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Culture, Courtiers, and Competition

The Ming Court (1368–1644)

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EIGHT

The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols

David M. Robinson

When the Mongol empire collapsed in the fourteenth century after roughly 150 years of hegemony in Eurasia (circa 1200–1350), it bequeathed a complex legacy of political institutions, global trade networks, and notions of rulership. The way each of its successor polities dealt with this legacy reveals much about the particular polity and about Eurasia as a whole. This chapter examines how the Ming imperial family dealt with the Mongol Yuan legacy.

The Mongols created the greatest land empire known to Asia. Although established at a steep price in death and destruction, each of the *uluses*, or khanates, that constituted the greater empire eventually wrung acknowledgment from local peoples that it was a legitimate dynasty or polity.

The present chapter adumbrates points that are developed and documented in greater detail in a full-length study tentatively entitled *The Ming Court in Eurasia*. I am grateful to Fuma Susumu and Sugiyama Masaaki of Kyoto University for the opportunity to present a version of this essay at the International Order and Exchange in East Asia, Second International Symposium. In addition to acknowledging my great debt for the many fruitful observations offered by the participants of the Ming Court Culture conference, I would also like to thank the following people for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this essay: Thomas Allsen, Christopher Atwood, Craig Clunas, Johan Elverskog, Shen Weirong, Gray Tuttle, and the two anonymous readers for the press. Their suggestions, corrections, and bibliographic help have saved me from many embarrassing mistakes. The credit for all remaining gaffs and blunders is entirely my own.

Scholars debate the overall impact of Mongol rule on the living conditions of people throughout Eurasia. None, however, contests that the Mongol courts of Dadu, Shangdu, Sultaniyya, and Saray were renowned throughout the world as centers of wealth, learning, power, religion, and lavish spectacle.¹ The Mongols established standards by which future rulers in Eurasia would measure themselves. This was especially true during the turbulent decades following the collapse of the Mongol empire. Whatever other indigenous traditions rulers exploited for legitimacy and power, the Mongols and their legacy represented a critical source of political capital for ambitious dynasties across Eurasia. No one who aspired to power at home or on the greater stage of Eurasia could ignore that repository of imperial glory.

During the latter half of the fourteenth century, perhaps the most influential Mongol successor in Eurasia was Temür (d. 1405; better known in the West as Tamerlane), who confronted the limitations and advantages of the Mongol legacy as he strove to conquer Central Asia and much of the Middle East. As Beatrice Forbes Manz has observed, “The achievements of the Chinggisid dynasty had given it a unique charisma, and according to the traditions of the Mongol empire accepted throughout Temür’s dominions, only Chinghis Qan’s descendents could adopt the title of Qan and aspire to sovereign power.” Temür then “adopted the pose of the Chinggisid line, installing a puppet khan and ruling in his name. He further acquired the title of royal son-in-law, *güregen*, by virtue of his marriage to a princess of the Chinggisid line.”² As Manz points out elsewhere, by representing himself as a defender of the rights of the Mongol ruling houses, Temür thus lay “claim potentially to the whole of the former Mongol empire.”³

The early Ottoman and Rus empires also sought to gain legitimacy and charisma from association with the Mongol empire. Charles Halperin has noted that although Muscovy’s variety of Christian rhetoric did not allow open acknowledgment of the legitimacy of infidel Mongol rule, the court nevertheless “foster[ed] its image as the successor state to the Golden

1. For descriptions of culture at the Ilkhanate courts, see Komaroff and Carboni, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*. For the Mongol capitals during the Yuan, see Ye Xinmin, *Yuan Shangdu yanjiu*; Shi Weimin, *Dushizhong de youmumin*; and Chen Gaohua, *Yuan Dadu*. On Sarai, see Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, p. 123.

2. Manz, *Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, p. 14.

3. Manz, “Temür and the Problem of a Conqueror’s Legacy,” p. 25.

Horde and . . . remain[ed] sensitive to steppe traditions of rule.”⁴ Michael Khodarkovsky similarly argues, “Throughout the sixteenth century, the assumption that Moscow was one of the successors of the Golden Horde served both to justify its expansion southward and eastward and to legitimate its conquests. . . . Moscow derived its legitimacy simultaneously from . . . the Christian tradition of Byzantium and the secular tradition of the Golden Horde.”⁵ According to Manz, “Even regions which had not been within the Mongol empire were engaged with the Mongol legacy. The Delhi Sultans, the Ottomans, the Mamluks, and the Turkmen dynasties of western Iran were conscious of their origins in the steppe and formulated their genealogical and political claims with an eye to Mongol traditions.”⁶

How did the fledgling Ming dynasty view the Mongols’ powerful legacy? An oft-repeated passage that appeared with slight variation in many Ming- and Qing-period documents would suggest a clear rejection of the Mongols. “The Grand Progenitor [the Hongwu emperor] drove off the barbarian caitiffs and restored the Central Florescence.”⁷ Indeed, in scores of edicts and laws, the Ming founder stressed his commitment to purifying the realm of the Mongols’ polluting influence.⁸ His subjects were no longer to speak Mongolian, wear Mongolian hats or gowns, follow Mongol marriage or burial practices, or play Mongolian tunes.⁹ The founder declared his intention to

4. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, pp. 100–102; quotation appears on p. 100. Halperin further observes, “Through the seventeenth century Moscow continued to play upon its tentative status as the Horde’s successor in dealing with Inner Asian peoples, and, less often, European powers” (p. 102). See also Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols*, pp. 177–88.

5. M. Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500–1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 222; cited in Gammer, “Russia and the Eurasian Steppe Nomads,” p. 492.

6. Manz (“Temür and the Problem of a Conqueror’s Legacy,” p. 22) continues, “The influence of the steppe in the Middle East was not limited to the abstract. Miniatures and album illustrations show nomads living in the felt yurts of the steppe and wearing a wide variety of clothing and headgear. Along with the turban and the robe, we find feathers, felt, and skins.”

7. For an early articulation, see *Taizu shilu* (hereafter cited as TZSL), 26.10b.

8. Farmer, *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation*; Gao Shouxian, “Hongwu shiqi de shehui jiaoyu yu yifeng yisu.” As Gao (p. 90) notes, Zhu Yuanzhang blamed many abuses, not just deviations from Chinese ideals, on the Yuan.

9. For reference to the Yuan’s “complete abolition of ancient music” and the “mutual distortion of the sounds of the barbarian caitiff and the pure music [of the Central Plains],” see TZSL, 66.6a. For early Ming prohibitions against various Mongol customs,

restore the past glories of true Chinese custom and the political institutions of the Han (206 BCE–220 CE) and Tang (618–907). In an apparent rejection of the Mongols' renowned expansionism and active encouragement of foreign trade, Hongwu explicitly instructed his descendents to restrict incursions into neighboring states and limited private trade and contact.

As many studies have shown, this strand of rhetoric and policy did not comprehend the full complexity of the early Ming court's attitudes toward the Yuan legacy.¹⁰ With often only minor changes, Hongwu adopted major aspects of the Yuan institutional apparatus, including the hereditary garrison system and the hereditary occupation system in general.¹¹ He attempted to absorb areas conquered by the Mongols but not previously under Chinese control, such as Yunnan, Liaodong, and even parts of Mongolia.¹² In many edicts, he fully acknowledged the legitimacy of the Great Yuan *ulus*.¹³ He recruited Mongol military personnel into his government and armies and sought to continue Yuan practices that brought Korean women and eunuchs into the imperial household. Thus, the Ming dynasty was in many ways a true successor to the Great Yuan *ulus*.¹⁴ In addition to using Confucian, Buddhist, Daoist, and other native traditions, Hongwu wished to exploit the powerful Yuan legacy to legitimate his rule within Ming territories and throughout Eurasia.

see Serruys, "Remains of Mongol Customs," pp. 148–90; and Gao Shouxian, "Hongwu shiqi de shehui jiaoyu yu yifeng yisu," pp. 89–90.

10. For concise analysis, see Miyazaki Ichisada, "Kōbu kara Eiraku e," pp. 19–20. As Wu Han noted more than half a century ago, not until the very end of his rise to power as a rebel did Zhu Yuanzhang attempt to discredit Mongol rule on the basis of "the Sinic-barbarian divide," a rhetorical strain that would appear more frequently after he became emperor; see Wu Han, *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan*, pp. 94–99; and idem, *Mingshi jianshu*, pp. 22–24.

11. Serruys, "Remains of Mongol Customs," pp. 143–48. On the Mongol origins of the Ming hereditary military household system, see Taylor, "Yuan Origins of the Wei-so System." Serruys also notes the continued existence of the Mongol Hanlin Academy and the Muslim Bureau of Astronomy.

12. Okada Hidehiro ("China as a Successor State to the Mongols," p. 264) makes this point explicitly. For an overview of Ming military campaigns against the Mongols in the years immediately following the dynasty's establishment, see Dreyer, "Military Origins of Ming China," 7: 98–103. See also Langlois, "The Hung-wu Reign."

13. Langlois, "Introduction," pp. 14–15; Dardess, "Ming T'ai-tsu on the Yuan." On the lack of enmity toward the Mongol regime in the collected works of leading early Ming ministers, see Qian Mu, "Du Mingchu kaiguo zhuchen shiwen ji."

14. For a cogent summary of Yuan influence on Zhu Yuanzhang and his policies, see Danjō Hiroshi, "Shoki Min teikoku taiseiron."

