political instabilities, and increasing global conflict.

José Cabezón has pointed out, "it is not uncommon [at least in Tibetan tantric ritual practices] to find nonmonastic, institutionally unaffiliated, and illiterate individuals, including women, engaged in highly specialized, complex enlightenment-directed practices."<sup>139</sup> For Buddhists, Tibetan, Chinese, or Mongolian, rituals have been magical and pragmatic technologies used to solve problems in everyday life. Cabezón explains, "rituals are not only considered useful, but they are also often seen as indispensable to success in a variety of human affairs. They are enacted not only once calamity strikes, but also to avert mishap in the first place."<sup>140</sup>

It may be that many simply believed in the extraordinary ritual potency of the *Kālacakratantra* heralded by esteemed members of society and the unequalled pedigree and religious authority of the Panchen Lama to perform its initiations. Gray Tuttle confirms this reading in his article, "Tibet as the Source of Messianic Teachings to Save Republican China" (2008). He says that the Ninth Panchen Lama and his writings on the benefits of the Kālacakra initiations were influential precisely "because these teachings offered salvation to a people literally desperate, hopeless, about their situation."<sup>141</sup> In his reading of the Panchen Lama's writings, Tuttle identifies "a powerful psychological position" that the Panchen Lama occupied in the Chinese imaginations of Tibet.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>139</sup> José Ignacio Cabezón, "Introduction," in *Tibetan Ritual*, eds. José Ignacio Cabezón (Oxford University Press, 2010), 19-20.

<sup>140</sup> Cabezón, 21.

<sup>141</sup> Gray Tuttle, "Tibet as the Source of Messianic Teachings to Save Republican China: The Ninth Panchen Lama, Shambhala and the Kālacakra Tantra," in *Images of Tibet in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries Volume I*, eds. Monica Esposito (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2008), 320.

<sup>142</sup> Tuttle, 320.

The power of the messianic message of the *Kālacakra* was felt perhaps even stronger amongst the Mongols in Inner Mongolia, who revered the Panchen Lama not only as one of the top leaders in the Gelug Buddhist tradition, a tradition that the Mongols have shared with the Tibetans for centuries, but as the future king of Śambhala. If the people of the Republic of China were mainly concerned with aggressions from Japan and the Western imperial powers, then the Inner Mongolians were increasingly feeling threatened by not only the imperialists, but also forced colonization and agriculturalization of the steppes under the Chinese warlords, not to mention also the hostility coming from socialist Outer Mongolia and Soviet Russia. The ritual magic of the unusual but superior *Kālacakra* empowerments delivered by one of the most powerful Lamas in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition would have been indeed incredibly empowering.

Tradition, pedigree, (mythic) history, and their uninterrupted continuation was integral to ensure the authenticity and efficacy of the *Kālacakra* initiations. The popular audience, both in Inner Mongolia and China, reacted to this continuity and the Panchen Lama delivered. Gray Tuttle remarks that, "... the Panchen Lama embraced traditional patterns of interactions, in which Buddhist unity with Chinese or Mongols was paramount, and what was good and desirable was judged by Buddhist standards and not modern enlightenment schemes."<sup>143</sup> Tuttle explains that rather than offering his audience new interpretations or revisions of Tibetan Buddhism as modern or as part of pan-Asian Buddhism, the Panchen Lama instead insisted on the continued significance of previous models of identity and social relations.<sup>144</sup> Tuttle argues that the reason why the Panchen Lama made the choice to insist on continuity and was immune from Western-originated discourses of modernity was "because their homeland had not been compromised by colonization... few of these [modern] expectations were fulfilled or even deemed desirable, whether by the elite or the populace at large."<sup>145</sup>

While this might be the case, Fabienne Jagou reminds us in her studies on the Ninth Panchen Lama that the Tibetan monk and leader was not as "immune" to modernity as we might have assumed. In a proposal that the Panchen Lama sent to Huang Musong (黄慕松), the new director of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission at the time in March 1935, the Lama requested material aid and funding of no less than 100 million *yuan* for a development project involving educational infrastructure and communication networks for Tibet.<sup>146</sup> For education, the Panchen Lama wanted his young fellow Tibetans to learn Tibetan and Chinese, which was understood by him as the synonym for industrial development and economic and social progress.<sup>147</sup> He also proposed the creation of post offices equipped with radio

<sup>143</sup> Tuttle, 308.