This acute consciousness of the Yuan legacy owed much to the fact that the Great Yuan *ulus* did not simply disappear in 1368. A powerful threat to the fledgling Ming dynasty, it controlled an enormous expanse of territory north and west of China and maintained diplomatic relations with polities from the Korean Koryō dynasty to Tamerlane's regime in Central Asia. Japanese scholar Sugiyama Masaaki has provocatively termed the relationship between the Yuan and Ming the "northern and southern dynasties" to highlight the military, political, and ideological competition between the two polities.¹⁵

The Ming founder's son and third ruler, Yongle (r. 1403–24), identified even more closely with the Mongol legacy. In his classic essay "From Hongwu to Yongle," the eminent Japanese scholar Miyazaki Ichisada argued that Yongle conceived of himself as a "successor to Khubilai," who envisioned "a China not only of the Chinese but a China as the center of an East Asian community . . . in other words, [as] the revival of the Yuan empire."¹⁶ Edward Dreyer has commented that "Yongle attempted to live up to both the Chinese and the Mongol versions of the imperial

15. Sugiyama Masaaki, *Mongoru teikoku no kōbō*, 2: 223–24. Sugiyama provides a thought-provoking map of the "northern and southern dynasties" on p. 224. Debates at the Koryō court over ties with the Ming and Yuan illustrate the Yuan's continuing political prestige in East Asia. For recent scholarship, see Kim Tangtaek, "Koryō Uwang wōnnyōn 1375 nyōn Wōnkwā ū oegyo kwan'gye chaegae"; and To Hyōnjōl, "Koryō malgi sadaebu ūi taegoegwan." When viewed in the greater context of Eurasia, it is difficult to accept without qualification Henry Tsai's (*Perpetual Happiness*, p. 149) statement that "after Toyon Temur, the last Yuan emperor, fled Beijing in 1368, the Mongol khan was considered to have lost his mandate to rule." The Yuan court continued to use the dynastic title of Great Yuan until at least 1388. As late as the mid-fifteenth century, the Oirat leader Esen evoked the Yuan legacy, calling himself Khan of the Great Yuan; see Cai Meibiao, "Mingdai Menggu yu Da Yuan guohao," pp. 47–49. Cai argues that the Yuan legacy was so firmly impressed in the minds of Ming officials that Chinese interpreters' mistranslation of Dayan Khan (1464–1532) as Khan of the Great Yuan (Ch. Da Yuan han 大元汗) was widely accepted. Dayan Khan's name was Batu Möngke. Roy Andrew Miller (Goodrich and Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, pp. 17–20), in contrast, writes that "his royal style, Dayan-qayan, is a loanword version of the Chinese *ta-yüan* 大元." In either case, memories of the Mongol empire remained powerful.

16. Miyazaki Ichisada, "Kōbu kara Eiraku e," pp. 19–20. Terada Takanobu, too, paints Yongle as "a successor to Khubilai," who strove to "succeed to and reproduce the scale of the Yuan dynasty that had unified rule over Mongolia and China"; see Otagi Matsuo and Terada Takanobu, *Mongoru to Dai Min teikoku*, pp. 314–15. Morris Rossabi ("The Ming and Inner Asia," 8: 229) also notes similarities between Yongle's policies and those of "Yuan dynasty models."

ideal.”¹⁷ Most discussions of Yongle’s links with the Yuan have focused on the emperor’s intense interest in foreign relations and an expansionistic military. This chapter examines the Ming imperial family’s relation to the legacy of Khubilai as *khabghan*, khan of khans.

The Ming emperor’s identity as *khabghan* has been obscured in large part because of the nature of the documentary record available to us today, much of which was compiled by a civil bureaucracy whose interests, views, and self-perceptions often diverged significantly from those of the imperial family. To offset these biases, a variety of both documentary and non-documentary sources has proven useful. The following sections explore the imperial family’s associations with the Great Yuan *ulus* through its patronage of Tibetan Buddhism, court portraiture, Korean palace women and eunuchs within the Forbidden City, Mongol military personnel in the capital, funerary figurines from princely tombs, and porcelains with foreign inscriptions. The chapter concludes with a brief reconsideration of the early sixteenth-century emperor Zhengde (r. 1506–21) as a universal ruler and suggests that his death without an heir in 1521 (which brought a cousin raised far from the capital to the throne) weakened the Zhu imperial family’s links with Khubilai and the Mongols and marked an important shift in the orientation of the Ming court.

A few final prefatory remarks. First, not all instances of continuity between the Yuan and the Ming courts represent efforts by the Zhu family to foster an association with Khubilai and his descendents. The retention of certain practices and institutions sometimes occurred by default: an acceptance, on occasion unexamined, of existing systems. In other cases, Hongwu and his successors felt it their right to succeed to the Mongols’ position and status in East Asia. Second, as many fine studies have demonstrated, the Ming emperors drew on the state religion as well as Confucian, Buddhist, Daoist, and other native traditions in their efforts to secure legitimacy, power, and personal fulfillment. The particular features of Ming

17. Dreyer, *Early Ming China: A Political History*, pp. 173–74. Dreyer (pp. 173–74) further observes, “Yongle’s reign recalls Khubilai’s in its outstanding events: the conquest of the south, the establishment of the capital at Peking, the opening of relations with Japan, an ultimately abortive attempt to conquer Vietnam, and naval expeditions to Southeast Asian and the Indian Ocean.” For Dreyer, the Mongol and Chinese ideals led to “hopeless contradictions” and “two different sets of institutions,” which often were at loggerheads (p. 174)—the civil bureaucracy and an establishment of eunuchs and military officers. As will become clear below, the fault line was as much the authority of the imperial family versus that of its various competitors as civil versus military.

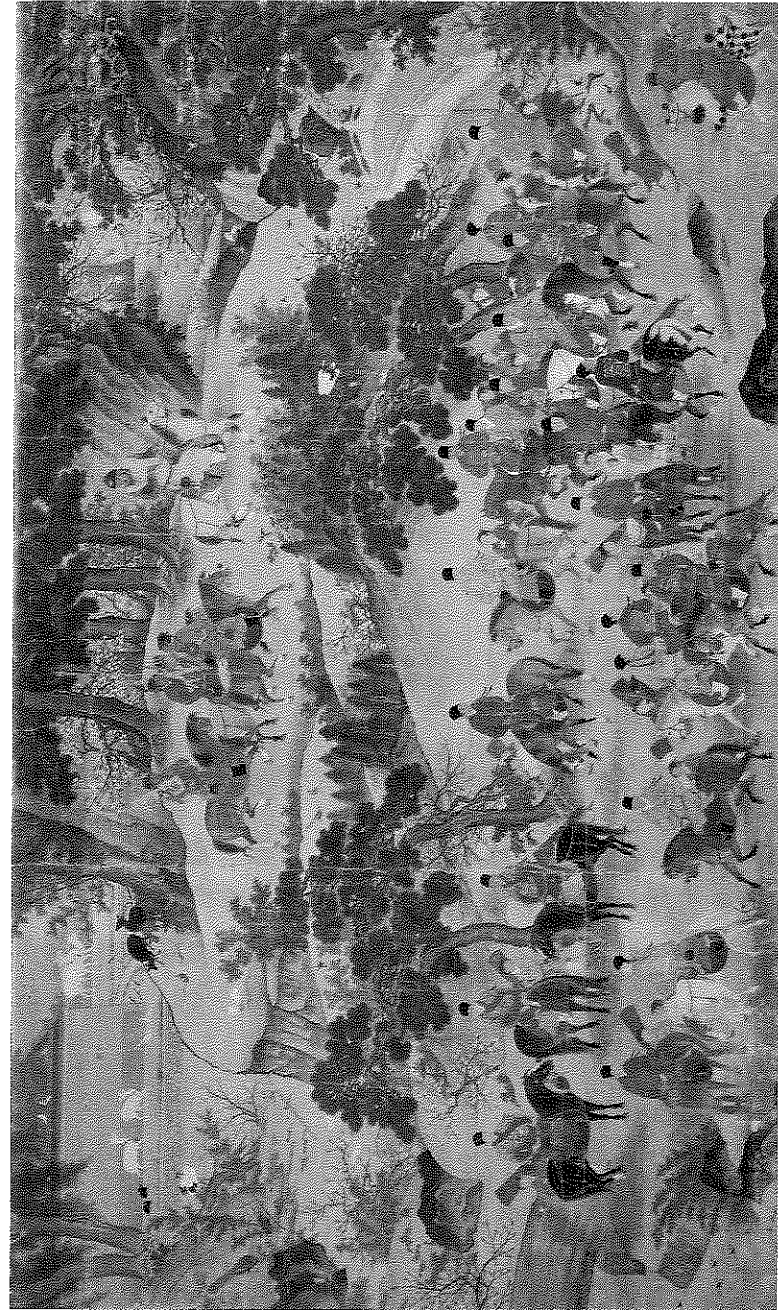


Fig. 8.1 Shang Xi 商喜. *The Xuande Emperor's Pleasures*. Fifteenth century, ink and color on silk, 221 x 333 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

court culture examined in this chapter were chosen because they illustrate the sustained influence of the Mongols, not because they represent the entirety of imperial court culture. The association with Khubilai and the Mongol empire was but one facet among many other, more familiar aspects of Ming imperial identity. Finally, as the chapters in this volume demonstrate, the tone and dynamics of each reign varied considerably. There was no monolithic Ming imperial style. Even during the first half of the dynasty, the importance and understanding of the Mongol legacy varied according to the particular circumstances of individual emperors, court dynamics, and developments on the steppe.¹⁸

Tibetan Buddhism at the Ming Court

Lavish patronage of Tibetan Buddhism formed an important facet of the Ming imperial family's identity as successors to the Mongol *khaghans*. Hand in hand with the extension of Mongol influence into the kingdoms of Xixia and Tibet during the thirteenth century went the growing presence of Tibetan Buddhism in the Mongol court of Dadu and from there into other parts of the Mongol imperium.¹⁹ The Tibetan polymath 'Phags pa (1235–80) created an identification between Chinggis (and Khubilai) and the *cakravartin*, the universal wheel-turning king.²⁰ 'Phags pa also proved critical in introducing Tibetan Buddhist court rituals to the Mongols. Following his lead, on the fifteenth day of the second month, Dadu saw lavish processions to exorcise demons and other forms of pollution. Rituals and parades also marked the first and sixth lunar months. As Morris Rossabi has noted, "For the 'Phags pa lama, these ceremonies were meant to compete with or offer an alternative to the Confucian court ceremonies; for Khubilai, they complemented but did not supplant the Confucian rituals."²¹ We glean some sense of Yuan largesse from the amount of food allotted for Buddhist

18. These questions are considered more fully in my *The Ming Court in Eurasia*.

19. On the impact of the Xixia on the Mongols' contact with Tibetan Buddhism, see Xiong Wenbin, *Yuandai Zang Han yishu jiaoliu*, pp. 27–30. On the impact of Tibetan Buddhism on contemporaneous Japan, see Sugiyama Masaaki, *Dai Mongoru no jidai*, p. 273. On the brief Mongol patronage of Tibetan Buddhism in Persia, see Morgan, *The Mongols*, p. 58. On evidence of Tibetan Buddhism in Koryō, see Chōn Chongsōk, "Kōrai bukkyō to Gendai ramakyō to no kankei." See also Sørensen, "Lamaism in Korea During the Late Koryō Dynasty."

20. Franke, "From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God," pp. 54–69; Ishihama Yumiko, *Chibetto bukkyō sekai no rekishiteki kenkyū*, pp. 1–44.

21. Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, p. 145.

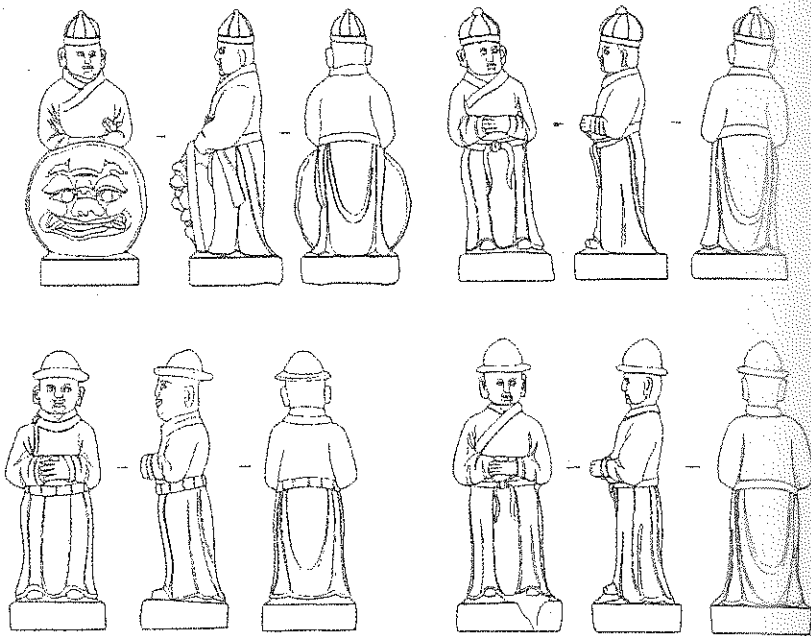


Fig. 8.9 Honor guard figurines from Shu Xiwang Prince's tomb. Fifteenth century. Chengdu Municipal Institute of Relics Preservation and Archeology.

activities within the Imperial Palace for the single year of 1317: 439,500 *jin* (one *jin* was equivalent to slightly more than one pound) of flour, 79,000 *jin* of oil, 21,870 *jin* of butter, and 27,300 *jin* of honey.²² The presence of Tibetan Buddhist monks at the Yuan court was sufficiently prominent that even West European observers noticed; Marco Polo's *Travels* mentions the monks' ability to perform such miracles as controlling the weather and levitating objects.²³

Born and raised in southern central China and eager to establish proper credentials as a Confucian ruler, the first Ming emperor nevertheless saw Tibetan Buddhist clerics as religiously efficacious and diplomatically useful. Although more familiar and more concerned with homegrown varieties of Buddhism,²⁴ Hongwu evinced interest in ceremonies and rites conducted by leading Tibetan clerics. At the same time, the Ming founder drew on Tibetan Buddhist clerics, cultural artifacts, and sutras in an effort to establish Ming influence in Tibet.²⁵ He invested various Tibetan clerics with official titles, granted them imperial audiences, and provided access to the Chinese economy in exchange for nominal acknowledgment of the Ming's privileged diplomatic position within Asia. Here the Ming founder was likely attempting to follow Yuan policies in his relations with Tibet.²⁶

Yongle's motives for his lavish patronage of Tibetan monks were perhaps even more complex. There is no reason to doubt his sincere faith in Tibetan Buddhism or his veneration of Tibetan Buddhist hierarchs. At one level, Yongle, like the Ming founder, saw support for Tibetan Buddhism as a useful medium for pursuing political and economic relations with Tibet.²⁷ Tibetan envoys regularly traveled to the Ming capitals, sojourned in the

22. Qiu Shusen, *Yuanchao jianshi*, p. 457.

23. See Ootosaka Tomoko, "Make Boluo zhuzuo zhong suo miaoshu de Zangchuan fojiao."

24. Chen Gaohua, "Zhu Yuanzhang de fojiao zhengce"; Yang Qiqiao, *Ming Qing shi jueao*, pp. 5–21.

25. Much early scholarship downplays Zhu Yuanzhang's religious engagement with Tibetan Buddhism. See, e.g., Suzuki Masashi, "Mindai teishitsu zaisei to bukkyō," p. 1336; and Ryūchi Kiyoshi, "Mindai Pekin ni okeru ramakyōdan," p. 67. Shiga Takayoshi ("Min no Seiso to Chibetto") also consistently stresses political motives over religious faith in his discussion of Hongwu and Yongle.

26. The policies were clearly not identical. Neither were the relations that obtained between the Ming and Yuan thrones with the Tibetan region. For brief comments on some of the major differences, see Wylie, "Lama Tribute in the Ming Dynasty," pp. 335–40.

27. Sperling, "Early Ming Policy Toward Tibet," pp. 155–243.

government-run hostel for the dynasty's foreign guests, and received imperial support and gifts during their stay. Yongle also periodically dispatched Tibetans staying in Beijing as his envoys to their native lands. For the next century, Ming emperors would continue all these practices.

Yongle also cultivated ties with Tibetan Buddhism as a way to establish a direct association between himself and Khubilai. Both were men who founded new polities, and both chose Beijing as the site of their new regimes. As a young prince, Yongle made extensive use of the former palaces of the Great Yuan *ulus*, palaces constructed by Khubilai little more than a century before as a way to link the steppe with the sown.²⁸ Once emperor, Yongle would establish his capital on nearly exactly the same site as the former Yuan Dadu. During his decades in Beijing, Yongle came into regular contact with many who had served at the Yuan court or in Mongol armies. Yongle was not, as is often argued, chosen to garrison the former Yuan capital because he enjoyed the special favor of his father.²⁹ However, the physical space and the continuity in personnel between his princely establishment and the Dadu palaces exercised a profound influence on Yongle's ambitions and attitudes. Contemporary Ming and Chosŏn observers regularly linked the prince's ambitions with his investiture in the former Yuan capital.³⁰

In 1407, Yongle invited the Fifth Karma pa, De bzhin gshegs pa (often referred to as Helima or Halima 哈立麻 in Chinese sources), to Nanjing to officiate over a large-scale ceremony of universal salvation in the memory of his father, the Ming founder, and his putative mother, Empress Ma.³¹ The Karma pa had been reincarnated in the same Kagyu order that had enjoyed close ties to successive Mongol courts during the Yuan period. Yongle commissioned a lavish fifty-meter-long silk handscroll in forty-nine separate sections that represented in vivid detail the many miraculous manifestations associated with the Fifth Karma pa's visit.³² Art historian Patricia Berger has argued that Yongle lavished such resources on inviting the Karma pa and creating a pictorial and pentaglotal account to provide "spiritual verification of his very muddy claims to the throne he had

28. Aramiya Manabu, "Minsho no En'ōfu o meguru shomondai," pp. 83, 88–92.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 87–88.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–83.

31. Sperling, "Early Ming Policy Toward Tibet," pp. 74–99. For a biography of the Fifth Karma pa, see Fang Jianchang, "Xizang Rulai dabao fawang kao."

32. Berger, "Miracles in Nanjing," pp. 145, 149.

usurped in 1401 from his nephew, the ill-fated Zhu Yunwen.”³³ Rumors swirled that Yongle was the product of a liaison between his father and a Korean or Mongol consort. Even more scandalous for some was the tale that he was actually the son of the last Yuan emperor to rule the Central Plains. Thus, argues Berger, Yongle felt it imperative to demonstrate his filial piety through a massive public mass for universal salvation.

When viewed from a wider Eurasian perspective, a number of additional questions arise. Why did Yongle appeal to the Fifth Karma pa rather than to an eminent Chinese Buddhist cleric?³⁴ During the early years of his reign, Hongwu had also commissioned large-scale Buddhist services in Nanjing. In 1372 as many as a thousand monks participated in a two-week series of ceremonies: the founder personally attended the opening and closing events.³⁵ Hongwu clearly wished to use Buddhism for his own purposes. He, however, felt content with Chinese monks. Moreover, why did his son Yongle order textual descriptions to accompany the painting in Chinese, Persian, Tibetan, Mongolian, and an as yet unidentified language?³⁶ Yongle was apparently invoking the Mongol Yuan legacy and speaking to a larger audience beyond the Ming state. During Yongle’s reign, echoes of this legacy were still audible. In a 1420 report of a trip to Yongle’s court in Beijing, a Timurid envoy referred to Yongle as the Dayming khan (the khan of the Great Ming) and called Beijing the Khan baliq, the “Khan’s City,” a Turkic designation for Beijing during the Mongol period that also appears in Rashid al-Din’s early fourteenth-century *Compendium of Chronicles*.³⁷

33. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

34. Yang Qiqiao (*Ming Qingshi jueao*, p. 31) suggests that Yongle’s patronage of Tibetan Buddhism followed Yuan precedents. He further holds that Yongle was motivated by the desire to bolster his position in the western border regions where Tibetan Buddhism enjoyed extensive support and by the emperor’s sincere faith in Tibetan Buddhism.

35. Chen Gaohua, “Zhu Yuanzhang de fojiao zhengce,” p. 112.

36. Berger (“Miracles in Nanjing,” p. 162) concludes that these inscriptions “serve an orderly, bureaucratic, and thoroughly Chinese purpose—the sustenance and legitimation of imperial power.” Scholars have suggested the fifth language may be Sanskrit, Uighur, Chagatai, or, most recently, Burmese. For a brief overview and a translation of the first few lines of the Mongolian text, see Matsukawa Takeshi, “Chibetto jichiku haku-butsumukan zō gogengo gappeki.”

37. Ghiyathuddin Naqqash, “Report to Mirza Baysunghur,” pp. 287, 291; Rashid al-Din, *Compendium of Chronicles*, pp. 440–41, 444–45.