<sup>144</sup> Tuttle, 308.

<sup>145</sup> Tuttle, 307.

<sup>146</sup> Jagou, 126-127.

<sup>147</sup> Jagou, 127.

transmitters in all the main districts in Tibet along with the assistance of Chinese technicians and experts to supervise over these projects.<sup>148</sup>

It seems possible that the Panchen Lama's choice to insist on the continuity of tradition and identities especially in the Kālacakra initiations was less based on his own disposition towards modernity, but more on the popular demand for the optics of tradition. The Lama was not completely uninterested in engaging with modernity, as we have seen; the Kālacakra initiations were actually quite revolutionary in their engagement with the general population as a public sphere of communal experience and discourse. The use of modern technology and media to promote, record, and broadcast the Kālacakra initiations were also not opposed by the Panchen Lama himself. Tradition, lineage, and temporal and spatial continuity (both going backward to the historic Buddha in India and also forward to the future triumph of the kingdom of Śambhala) were emphasized over more “modern” takes on Buddhism because these are essential to the integrity and efficacy of the messianic metanarrative and its success with the masses.

### Esoteric Rituals as Places for Public Discourse

On the other hand, the messianic promise of the *Kālacakratantra* was not the only thing that attracted popular attention. Many who attended were not practicing Buddhists nor individuals interested in seeking refuge under the Three Jewels. Many of the commentators who wrote publicly about the Kālacakra initiations participated to observe; they reported on the spectacle of the ritual and often commented with a modernist critical stance. This means that the Kālacakra initiations also served as public spheres for discussions, debates, and even critiques on Tibetan esoteric Buddhism. Some of these discussions centered on the authenticity of Buddhist *tantras*, some explored the efficacy of the Kālacakra initiations, some doubted the motives of the organizers, while others questioned the place of religion in the public sphere in general. These discussions and critiques reflect not only a level of public engagement with the Tibetan Buddhist ritual, but also a distrust with the new Republican government, as well as a kind of anxiety towards the popularity of such a religious activity on a national scale and its place in the new modern nation.

In Luo Tongbing's article, “The Reformist Monk Taixu and the Controversy about Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism in Republican China” (2008), he illustrates the debate between Jing Changji (景昌極) of the China Institute of Buddhism and the reformist monk Taixu (太虛) on the authenticity of *tantras* and the Kālacakra initiations. As a proponent of exoteric Buddhism, Jing believed that *tantras* are “a mélange of superstition and deceptive metaphysics, which led to strained interpretations and

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<sup>148</sup> Jagou, 127.

false analogies.”<sup>149</sup> In defense of esoteric Buddhism, Taixu emphasized faith before historical facts, he argued in response, “Examined with common understanding and according to the history of the human world, the esoteric *mantras* are just as unreliable as are the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* and the *Yogācārya-bhūmi-śāstra* with their unverifiable myths. However, Buddhism is grounded on the inconceivable fruit of Buddhahood and other saintly fruits. Only those who have attained the fruit of Buddhahood can judge the authenticity of the Buddhist Dharma.”<sup>150</sup> Taixu continues, “If we can accept with faith the doctrines and then practice, sooner or later we can attain the fruits.”<sup>151</sup>

While Buddhists like Jing Changji and Taixu debated on the authenticity of *tantras* from exoteric or esoteric positions from within the tradition, non-Buddhists called into question the validity of religious rituals in the “age of science.” A writer named You Qing (又青) challenged official publications of the Kālacakra initiations on the efficacy of the rituals in an article entitled, “Oh! Kālacakra Initiations” published in the *People’s Weekly*. The author writes,

Apparently the Kālacakra initiations were believed to summon gods to dispel disasters, and to protect the nation from humiliation. Ah! Humans have already evolved from the age of the gods to the age of science; the Japanese enemies are relying on the newest weapons and have invaded us, while our outdated elites and dull scholars are here indoctrinating us with their esoteric Buddhism, performing tricks revering spirits and gods. They are cursed by time, laughed at by science, made fun of by our enemies – this is the most unwise!<sup>152</sup>

Following these series of accusations, the author continues and counts the times that the Panchen Lama’s ritual magic had failed. The first time was when the Nanking warlord Sun Chuanfang (孫傳芳) and his military clique lost the battle during the Northern Expedition in 1926; they had been blessed by the Panchen Lama prior at the Zhaoqing Temple (昭慶寺) in Hangzhou. The second time was when the territory of Jehol was lost to the Japanese soon after the Kālacakra Initiation took place in Beijing. The author laments, “This third time [in Hangzhou], what kind of disaster would he bring!”<sup>153</sup>

In another article published in the *People’s Weekly*, the Kālacakra initiations’ donors and their motives were heavily criticized. In the piece “Perspectives on

<sup>149</sup> Luo Tongbing, “The Reformist Monk Taixu and the Controversy about Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism in Republican China,” in *Images of Tibet in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries Volume I*, eds. Monica Esposito (Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 2008), 451.