Yongle’s invocation of Khubilai’s legacy, in this case by serving as a generous patron of Tibetan Buddhism, was part of his efforts to bolster his position as a legitimate ruler who would usher in dynastic unity and strength. Tibetan annals note far more explicitly than do the Chinese records the parallels between the policies proposed by Yongle and those of Khubilai khan. Yongle offered the Fifth Karma pa a relation similar to that obtaining between Khubilai and Phags pa—extensive administrative and religious authority within Tibet for the cleric in exchange for acknowledgment of Ming paramountcy. Although the Fifth Karma pa declined Yongle’s offer, the historical precedent was clear to both the Tibetans and the Ming court.³⁸ Similarly, during at least one state banquet, Yongle yielded to the Fifth Karmapa a seat superior to his own—evoking the religious student-teacher relationship between Khubilai and Phags pa.³⁹

The Mongols, and later the Qing, routinely issued multilingual proclamations to enhance their image as universal rulers. Yongle was trying to establish a similar reputation. In Tibetan versions of his invitation to a leading Tibetan cleric, Kun dga’ bkra shis, Yongle referred to himself as “the *balacakra* *vartin*, the Great Ming emperor.” As Elliott Sperling has noted, this would suggest that the emperor was laying claim to being a consecrated Buddhist sovereign, a fully justifiable claim given his religious initiation by the Fifth Karma pa.⁴⁰ Emperor as universal ruler through Tibetan initiation was a familiar practice to the contemporary Tibetan political and religious audience. One suspects that the image was equally recognizable to Mongols, Uighurs, and others of the day. Especially noteworthy is the fact that Yongle received from Kun dga’ bkra shis religious instruction involving Mahākāla and Hevajra, important tutelary deities of the Sa skya and central to the consecrations that had transformed Khubilai into a *cakravartin*.⁴¹

Yongle’s acts were open to different interpretations in different quarters. Yet the grandeur of Yongle’s vision of rulership must have been clear

38. Sperling, “Early Ming Policy Toward Tibet,” pp. 89–94.

39. Fang Jianchang, “Xizang Rulai dabao fawang kao,” p. 53.

40. Sperling, “Early Ming Policy Toward Tibet,” p. 140; He Xiaorong, “Mingdai huangdi chongfeng Zangchuan fojiao qianxi,” p. 121. According to the account in Kun dga’ bsod nams grags pa rgyal mtshan’s *Sa skya’i gdun rabs* (composed in 1629), Yongle requested to be initiated into various esoteric rites, including those of Hevajra. For a Chinese translation, see Chen Yingqing et al., *Sajia shixishi*, p. 225.

41. Franke, “From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God,” pp. 59–60; Sperling, “Early Ming Policy Toward Tibet,” p. 142.

to members of the Ming court. It neither stopped at the borders of Ming territory nor was limited to a Ming audience.⁴² He actively sought distinguished Tibetan clerics to conduct religious ceremonies for his parents, himself, and his dynasty within the imperial palace and imperially constructed temples in the capitals. He posed as a successor to Khubilai and the Yuan emperors through his dual patron and disciple relationships with leading Tibetan monks. Finally, he performed this role on an international stage. In addition to the multilingual account of the Karma pa's visit noted above, in 1407 Yongle also promulgated an edict protecting Muslim clerics within his empire written in classical Chinese, Persian, and Mongolian.⁴³ In 1431, the Ming court produced a "collection of *dhāraṇī* in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian."⁴⁴ More famously, stele accounts commemorating Ming expansion under Yongle (such as expeditions to Southeast Asia, the African coast, and the Amur River) were written in Chinese, Persian, Tamil, Jurchen, Mongolian, and Tibetan.⁴⁵

During his reign, Yongle persuaded his courtiers to share his vision: most at the time acknowledged "the blinding light of vajra energy emanating from the vicinity of the Karma pa, the emperor, and his parents' relics; visits from supernatural Buddhist sages, ecumenically minded, gilt Daoist immortals, and the bodhisattva Manjushri himself."⁴⁶ His descendants encountered more difficulties selling this image of emperor as *khaghan*.

Most scholarship on Tibetan Buddhism and the Ming dynasty has focused on the first and third Ming emperors. However, as Dora Ching discusses elsewhere in this volume, imperial patronage of Tibetan Buddhism

42. Berger ("Miracles in Nanjing," p. 153) notes that the visions contained in the handscroll of the Fifth Karma pa's visit to Nanjing probably evoked associations with Mount Wutai, a sacred Buddhist mountain that was rich in associations to the steppe, imperial power, and the Buddhist deity Mañjuśrī. She refers to David Farquhar's article "Emperor as Bodhisattva," which discusses the links among the multilingual inscriptions of Juyong Pass, Mongol (and later Qing) emperors, and Mañjuśrī. She speculates that Yongle was attempting to cast the Ming founder in the role of a *cakravartin* (p. 159). She does not, however, consider the possibility that this figured in Yongle's efforts to forge a new identity for Ming rulers as *khaghan*.

43. See the imperial edict cited in Li Yihua, "Liangjian Zhengde chao Alabowen Bosiwen ciqi," p. 5171.

44. Serruys, "Early Lamaism in Mongolia," p. 187.

45. Su Bai, "Lasa Budalagong zhuyao diantang he kuzang de bufen Mingdai wenshu," p. 46112; Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness*, p. 158; Dreyer, *Zheng He*, p. 71.

46. Berger, "Miracles in Nanjing," p. 161.

continued well into the sixteenth century.⁴⁷ As Otosaka Tomoko has argued, as a counterweight to the growing power of the civil bureaucracy, Tibetan Buddhism became tightly linked to the emperor's authority.⁴⁸ One tangible sign of this support was that throughout the fifteenth century Tibetan monks were housed at the three principal lamaseries in Beijing—Da longshan huguo Temple 大隆善護國寺, Nengren Temple 能仁寺, and Da Cien Temple 大慈恩寺.⁴⁹ Their numbers ranged between one and two thousand from the 1420s through the 1440s. Civil officials often railed against the impropriety of using imperial funds to finance this "alien creed" and repeatedly demanded that the ranks of the Tibetan monks be reduced or eliminated altogether. Despite these protests, all the temples enjoyed financial support from the emperor and the imperial family.

Imperial patronage of Tibetan Buddhism was often tied directly to the emperor's personal concerns. For instance, over the objections of his ministers, on the second day of the eleventh lunar month of 1472, the Chenghua emperor ordered the composition of a commemorative stele account of the renovation of Longshan Temple (a fact omitted in the *Veritable Records* of his reign). This date was the emperor's birthday. Otosaka's argument that the stele account was part of the emperor's birthday celebrations suggests that Tibetan Buddhism formed an important part of the emperor's personal sphere.⁵⁰ In 1505, Tibetan monks conducted purification rites in the Hall of Imperial Tranquility 乾清宮 after the Hongzhi emperor's death.⁵¹ As we shall see below, his son, the early sixteenth-century emperor, Zhengde, took even more interest in Tibetan Buddhism.

Criticisms of state support for Tibetan monks often focused on what civil officials viewed as the disruption of proper social and political hierarchies. First, the officials decried the fact that Tibetan monks enjoyed unfettered access to the politically and ritually exclusive space of the Forbidden

47. Yang, *Ming Qingshi jueao*, pp. 46, 57–58, 60–61, 66; He Xiaorong, "Mingdai huangdi chongfeng Zangchuan fojiao qianxi."

48. Otosaka Tomoko, "Kaette kita shokumokujin."

49. Suzuki Masashi, "Mindai teishitsu zaisei to bukkyō," pp. 1339–46; Ryūchi Kiyoshi, "Mindai Pekin ni okeru ramakyōdan," pp. 70–71; Satō Hisashi, "Mintei ni okeru ramakyō sūhai ni tsuite," pp. 293–98. Da longshan huguo si was popularly known as Chongguo si 崇國寺; see Jiang Yikui, *Chang'an kehua, juan 1*, "Huangdu zaji" 皇都雜記, p. 20.

50. Otosaka Tomoko, "Kaette kita shokumokujin," p. 256–57.

51. Ryūchi Kiyoshi, "Mindai Pekin ni okeru ramakyōdan," p. 73.

City. In 1465, shortly after Chenghua came to power one minister invoked the Ming founder's instructions and then objected:

Recently, I have heard that Tibetan monks have entered the Forbidden City to chant sutras. They do not leave until dawn. There have also been cases in which silver vessels have been delivered to temples and lamaseries without the official approval of an imperial edict. I humbly request a clear prohibition [of such practices] in order to restrict access to the palace.⁵²

Several officials protested that the emperor granted Tibetan monks social privileges that exceeded even those allowed imperial princes. For instance, in 1473 one supervising secretary complained of a Tibetan monk much favored by Chenghua: "When he sets out [into the city], he rides in a palanquin whose top is constructed of coir palm [*Trachycarpus excelsa* 棕轎].⁵³ Those who walk at the head of his procession use the imperial regalia 金吾仗.⁵⁴ His emolument surpasses that of princes of the blood."⁵⁵

In addition to whatever ideological issues may have been in play, Ming bureaucrats deeply resented how, through imperial favor, Tibetan monks disrupted what they viewed as proper social hierarchy in the capital. The official quoted above objected to the Tibetan's violation of correct sumptuary practice in his use of modes of transportation and public display reserved for the imperial family, or at least imperial officials. What made the Tibetan monks' presence particularly galling was the public nature of the imperial patronage they enjoyed. Anyone in the streets of the capital could see their power and prestige manifested in their honor guards and carriages, all key social and political markers to which the emperor, his officials, and the savvy population of Beijing were keenly attuned.

52. Shen Defu, *W'anli yehuo bian* (hereafter cited as YHB), *juan* 27, 3: 683, cited in Satō Hisashi, "Mintei ni okeru ramakyō sūhai ni tsuite," p. 299. The minister was Li Xian 李賢 (1408–67).

53. The original text uses a different character for *zong*, see *Hanyu dacidian*, 4: 1190–91. As early as the first year of his reign, Yongle complained that an imperial in-law had violated sumptuary law and used a *zongjiao*, as though he were no different from the princes of the blood. See Yu Ruiji, *Lihu zhigao* (hereafter cited as LBZG), 2.6a–b.

54. The *Hanyu dacidian* does not list a *Jinwu zhang*. *Jinwu* refers to the imperial honor guard. The *Jinwu niao* was a staff with a carved bird at its head (*Hanyu dacidian*, 11: 1148). The point is that his use of symbols was not commensurate with his rank.

55. *Xianzong shilu* 憲宗實錄, 58.4b, quoted in Satō, "Mintei ni okeru ramakyō sūhai ni tsuite," p. 299. Wang Shizhen 王世貞 further added that personnel from the Brocade Guard walked in front and in back of the palanquin; "All who saw it assumed it was a prince of the blood"; see "Ci shang shi yi zhang" 賜尚師儀仗, in Wang Shizhen, *Yanshantang biji*, 11.211.

Another dimension of the contested status of Tibetan monks in Beijing involved titles granted by the throne. Our guide to the Ming court, Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578–1642), observed, "During Chenghua's reign, Buddhist and Taoist [monks] were favored by the emperor. For instance, [Chenghua] granted to one Tibetan monk an investiture title of more than thirty characters. This likely follows the old practices of the former Yuan dynasty. It also follows the Yongle reign precedent of Halima."⁵⁶ Here we see in the eyes of one well-informed observer the nexus of connections among the Ming imperial family, Tibetan Buddhism, and the Great Yuan *ulus*. Shen drew these links in several other instances.⁵⁷

Another reflection of ties between the imperial family and Tibetan Buddhism may be seen in the production of porcelains. The Ming court ordered imperial kilns to make high-quality porcelains inscribed with Tibetan script or bearing strong influences of Tibetan Buddhism in terms of style and use. Scholars have speculated that these porcelains were produced as gifts for high-ranking clerics, to accommodate them during their sojourns in the Ming capitals, and for use in Tibetan rituals for the imperial family.⁵⁸

Shen provides another example of how closely Tibetan Buddhism, the imperial family, and the Yuan were linked in the minds of contemporary observers.

I have seen the Joyous Buddhas within the Imperial Palace. It is said that they were presented by a foreign country. Others say that they were left by the former Yuan dynasty. Each Buddha wears a red jade pendant. The Buddhas embrace each other. Their reproductive organs fit together. They move by a hinge. I have seen them in several places. The palace eunuchs say that each time a ruler is to marry, they always show him to this hall [containing these statues]. After prostrating himself in

56. Shen Defu, "Shi dao zhenren fenghao zhi yi" 釋道真人封號之異, in YHB, *juan* 27, 3: 696.

57. When confronted with unfamiliar practices, Shen often attributed them to the Yuan. For instance, he noted when imperial princes were born, a youth was selected as a ritual substitute, his head was shaven, and he became a Buddhist monk. Shen writes, "I do not know whence such a practice originated. I suspect that it follows a remnant practice of the former Yuan dynasty" (*ibid.*, 3: 686).

58. Zhao Hong, "Gugong bowuyuan cang Ming Qing shiqi Zang, Meng su ciqi"; Hu Zhaojing, "Sajia si cang Ming Xuande yuyao qinghua wucaiwai," p. 73. *Thangka*, bronze statues, and even a portrait of the Yongle emperor are also held to have been sent as gifts to prominent Tibetan clerics; see Xizang wenguanhui, Wenwu puchadui, "Dazhao si cang Yongle nianjian wenwu," pp. 69, 71; and Xizang wenguanhui, "Budalalong cang Ming Chengzu Zhu Di huaxiang."

worship before the statues, he is instructed to caress their private parts in order to silently comprehend the way of sexual congress. Later [the ruler and wife] marry. This instruction was in consideration of the emperor's naïveté in this matter [i.e., sexual intercourse]. Now periodically those who sell curios have [similar statues]. They are exquisitely crafted, not local products. Their price is beyond calculation. However, they are much smaller than those within the Imperial Palace. Imperially sponsored temples within the capital also have such Buddhist [figures], which have been granted by the throne. Monks are generally unwilling to show them to people lightly.⁵⁹

Elsewhere Shen notes that the Da Cien Temple, an imperially patronized temple closely associated with Tibetan Buddhism, continued to house a Joyous Buddhas statue until the mid-sixteenth century.⁶⁰ Shen's sketch of the Joyous Buddhas aptly describes the genre of statues within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition that represent the underlying unity of the cosmos that may be glimpsed through Tantric sexual meditations.

The impact of Tibetan Buddhism on the Ming court was not limited to emperors and their relations with officialdom. Writing late in the fifteenth century, Lu Rong 陸容 recounts an example of the small ways in which Tibetan Buddhist practices shaped religious and material culture within the Imperial City. Charged with rewarding troops for their efforts in the northwestern province of Ningxia, Lu made his way to one of the warehouses in the Imperial City to secure winter clothing for the soldiers. He noticed a eunuch holding a set of prayer beads whose color was like ivory, only darker and richer. The eunuch informed him that after the pivotal battle of Baigou River 白溝河 against troops loyal to the Jianwen emperor in the spring of 1400, the corpses of fallen soldiers blanketed the field.⁶¹ Moved, Yongle ordered that their skulls be collected and formed into prayer beads. The beads were then given to palace eunuchs who were to pray for the transmigration of the deceased. Especially large skulls were used as vessels for pure water to offer the Buddha. They were named Bowls of Heavenly Grace. Lu attributed these practices to "Tibetan teach-

ings."⁶² One presumes that Lu deemed the incident sufficiently interesting to include in his writings. Perhaps most literati were not familiar with such customs within the imperial city.

During the latter half of the fifteenth century, a variation of the practice apparently flourished outside the walls of the imperial palace. One group of enterprising soldiers from the environs of Beijing carried on a brisk trade in Buddhist rosaries made from human cranial bones. Working with Tibetan monks in the capital, the soldiers exhumed corpses in the area, strung the bones together, and sold them in the markets of Beijing, claiming that they had been made in Tibet. The soldiers presented some of these prayer beads to palace eunuchs, calling them the "miraculous method of transmigration." The eunuchs rewarded them handsomely.⁶³

Especially noteworthy here is that this same passage notes explicitly that the soldiers also produced *kapāla* (Ch. *gebala wan* 葛巴刺碗). *Kapāla* is the skull cup (an emblem of compassion) held in the right hand of Mahākāla, the tutelary deity closely associated with the Sa skya sect.⁶⁴ In his left hand, Mahākāla grasps a flaying knife (or chopper), which indicates the severing of delusions. Several examples of finely crafted statues of Mahākāla dating from the fifteenth century and inscribed with Yongle reign dates have survived in collections in Tibet and China. A small intricately wrought gold statue of Mahākāla was recently excavated from the tomb of an imperial Ming prince who died in the mid-fifteenth century.⁶⁵

Although the scale and composition of the market for these beads and *kapāla* are unclear, this anecdote and Shen Defu's comments on the sale of Tantric artifacts by curio dealers suggest that over time, Tibetan Buddhism, if only as fashion, had expanded beyond the walls of the Forbidden City.⁶⁶ The anecdote also serves as a reminder of the critical role that palace eunuchs played in the maintenance of court customs.

62. Lu Rong, *Shuyuan zaji*, 1.3.

63. Zhu Guozhen, *Yongchuang xiaopin*, 32.774-75.

64. Franke, "From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God," pp. 59-60. Other Tibetan deities are also represented holding the *kapāla* and chopper. For Ming-period examples of Yamantaka-Vajrabhairava rendered in silk embroidery and gilt bronze, see Leidy, "Buddhist Art," plates 26 and 35.

65. Hubeisheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo et al., "Hubei Zhongxiang Mingdai Liang-zhuang wang mu fajue jianbao," pp. 16-17. See plate 33 (p. 17) for illustration.

66. An early seventeenth-century guide to the sites and wares of Beijing notes that prayer beads made of cranial bones were available for sale at the City God Market in the capital; see Liu Tong and Yu Yizheng, *Dijing jingwulüe* (hereafter cited as *DJJW*), *juan* 4, "Chenghuang miao shi" 城隍廟市, p. 166.

59. Shen Defu, "Wanju chunhua" 玩具春畫, in *YHB*, *juan* 27, 3: 659. I thank Chu Hung-lam for improving the accuracy of this translation. Craig Clunas has also drawn attention to this passage, noting correctly that Shen failed to grasp the religious significance of the statue; see Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, p. 151.

60. Shen Defu, "Jingshi diwang miao" 京師帝王廟, "Liechao" 列朝, in *YHB*, *juan* 1, 1: 2.

61. For a description of the battle between the forces of Yongle and loyalist troops under Li Jinglong 李景隆, see Zhao Zhongchen, *Ming Chengzu zhuan*, pp. 116-21.

During the fifteenth century, Ming imperial patronage of Tibetan Buddhism took many forms: the throne provided financial support for thousands of Tibetan monks within the capital; it commissioned the construction of temples strongly associated with Tibetan clerics; and it granted impressive titles, seals, and sumptuary privileges to favored monks. In exchange, Tibetan monks performed religious ceremonies for the imperial family designed to ensure good health, ritual purity, spiritual growth, and peace within the realm. By serving as patrons of Tibetan Buddhism, the Ming imperial family gained a valuable counterweight to the civil bureaucracy. Emperors from Yongle to Zhengde enjoyed access to spiritual, political, and cultural resources largely unavailable to the Chinese bureaucracy. Finally, until the first quarter of the sixteenth century, Ming emperors distinguished themselves from their subjects through the consistent support of religious practices and personages that remained exotic and strange in the eyes of most Chinese. In all these ways, the Ming imperial family followed in the footsteps of Khubilai.

Foreign Personnel Within the Imperial Palaces

Past scholarship has documented in some detail the Ming dynasty's demands for Korean virgins and eunuchs.⁶⁷ Until recently, however, few have posed the basic question why the Ming made such demands.⁶⁸ The demand for Korean palace personnel—women and eunuchs—constitutes another continuity between the Ming imperial family and its Mongol Yuan predecessors.