<sup>150</sup> Luo, 451.

<sup>151</sup> Luo, 451.

<sup>152</sup> You Qing 又青, “Minghu shilun jingang fahui” 嗚呼時輪金剛法會[Oh! Kālacakra Initiations], *Renmin zhoubao* 人民週報, 119(1934), 10.

<sup>153</sup> You, 10.

the Kālacakra Initiations,” a writer named Shen Bozhan (沈伯展) questioned the intention behind the rituals:

Last year, the Panchen Lama set up a ritual in Beijing for the sake of world peace and the elimination of national disasters using the power of the Buddha. But the result on world peace and national disaster was miniscule and irrelevant. This year, Duan Qirui and these liars wish to deceive yet again under the slogans of “peace,” “ending suffering,” “praying for fortune,” “eliminating disasters,” and “praying better rebirths for the deceased.” This is nothing but another scam enabling our ignorant and degenerate countrymen to lie to themselves.<sup>154</sup>

As for the “true” motive behind Duan Qirui’s organization of the Kālacakra initiations, the writer claims that Duan aimed to use the Kālacakra initiations to “reverse the progress of the evolution of society,” and that this act is “counter-revolutionary.”<sup>155</sup>

Moreover, there were public voices that interrogated the effects that the Kālacakra initiations had on public life, as well as the role religion should (or should not) play in the public sphere. Shen Shanhong (沈善鉉) commented in an article called “The Absurdity of the Kālacakra Initiations”:

Subjectively speaking, the Kālacakra initiations do not involve conspiracies and they support religious freedom. Objectively speaking, however, how many people in our under-educated nation today have enough knowledge to make [sound] judgements? For the common uneducated citizen, concepts such as “scientification” (C: *kexuehua* 科學化) and “new lifestyle” (C: *xinshenghuo* 新生活) have not yet taken roots. Sirs and gentlemen, [such as Dai Jitao] who are important politicians, educators, and military leaders, should be models for the rest of us. However, they have subconsciously influenced so many people’s mentalities [through participating in the Kālacakra initiations] and have led us onto the path of degeneration.<sup>156</sup>

Continuing their remarks on the intrusion of religion in the supposedly secular, scientific, and modern public sphere, the author further doubts the function of religion in the fight with imperialist aggressions. Shen writes: “For these cold-blooded imperialists, can you sway them with humanitarianism? Will you be able to call on “gods” or “Buddhas” to subdue them?... The only path in our future is to disengage

<sup>154</sup> Shen Bozhan 沈伯展, “Shilun jingang fahui di toushi” 時輪金剛法會底透視[Perspectives on the Kālacakra Initiations], *Renmin zhoubao* 人民週報, 119(1934), 3.

<sup>155</sup> Shen Bozhan, 6.

<sup>156</sup> Shen Shanhong 沈善鉉, “Huangmiu juelun de shilun jingang fahui” 荒謬絕倫的時輪金剛法會[The Absurdity of the Kālacakra Initiations], *Renmin zhoubao* 人民週報, 119(1934), 13.



their weapons through “iron” and “blood.” Then can we put down our weapons and drive the world into a cycle of peace.”<sup>157</sup>

It is not difficult to see that many of these discussions and criticisms directed at the Kālacakra initiations were made with the assumption that modern nation-states, such as the Republic of China, should have a certain kind of separation between religion and politics, and this is based on another assumption that a modern secular society is necessarily a more “progressed” one. Due to the high-profiled nature of the Kālacakra initiations, they became obvious and accessible arenas for public discourses on religion and modernity. It seems that while there was a critical awareness of the esoteric Tibetan Buddhist ritual, what is really revealed in these modernist critiques is a sense of disappointment and disillusionment with the new modern Republic, the corruption of their leaders, and the ineffectiveness of the government at addressing imperialist aggressions and invasions.