Beginning during the reign of Khubilai khan, thousands of Korean women, often from elite families, were presented to the Mongol court.⁶⁹ Most of these women served in menial positions within the imperial pal-

67. Wang Chongwu, "Ming Chengzu Chaoxian xuanfei kao," pp. 165–76.

68. The most notable exception is Xi Lei's recent monograph, *Yuandai Gaoli gongnü zhidu yanjiu*. She argues (p. 274) that "after succeeding to the Yuan, in order to demonstrate the legality and legitimacy of its own feudal dynasty, the Ming dynasty went to great efforts to continue the Yuan's various special prerogatives." Hok-lam Chan ("Mingchu Chaoxian 'ruchao' huanguan juyü," p. 66) notes in passing that Yongle's request for Korean women "was a return to Mongol Yuan practice." He speculates that perhaps this was related to Yongle's Mongolian blood.

69. For an early and somewhat nationalistic perspective on Korean tribute women to the Yuan court, see Yu Hong'yöl, "Koryö üi Wön e tae han kong'yö." A postscript note indicates that an earlier version of this article was first published in 1937. The most thorough study in any language is now Xi Lei's *Yuandai Gaoli gongnü zhidu yanjiu*.

ace, but some were given to leading Yuan ministers as consorts. In fact, by the mid-fourteenth century, the giving and receiving of Korean women among Yuan elites had grown fashionable in Dadu.⁷⁰ A few even gained the affections of Mongol emperors. For instance, in 1282, Palace Woman Yi 李宮人, a Korean woman of good family and considerable skills with the *pipa* (a Chinese lute) entered the Yuan palace and quickly won the favor of Khubilai. Early in the fourteenth century, Lady Kim, known to posterity as Dharmashiri 達麻實里, became the first Korean woman invested as a secondary Yuan empress (皇后). Finally, the most influential Korean woman in Yuan history was Empress Ki 奇皇后 (fl. 1340–68), who, during the mid-fourteenth century, became a full empress and bore the Shundi emperor the heir apparent Ayushiridara.⁷¹

Ming forces seized many of the Korean palace women and consorts abandoned during the Yuan court's flight from Dadu. The Ming founder, Hongwu, counted Korean women captured from the former Yuan palace among his consorts.⁷² Yongle, who identified so closely with the Yuan legacy (especially that of Khubilai), was the first Ming emperor to demand women directly from Korea for his harem. Following Yuan practice, Yongle bestowed positions within the Ming government on the fathers and brothers of several of his Korean consorts. The Xuande emperor would continue to request Korean women for the palace.⁷³

70. Quan Heng and Ren Chongyue, *Gengshen waishi jianzheng*, p. 96.

71. Xi Lei, "Yuanchao gongtingzhong de Gaoli nüxing," pp. 208–12; Yi Yongböm, "Ki hwanghu üi ch'aeknip kwa Wöndaec üi Chajöngwön"; Min Hyöng'u, "Koryö Kongmin wang üi chükwi paegyöng," pp. 803–4. For fuller discussion of Empress Ki and relations between the Yuan and Koryö courts, see Robinson, *Empire's Twilight*.

72. For an anecdote related to what Hongwu perceived as the dangerous connections between Koryö women (who had formerly been consorts to Yuan elites) who resided within his palace and foreign diplomacy, see Shen Defu, "Gaoli nü jianyi" 高麗女見疑 in "Gong wei" 宮闈, in *YHB, juan 3*, 1: 74–75. Korean court annals note that in 1368 Ming troops captured a twelve-year-old Korean girl who had just recently arrived in the Yuan; she became a palace woman under the Ming, favored by Hongwu (*Koryö sa*, 44.653, 恭愍王二十二年七月甲辰).

73. Shen Defu, "Diwang qu waiguo nü" 帝王娶外國女, in *YHB, juan 3*, 1: 74. Shen notes explicitly that this custom "followed Yuan practice." Wang Shizhen ("Zhongguo yiguan hujü" 中國夷官互居, in *Yanshanfang bieji*, 18.336) notes an additional four Korean women who gained various ranks within the Ming palace (three of them during Yongle's reign) and whose fathers were then granted honorary posts within the Chinese bureaucracy although they continued to reside in Korea. Shen Defu remarked on the unusually prestigious posts granted to these men; see "Yongle jian houcong fu enze" 永樂間後宮父恩澤, *YHB, juan 5*, 1: 184. See also Jiang Shunyuan, "Ming Qing gong-

Even more strikingly, Korean records reveal that almost immediately on taking the throne, Yongle proposed a marriage alliance with the royal Yi family of the fledgling Chosŏn dynasty. This overture too closely resembles the relation between the ruling families of the Yuan and Koryŏ dynasties to be dismissed as accidental. During the reign of Khubilai, Mongolian princesses began to marry Koryŏ kings. Yongle's offer rankled the Chosŏn king; such marriage alliances had compromised royal autonomy during the preceding century. The Chosŏn king immediately married several daughters to political supporters within Korea.⁷⁴ Ming demand for Korean women reached its height under Yongle; the practice seems to have ceased in the 1430s with the death of Xuande (who, among other things, appreciated how Korean women prepared soybean curd, *doufu*).⁷⁵

In the early sixteenth century, however, we read of a Muslim confidant in Zhengde's Leopard Quarter, an alternative site of imperial residence and government where civil ministers seldom trod, praising the superior beauty of "Koryŏ women" to the emperor.⁷⁶ Korean records reveal that by the first lunar month of 1521, tales reached the Chosŏn court that Zhengde planned to request Korean women for his palace. A Korean eunuch at the Ming court confirmed the rumor. He informed a Chosŏn official that "the emperor was investigating Xuande period precedents" and that "[the official] was afraid that he would procure women in Korea." Further inquiry revealed that another Korean eunuch had informed Zhengde that there was an overabundance of women in Chosŏn and had praised their beauty and culinary skills.

Zhengde dispatched two Korean eunuchs to Chosŏn to invest the Korean heir apparent and to acquire several dozen women with cooking skills

ting Chaoxian 'cai nü' yanjiu," pp. 86–87. In contrast, Ellen Soullière ("Imperial Marriages of the Ming Dynasty," p. 33) maintains that they were given residences in Nanjing. Jiang notes that in total nearly two hundred Korean women were incorporated into the Ming palace as consorts, attendants, entertainers, and cooks.

74. *Chosŏn Taejong sillok* 朝鮮太宗實錄, *kwŏn* 6, 三年九月辛卯, 十二月辛卯, cited in Pak Wŏnho, "Ming 'Jingnan zhi yi' yu Chaoxian," p. 242. For discussions of the marriage ties between the ruling houses of the Yuan and the Koryŏ, see Xiao Qiqing, "Yuan-Li guanxizhong de wangshi huanghun yu qiangquan zhengzhi." See also Morihira Masahiko, "Fuma Kōrai kokuō no seiritsu"; and idem, "Genchō keshike seido to Kōrai ōke."

75. Clark, "The Ming Connection," pp. 86–87; idem, "Sino-Korean Tributary Relations Under the Ming," 8: 291–93. See also Soullière, "Palace Women in the Ming Dynasty," pp. 269–71.

76. Shen Defu, "Diwang qu waiguo nü" 帝王娶外國女, in *YHB*, *juan* 3, 1: 74.

and young girls. Shortly thereafter, Zhengde died, and his successor, Jiaping, rescinded the order. After some initial hesitation, the Chosŏn court decided that approximately fifteen women might be sent back with the Korean-born Ming eunuchs. The new Ming emperor protested that this "was not necessary"; it is unclear whether the women traveled to China in the end.⁷⁷

Chosŏn women were incorporated into the traditions of the Ming imperial family. These traditions linked Zhengde, Xuande, Yongle, and ultimately Khubilai khan. Like so many other practices at the Ming court, the use of Korean women as palace personnel was not constant but reflected the individual interests and agendas of individual emperors and their courts. Even as we can perceive the personal stamp of individual rulers, however, we can see that the importance of eunuchs in Ming diplomacy and imperial family life proved more enduring.

Incessant demands for Korean eunuchs began during the Ming founder's reign. As Hok-lam Chan has noted, the first Korean-born eunuchs were used as Ming envoys to the Koryŏ dynasty.⁷⁸ Here again we see the strong influence of the Yuan, which systematically used Korean eunuchs as envoys to the Koryŏ court.⁷⁹ As had been the case during the Yuan, Korean eunuchs at the Ming court parlayed their privileged access to the imperial family and influential ministers into prestige and power for themselves and their relatives in Korea.⁸⁰ Further, as also had been true during the Mongol period, Korean monarchs attempted to use the Korean eunuchs at the Chinese court to their own advantage throughout most of the Ming period.⁸¹

The Ming imperial family incorporated foreign men and women into the private sphere of the Forbidden City. Like the Mongol Yuan court, during the first half of the dynasty, the Ming imperial household establishment was international in its composition and interests. Yongle and some of his successors patterned their expectations and behavior on the

77. Jiang Shunyuan, "Ming Qing gongting Chaoxian 'cai nü' yanjiu," pp. 82–83. Details related to Korean eunuchs and women are seldom available in Chinese court annals. Jiang draws extensively on materials from the *Koryŏsa* and *Chosŏn sillok*. This incident is also mentioned in Yu Hong'yŏl, "Koryŏ ūi Wŏn e tae han kong'yŏ," p. 45.

78. Hok-lam Chan, "Mingchu Chaoxian 'ruchao' huangguan juyi." On Ming envoy missions to Seoul led by Korean-born eunuchs, see Tsai, *The Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty*, pp. 135–40.

79. For recent scholarship, see Chang Tong'ik, *Koryŏ hugi oegyosa yŏn'gu*, pp. 178–85.

80. For a detailed case study drawn from the early Ming, see Hok-lam Chan, "Mingchu Chaoxian 'ruchao' huangguan juyi."

81. For an early sixteenth-century example, see Robinson, "Korean Lobbying at the Ming Court."

precedents of Khubilai and his descendents. The following section demonstrates that several fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Chinese rulers fashioned a visual image modeled closely on the Mongol *khaghan*.