### Can Esoteric Rituals be Public?

But in an emic sense, can the esoteric ritual of the Kālacakra initiation be public? What does it mean to make the esoteric public?

The *Kālacakratantra* and its commentary, the *Vimalaprabhā* do warn potential practitioners of the high stakes of not having the appropriate prerequisites for tantric initiations. For example, studying under a tantric teacher without the necessary qualifications can lead to sufferings in hell.<sup>158</sup> The pledge of secrecy was also one of the necessary prerequisites for the appropriate practice of *tantras*. Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim points out that in the *Vajrāvalī*, for example, the pledge of secrecy is repeated four times and fearsome threats are issued for those who fail to do so.<sup>159</sup>

However, even if secrecy had been important to the Kālacakra tradition, it has certainly evolved to be more open and flexible. In the chapter “Kālacakra in transition: From the Apocalypse to the Promotion of World Peace,” Katja Rakow clarifies that the Kālacakra initiation is actually meant for the public. She says,

This contradiction may at first sight seem rather irritating in the light of the esoteric character of those *annutara-yoga-tantras* and their required preliminary practices and preparations. Yet there is a sort of ‘mass initiation’ in the Kālacakra scriptures themselves when King Yaśas taught an abridged version of the *Kālacakratantra* to all the inhabitants of the kingdom of Śambhala and thereby unified all the Brahman families within one single Buddhist *vajra* clan.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Shen Shanhong, 13-14.

<sup>158</sup> Wallace, 10.

<sup>159</sup> Yoeli-Tlalim, 435.

<sup>160</sup> Katja Rakow, “Kālacakra in Transition: From the Apocalypse to the Promotion of World Peace,” in *Transformations and Transfer of Tantra in Asia and Beyond*, eds. István Keul (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 425.

It therefore seems that the Kālacakra texts do not clearly oppose the opposite of secrecy. However, Rakow adds, “Although public tantric initiations could be found as early as in the eleventh century, the mass initiation into the *Kālacakratantra* are probably a recent phenomenon.”<sup>161</sup>

Regardless of what the *Kālacakratantra*’s prohibitions might have been for mass/public tantric initiations, secrecy certainly was not a commonly debated issue for the nine Kālacakra initiations given by the Ninth Panchen Lama. On the contrary, the openness and public nature of the rituals were often applauded as indications of the Lama’s compassion and altruism. This opinion is echoed in more contemporary Kālacakra initiations given by renowned Tibetan teachers such as the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

In Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim’s studies of contemporary Kālacakra empowerments, she has observed a series of changes that the ritual has taken on. These include: a redefinition of secrecy, a move from personal initiations to group initiations, initiations for lay practitioners, and the interpretation of various physical aspects of the ritual as symbolic.<sup>162</sup> With the appearance of more publications on Kālacakra teachings in various Western languages, Yoeli-Tlalim notes, the restriction of revealing texts only to the initiated has in effect become less plausible.<sup>163</sup> The Fourteenth Dalai Lama has also adopted similar pragmatic approaches to esoteric teachings. Yoeli-Tlalim argues that “his policy maintains a preference to publicize accurate and authentic teachings rather than to face the proliferation of teachings which are fundamentally wrong.”<sup>164</sup>

It is interesting that many of the observable changes made in contemporary Kālacakra practices, such as the redefinition of secrecy, group initiations and initiations for lay practitioners were in fact key features in the Kālacakra initiations that the Ninth Panchen Lama performed in the early twentieth century. What does this say about the role Tibetan Buddhism played in the post-imperium spaces of early twentieth-century East Asia? What does this tell us about Buddhist tantric rituals in the modern?

### **Tibetan Gelug Buddhism in Post-Imperium Modern East Asia:**

Through investigating the case of the Ninth Panchen Lama’s Kālacakra initiations, it has been revealed that the tantric rituals were sponsored by politically affluent donors and were highly visible public events that garnered considerable media publicity. This tells us that there were immense interests in the Panchen Lama, the Kālacakra rituals, and Tibetan Buddhism in general. These interests were there for three main reasons: the geopolitical significance of Tibet in early twentieth-century East Asia; Tibetan

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<sup>161</sup> Rakow, 425.

<sup>162</sup> Yoeli-Tlalim, 435.

<sup>163</sup> Yoeli-Tlalim, 435.

<sup>164</sup> Yoeli-Tlalim, 435.

Buddhism's believed proximity to Indian Buddhism; and the promised soteriological benefits of Tibetan tantric Buddhism in messianic metanarratives.

In the post-Qing ruins of Inner and East Asia, Tibet played a crucial role in geopolitics. Being the heartland of Gelug Buddhism, Tibet was both the guru and the ally to the Buddhist Mongols in Inner Mongolia. Having the Ninth Panchen Lama, who had considerable religious and political capital, on their side meant having the ability to assemble and mobilize populations. Recognizing these historic ties between the Tibetans and the Mongols, the Ninth Panchen Lama and the Tibetan Buddhist institution that he stood for were seen as keys to the construction of the new nation-state for the Republic of China, who replaced the Qing empire but still sought ways to retain the territorial claims of the fallen supremacy. Tibetan Buddhism and its expressions were thus tools that could be used to promote the allegiance of ethnic minorities and for making territorial claims at the frontiers.

Tibetan Buddhism was also part of a larger pan-Asian tantric revival movement mainly propelled by modern Chinese Buddhists and Japanese Buddhists, who were to a large extent inspired by both modernity and the academic studies of Buddhism in the West. In this revival movement, Tibet came to be known as the last stronghold that preserved the most complete and the most sublime tantric teachings of the Buddha. In the movement's search for the "lost *tantras*," Tibet and its comprehensive esoteric Buddhist traditions became desirable and arguably superior to the "incomplete" esoteric Buddhist traditions of China and Japan. Tibetan Buddhism was seen as more authentically close to the legacies of Indian Buddhism. The continuity of "uninterrupted transmission" from India gave Tibetan Buddhism a pedigree that held substantial religious capital for the tradition.

Tantric texts that were preserved in Tibetan Buddhism, such as the *Kālacakratantra* and its associated practices, provided metanarratives using Buddhist cosmology to explain suffering, war, disorder, and even imperialism in the post-imperium spaces of modern East Asia. These metanarratives summoned Buddhist understandings of time and space. Through the *tantra*'s unique trajectories and locations of history, the causes of modern suffering were articulated through *karma* and *Dharma*, while the future was prophesized through the messianic promise of the victorious kingdom of Śambhala. Rituals that embodied these metanarratives, such as the Kālacakra initiations, provided arenas for the soteriological and intellectual concerns of the public.

On a broader level, these nine Kālacakra initiations unveil the fact that Tibetan Buddhism, especially Gelug Buddhism, was highly transregional, trans-ethnonational, and even international in the first few decades of the twentieth century. More specifically, while the Kālacakra initiations were conducted as "national" rituals serving the spiritual needs of imagined communities, at the same time, their purpose and efficacy were meant to be directed across and beyond borders and frontiers. These "borders" were physical; for example, borders that mark the divide between Inner

Mongolia and Outer Mongolia, and margins that trace the contours of the Republic of China. In order to promote harmony between the “five nationalities” and ethnic minorities, the ritual function has to cross these physical boundaries to reach their diverse audiences.

The “borders” can also be abstract, such as the demarcation between the private and the public. For the publicity of the Kālacakra initiations to be established so that they can serve various purposes and engender different opportunities, traditional limits of the tantric relationship between teacher and disciple must be removed and secrecy redefined. These changes enacted by the Nine Panchen Lama and his donors were exactly what assisted the inclusivity of the Kālacakra initiations – the rituals were able to offer various kinds of benefits to different groups of people, transcending social confinements and class categories. Without the publicity and openness of the Kālacakra initiations, groups of people that would normally be excluded from tantric initiations, such as women, common citizens, non-Buddhists, children, and international attendees would not be able to participate like they did.

In this sense, the agents of Tibetan Buddhism were diverse, and they had the agencies to participate and interpret its practices, such as the Kālacakra initiations, in their own creative ways. Regardless of what the *Kālacakratantra* and other canonical sources teach, participants of the rituals with different language and religious backgrounds often interpreted the initiations in their own unique ways. Some expressed a firm belief in the cosmological analysis and soteriological guarantees of the *Kālacakratantra*; some raised questions about its authenticity. Some advocated for the Kālacakra initiations as timely solutions for geopolitical problems and national moral crises; while others argued against the Kālacakra initiations, challenging its place in a modern society marked by “progress,” “enlightenment,” and “science.”