In the Image of the khaghan

As Wang Cheng-hua, Dora Ching, and others have shown, imperial portraiture can tell us much about the Ming court and the imperial family.⁸² Perhaps the variety of imperial portraiture most familiar to us is the formal seated portraits of the emperors held in the Palace Museum collection in Taipei.⁸³ Although the character of these carefully crafted images changed significantly during the first half of the dynasty, the seated portraits depicted the emperor on his throne within the palace dressed in silken robes embroidered with an expanding number of symbols of rulership (see Figs. 7.1 and 7.10). This style of portraiture, which often rendered the subject in an idealized fashion, projected an image of the Ming emperor firmly rooted in Chinese traditions of political and cultural symbolism. However, as Dora Ching's chapter in this volume demonstrates, even this relatively staid form of imperial portraiture owed much to Tibetan styles and concerns.⁸⁴

Less thoroughly investigated varieties of imperial portraiture like paintings in the "pleasures of the emperor" (*xingle tu* 行樂圖) genre reveal a different face of the Ming emperors. Such scholars as Shan Guoqiang characterize the "pleasures of the emperor" paintings as more realistically rendered, historically accurate, and dynamic than the seated formal portraits. This genre, nevertheless, also sought to convey certain visions of the court and the realm. In Richard Barnhart's analysis of Xuande and his court, he notes the cultivated and civil side of the ruler and his reign. Discussing Shang Xi's 商喜 *The Xuande Emperor's Pleasures* (*Xuanzong xingle tu* 宣宗行樂圖),⁸⁵ Barnhart stresses the auspicious items found in the work.⁸⁶ Wang Cheng-hua remarks that the work portrays a "world enjoying beauti-

ful weather and a harmonious atmosphere as if the empire under Zhu Zhanji (Xuande)'s reign were such a world."⁸⁷

The Xuande Emperor's Pleasures depicts an outdoor scene full of action and motion (see Fig. 8.1). Court elites are mounted on lively horses; the emperor and his close attendants, arrayed in Mongolian riding tunics and hunting caps, and bows and arrows are on display. The contrast with more familiar formal, seated, indoor court portraiture is striking. The central figure of the painting is the Xuande emperor, mounted on a spirited steed, leading an outing in the imperial menagerie. The emperor wears a Mongolian cap called a *xhanli* 氈笠 (笠子帽), a felt hat with a broad rim—useful for shielding the eyes during the hunt. He wears a sleeveless, body-hugging riding tunic. The outfit closely resembles the Yuan period *bijia* 比甲 tunic.⁸⁸ Several of the riders who follow immediately behind him have also donned felt caps and narrow-sleeved robes. One carries a quiver full of arrows on his back, and the other two seem to be holding horns or pennants. In the background, one can make out several pairs of deer, pheasants, ducks, rabbits, and storks—as Barnhart notes, all auspicious animals firmly rooted in Chinese symbolism and aesthetics. In the foreground, nearly two dozen riders, each with a youthful attendant on foot, are grouped in two lines. These riders, probably eunuchs, are dressed in gorgeous gowns with fitted sleeves but wear Chinese-style hats.

Such scholars as Mu Yiqin have noted the extensive Mongol influence on clothing reflected in this painting.⁸⁹ Mu appears to assume that the Ming emperors unconsciously continued Mongol styles in clothing.

87. Wang Cheng-hua, "Material Culture and Emperorship," p. 241.

88. Entry by Shan Guoqiang in Yang Xin, *Gugong bowuyuan cang Ming Qing huihua*, p. 124.

89. Mu Yiqin, "Mingdai gongting huihua," pp. 40–41. In his discussion of the *Xuanzong xingle tu*, *Xuanzong she lie tu*, and *Shezhi tu*, Barnhart notes the vivid, lively style of the paintings and their considerable historical value for reflecting reality. He does not consider the significance of portraits of Ming emperors rendered in the likeness of Mongol khans. He does note, however, the importance of horse paintings at the early Ming courts that most scholarship has overlooked (*Painters of the Great Ming*, p. 123). Shan Guoqiang, too, omits the connection to the Mongols; see his "Mingdai gongting huihua," p. 275. In an earlier article, Shan Guoqiang ("Mingdai gongting huihua gaishu," pt. 1, p. 10) did remark that Xuande was dressed "entirely in northern barbarian garb." He does not draw any connection to the Mongols. In regard to Zhou Quan's *Pheasant Hunting* and the anonymous *Xuanzong Hunting with Bow*, Shan ("Mingdai gongting huihua gaishu," pt. 1, p. 11) notes that the paintings reflect Xuande's deep concern with military matters.

82. Wang Cheng-hua, "Material Culture and Emperorship." See also Dora Ching's discussion of imperial portraiture in this volume, pp. 321–64.

83. The collection, entitled *Mingdai diwang xiang* 明代帝王像, contains twenty-seven works. See Shan Guoqiang, "Ming Qing gongting xiaoxianghua," p. 417.

84. See also Fong, "Imperial Portraiture of the Ming Dynasty," pp. 329–32.

85. The painting, done on paper, measures 211 × 353 cm and is held at the Palace Museum, Beijing. See Yang Xin, *Gugong bowuyuan cang Ming Qing huihua*, p. 134.

86. Barnhart, "Emperor Xuanzong and the Painting Masters," in idem, *Painters of the Great Ming*, p. 57.

However, Barnhart, Wang, and Ching have drawn attention to the carefully crafted political elements of imperial painting—the auspicious animals, the temperate weather, the conspicuous wealth revealed in the rich gowns. As a culturally and politically significant marker, clothing was not rendered without thought. Why, we must ask, did the emperor commission a portrait of himself arrayed in unmistakably Mongolian garb?

The composition of the painting suggests the many layers of the early emperors' identity. Is it accidental that at the center of the work is the emperor in his role as *khabghan*, hunting, riding, and dressed in Mongol clothing? In an implicit contrast, arrayed in a secondary position around the Son of Heaven are his silk-begowned eunuch officials, portrayed in lovingly rich detail and color. Clearly the handsomely attired officials constitute an important facet of Xuande's identity. If, however, on the basis of this work one were to hazard a guess about what sort of self-image Xuande harbored, one would have to conclude that the emperor felt completely at ease with the martial, equestrian, and steppe dimensions of his identity as ruler. At the very least, he wished to project ease with such an image.

Several scholars have argued that the setting for the painting is the Southern Lakes of the imperial city, where the imperial families from the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties honed their martial skills through royal hunts.⁹⁰ Wang Cheng-hua, in contrast, holds that the scene depicted is the Island of Beautiful Stones 瓊華島 in the Western Park.⁹¹ On the island, the Great Yuan *ulus* had maintained an imperial zoo, which may have survived into the Ming period. The early Ming emperors Yongle and Xuande were keenly aware of the links between the family enterprise and its predecessor, the Yuan. On one occasion in 1432, Xuande pointed out that the Mongols had once held all the lands visible from a hill on the island before losing them through mismanagement of the empire. Xuande closely associated this theme with Yongle, who had lectured him on the topic more than once.⁹² Perhaps more important than the specific setting of *The Xuande Emperor's Pleasures* is the powerful image of a Chinese emperor on horseback armed with bow and arrow, clothed in Mongolian garb—not an indoor setting within the walls of the imperial palace sitting on a throne wearing a Chinese gown.

90. Shan Guoqiang, "Mingdai gongting huihua gaishu," pt. 1, p. 10; Mu Yiqin, "Mingdai gongting huihua," pp. 41–42.

91. Wang Cheng-hua, "Material Culture and Emperorship," pp. 233–38.

92. *Ibid.*, pp. 236–37.

The anonymous *Emperor Xuande Hunting with Bow* (*Xuanzong she lie tu* 宣宗射獵圖), too, reveals an image of the emperor indistinguishable from that of a Mongolian *khabghan* on the hunt (see Fig. 8.2). Centered in the foreground, a dark-faced and bearded Xuande holds aloft his first prize, a young deer, two legs grasped in each of his hands. At the same time, he keenly tracks a second deer bolting in flight through the open field. Next to the emperor, his horse grazes peacefully. Xuande wears Mongolian riding gear with tight-fitting sleeves and a Mongolian felt hat. Slung around his waist are a Mongolian compound bow and a quiver of arrows.⁹³ Although some debate surrounds the exact setting of the painting, the relatively generic quality of the outdoor scene—sparsely inhabited and wild—may represent an effort to claim all such places as the emperor's proper domain. His activities and sphere of authority were not bound by specific place or even time.

Equally striking are richly detailed court portraits of Xuande dressed in Mongol garb on a riding excursion (see Fig. 8.3).⁹⁴ The detailed rendering of the expensive fur saddle-blanket closely resembles that in *The Xuande Emperor Hunting with Bow*; it also calls to mind the famous portrait of Khubilai on the hunt (Fig. 8.4). Equally noteworthy is the distinctive "girdle with a pouch" 繫腰合鉢, a detail so prominent in Yuan-period paintings of Mongol and Central Asian figures as to constitute a visual synecdoche (Fig. 8.5).⁹⁵ Both Zhou Quan's 周全 *Hunting Pheasants with Bow* (*Shezhi tu* 射雉圖; Fig. 8.6) and Shang Xi's *Xuande Emperor's Pleasures* include this distinctive cultural icon. The pouch's connection with steppe peoples would not have been lost on audiences at the Ming court. Government regulations prescribed the pouch as part of the garb for performers playing the role of Northern Barbarians in the Dance of Pacification of the Barbarians of the Four Directions (*Fu an siyi zhi wu* 撫安四夷之舞), which was performed at banquets and state rituals in the imperial palace.⁹⁶

93. Reproduction in Gugong bowuyuan, *Mingdai gongting yu Zhepai huibua xuanji*, p. 53.

94. Barnhart ("The Foundation of Ming Painting," p. 123) attributes the painting to an anonymous Ming painter at Xuande's court.

95. For comments on the pouch, see Serruys, "Remains of Mongol Customs," pp. 159–60n71. For examples of the pouch in Yuan-period paintings, see the four anonymous works, *Youqi tu* 遊騎圖, *Hua hanyuan lieqi* 畫寒原獵騎, *Baixiang yanqing* 百祥衍慶, and *Sanyang kaitai tu* 三陽開泰圖, in *Gugong shubuatulu*, 5: 191, 251, 263, and 373, respectively.