The agents that were involved with Tibetan Buddhism in this period were diverse also in terms of gender and ethnicities. Tibetan Buddhism, especially Gelug Buddhism, was not an essentially “Tibetan” Buddhism, but really a rich tradition shared amongst many ethnicities and races. The Kālacakra initiations were supported by Tibetans, Mongols, Han Chinese, Japanese, and interested individuals from the West. Women played major roles in early twentieth-century Tibetan Buddhism as well. As we have seen from the descriptions of women’s participations in the Kālacakra initiations, although they rarely appeared as monastics or established tantric yoginis, many of them contributed financially as avid donors and participated passionately as lay devotees. Again, without the enabled visibility of the religious rituals, the presence of these women would easily have been erased in official, canonical histories and writings.

Just as the diverse attendees of the Kālacakra initiations had creative agencies of interpretation and participation, the rituals themselves had agencies of their own in terms of affective power. Beyond the agencies and powers of the Panchen Lama and

the donors, the rituals often took on lives of their own, especially when made public. This agency of the rituals lies in a kind of affective power that had the ability to evoke all kinds of imaginations and interpretations about what esoteric Buddhism is and what its powers are, as well as nostalgic imaginations about what the “lost esoteric Buddhism” used to be. The rituals invoke the participants to feel the intimacy of shared lineages and the patriotism of protecting one’s country. They elicit from the audience desires of a peaceful nation safeguarded by legendary tantric masters of the past, and the hopefulness of an auspicious suffering-less future in victorious Śambhala.

The affective power that Tibetan Buddhist rituals had over large modern audiences in the twentieth century shows that contrary to the orientalist image of secluded monastic communities up in the Himalayas, Tibetan Buddhism very much engaged with modernity on the ground. Modern warfare and colonialism were rationalized through Buddhist cosmology, and the souls of dead citizens and soldiers sent into better rebirths through Buddhist rites of passage. Buddhist ritualists such as the Panchen Lama insisted on the continuity of Buddhist rituals such as the Kālacakra initiations to be technologies of statecraft for even modern states founded upon Western notions of democracy, science, and progress. For many Buddhist agents involved in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the nature of harm and conflicts might change with the turns of history, the potency of Buddhist rituals, especially tantric rituals with esteemed lineage connections to India and the magical kingdom of Śambhala, perseveres.

At the same time, it has been shown in our previous discussions that although the donors and participants of the Kālacakra Initiations were citizens of modern nation-states, most of them were not secular moderns. Indeed, there were also demands for the continuity of tradition, lineage, and narratives of a Buddhist cosmological time. These demands reflect desires for the assurance of authenticity, efficacy, and potency. The Ninth Panchen Lama and the Kālacakra practices responded to these demands for continuity and still managed to be revolutionarily inclusive with regard to their audience. Modern technologies and media were also embraced and strategically applied in ways that did not contradict with the immutability of continuity.

Lastly, the Kālacakra initiations served as great case studies of how Tibetan Buddhist rituals functioned as public spheres that facilitated public discourses on religion and modernity. The Kālacakra initiations became topics of fascination and objects of heated debates. The Tibetan Buddhist rituals drew out anxieties from all levels of society about national “progress” and aroused concerns about the mixing of religions with politics. The Panchen Lama’s exiled presence raised awareness for ethnic diversity and alliance, while also sparking state-sponsored programs to boost ethnic “unity” and “harmony.” Following this point on rituals as a place of public discourse, it is necessary to address the fact that although many women did participate in the Kālacakra initiations and might have written on the rituals anonymously or

using pen names to contribute to the larger conversation, the rituals themselves as well as the public discussions seem to remain mainly male-oriented and elitist. The lack of inclusivity of women and individuals from lower socio-economic classes should challenge the definition of the “public” in our context, as Nancy Fraser has pointed out in her critique of Habermas’ “public spheres.”<sup>165</sup>

Although this paper has attempted to offer a comprehensive discussion on the Kālacakra initiations performed by the Ninth Panchen Lama in the early twentieth-century, there are still many things that this paper was not able to touch on, given the dearth of primary materials that I had access to, such as how the Kālacakra initiations were carried out in Inner Mongolia, the details of these ritual processes and their economics. Sources are also lacking with regard to the Ninth Panchen Lama’s personal opinions about the rituals and their unprecedented attendance and public attention. I anticipate with excitement for future scholarships on these points.

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