96. See Xu Yikui, *Da Ming jili*, 57A.6a–b; Yu Ruiji, "Yanli" 宴禮 under "Yizhisi zhi-zhang" 儀制司職掌, in *LBZG*, 21.17a.

Within the walls of the Ming imperial palace too, equestrian skills and prowess with the bow and arrow figured prominently throughout the first half of the Ming. One scene from the long scroll painting *The Chenghua Emperor's Pleasures Within the Palace* (*Ming Xianzong gongzhong xingle tu* 明憲宗宮中行樂園) depicts a group of six riders exhibiting their equestrian skills for an appreciative Chenghua, who is wearing a Mongolian felt cap (Fig. 8.7).⁹⁷ Within the painting itself is a self-standing screen decorated with a number of panels depicting riders playing a version of polo (*jiqiu* 擊球). This suggests that polo was more than an imperial entertainment; paintings of polo were appreciated as decorative art at the court.⁹⁸ Another section of *Chenghua's Pleasures Within the Palace* shows an archery contest; men with Mongolian compound bows vie for the favor of an august Chenghua, again wearing a Mongolian hat.

Even when the site of riding and archery contests was contained within the bounded space of the imperial palace, these portraits of the Ming emperors evoked the Mongol Yuan legacy. Each year on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month and the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, the Mongol court in Dadu had sponsored polo competitions within the imperial palace.⁹⁹ Scattered entries in the *Veritable Records* from Yongle's reign note that on the fifth day of the fifth month, the Duanwu Festival 端午節, the emperor also viewed "polo (*jiqiu*) and willow archery contests 射柳" in the Eastern Garden of the Imperial Palace. Permission to attend these events was a mark of imperial favor. Ranking military and civil officials, members of the merit aristocracy, visiting foreign dignitaries, and "esteemed elders of the capital" were among those who watched the competitions. On this occasion, the court distributed gifts of cash to the emperor's esteemed guests.¹⁰⁰ A description of one such event in 1413 makes clear that court elites participated in both competitions. These mounted archery contests for military officers continued in the palace at least through the Xuande reign.¹⁰¹

97. Here I follow Wang Cheng-hua's ("Material Culture and Emperorhip," pp. 223–25) redating and renaming of the *Xuanzong xingle tu* to *Xianzong xingle tu* and the Chenghua reign.

98. Reproduction in Gugong bowuyuan, *Mingdai gongting yu Zhepai huibua*, p. 51. On the uses of paintings within the imperial palace, see Barnhart, "Function, Subject, and Symbol," esp. pp. 90–91.

99. Chen Gaohua, "Song Yuan he Mingchu de maqiu," pp. 180–81; Shi Weimin, *Yuandai shehui shenghuoshi*, p. 363–65; Ma Jige, "*Xuanzong xingle tu* tu," p. 35.

100. *Taizong shilu* (hereafter cited as *TSL*), 164.1a, 176.1a.

101. Lu Rong, *Shuyuan zaji*, 1.1.

Yongle explicitly commented on the cosmopolitan nature of the celebrations. Happy with his grandson's skill with the bow, Yongle exclaimed:

Today, the people of China and the foreign countries are all assembled together. We will provide a phrase. You should think of a matching verse. "The wind and clouds bring together the jade and silk of all countries." The son of the heir apparent kowtowed and responded, "The sun and moon brighten the unified rivers and mountains [of the empire]."¹⁰²

Flushed with pleasure, the emperor distributed horses, silk textiles, and "foreign cloth" among his guests. Civil officials composed commemorative poems. The court hosted a banquet for lower-ranking officials; it also handed out gifts of cash.¹⁰³ The presence of foreign envoys, the poetic references to foreign tribute, and theme of unification under the Ming imperial family makes clear that these polo and archery contests were not mere diversissements for early Ming emperors. They were also important political (both international and domestic) occasions.¹⁰⁴

Zhou Quan's undated *Hunting Pheasants with Bow* further suggests the importance of hunting, horses, and archery for mid-Ming emperors (Fig. 8.6).¹⁰⁵ This work features a group of three men and their horses on a

102. *TSL*, 140.1b–2a. "Jade and silk" refer to the tribute items that foreign envoys presented to the court. "Sun and moon bright" involves a simple play on words. The character for "ming," or "bright," was composed of two elements: sun and moon. Ming was also the name of the dynasty. I thank Chu Hung-lam for improving the translation of this couplet.

103. *TSL*, 140.2a.

104. As late as the Wanli reign, Shen Defu ("Duanyang" 端陽 under "Liechao," in *YHB*, *juan* 2, 1: 67) commented on the popularity of riding and archery contests during the Duanwu festivities, especially among military men. He observed, "Within the imperial palace, in addition to dragon boats, [the court] maintains [such] past practices [as] willow archery contests. It is called *zoubiaoqi* 走驃騎 (galloping). In general, this follows the practices of the Jin and Yuan dynasties." Imperial gifts were bestowed on senior officials at this time. According to Shen, the contests involved as many as 3,000 skilled riders and reward money totaling more than 20,000 taels of gold. In a separate note, Shen remarked that in recent days, the practice had declined somewhat ("Xuanzong ji she" 宣宗繫射 under "Liechao," *YHB bu yi*, *juan* 1, 3: 790–91).

105. Done in colors on silk, the painting measures 137.6 cm in length and 117.2 cm in width. Like many court painters in fifteenth-century China, Zhou held the post of regional military commissioner within the Brocade Guard (as the colophon on the painting indicates). Little information regarding Zhou has survived, but he left a reputation for skill in rendering horses. A Zhou Quan was adopted by the eunuch Jin Ying 金英 (1426–50) and held a post in the Brocade Guard until his death in August 1487; see Mu Yiqin, *Mingdai yuanti Zhepai shiliao*, pp. 35, 238. See Hok-lam Chan's biography of Jin

pheasant hunt. In the background are steep outcroppings of rock, a few gnarled pines, and a flowing river that leads to a small waterfall and ends in a pond. Mounted on his steed, the central figure scans the sky for prey and reaches back with his right hand for an arrow that an attendant on foot holds ready. The riders wear silk robes with narrow, fitted sleeves. On their heads are conical Mongolian hats with brims, presumably to protect their eyes against the sun's glare during the hunt.¹⁰⁶ Hung from their waists are "girdles with pouches." Wang Cheng-hua has suggested that the central figure may be either Hongzhi or Zhengde.¹⁰⁷ The repeated visual references to Ming emperors on the hunt call to mind the Mongols' well-known interest in imperial hunting, which served simultaneously as military training, grand spectacle, and opportunity to strengthen personal bonds of loyalty.¹⁰⁸

The *Emperor's Pleasures* and other court portraits that show Ming emperors on the hunt, riding excursions, bearing arms, and dressed in Mongolian garb remind us of the wisdom of Richard Barnhart's observation apropos newly rediscovered paintings: "We are constantly reminded of how cruelly arbitrary history is, and of the destruction that victors can do to those they defeat—as the scholars ultimately defeated the professionals in Chinese critical and art historical thought—and of the constant need to reexamine the intellectual and cultural biases of historians."¹⁰⁹ Paintings like Zhou Quan's *Hunting Pheasants with Bow* and the anonymous *Xuande Hunting with Bow* confront us with portraits of Ming emperors in the conscious pose of *khaghans*. The garb, the setting, and the activities evoke the Yuan Mongols. These surviving works may represent only a portion of a far larger number of court portraits lost over time. These portraits do not conform to the most commonly held images of the Ming emperors. In fact, they are so at

Ying in Goodrich and Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, p. 247. The painting is held in the Palace Museum, Taiwan. A second work by Zhou Quan, *Lions* 獅子圖, is apparently held in the Tokyo Museum (Mu Yiqin, *Mingdai yuanti Zhepai shiliao*, p. 238).

106. For a color reproduction, see *Gugong shubunatulu*, 9: 43.

107. Wang Cheng-hua, "Material Culture and Emperors," p. 265.

108. For brief comments on Mongol hunts during the Yuan, see Shi Weimin, *Yuan-dai shehui shenghuoshi*, pp. 362–63. For a wide-ranging discussion of the hunt, see Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*.

109. See Barnhart, "Emperor Xuanzong and the Painting Masters," in idem, ed., *Painters of the Great Ming*, p. 68. In *Superfluous Things*, Craig Clunas has similarly warned against blithely assuming that aesthetics of later periods and of certain groups can be accurately applied to all periods.

odds with expectations that Qing archivists miscatalogued at least two as Yuan works.¹¹⁰

As Dora Ching discusses in detail elsewhere in this volume, over the course of the fifteenth century, imperial portraiture changed from active and personal renderings of emperors to more formalized and circumscribed poses. Even within the *xingle tu* genre, by the late fifteenth century, Chenghua sits tranquilly on a throne as his eunuchs engage in archery and riding within the confines of the imperial palace.¹¹¹ One is tempted to describe these activities as increasingly vestigial remnants of a once-vigorous association with the *khaghan*. Such a generalization must, however, remain provisional. Zhou Quan's *Hunting Pheasants with Bow* dates from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. If we accept Wang Cheng-hua's argument that it is a portrait of Hongzhi or Zhengde, it represents a vision of the Chinese Son of Heaven as *khaghan* midway through the dynasty. There may have been other such works, especially given what we know of rulers like Zhengde. The evidence indicates that during the first half of the dynasty many Ming emperors retained an association with the Mongol legacy and sought to portray themselves in the image of the *khaghan* through these imperial portraits.

Mongol Military Personnel

Befitting a regime that drew heavily from both steppe tradition and Chinese institutional models, the Yuan Palace Guard comprised two major elements. The first and more important, the *kesbig*, evolved directly from steppe practices whereby ambitious tribal leaders assembled bands of followers or companions who owed personal loyalty to their leader rather than to a clan or tribe. These men served not only as their leader's personal bodyguard but also as household staff and government advisors. Chinggis khan owed much of his initial success to his band, and by 1206 he had expanded its ranks to include approximately 10,000 men. Although the *kesbig's* scope of duties and power diminished somewhat as Khubilai introduced more Chinese institutions into his government, the *kesbig*

110. One wonders if the misidentification was intentional. Qing officials were not encouraged to acknowledge this steppe element of Ming imperial identity, which would have undermined the Qing's claims about its unique qualifications for imperial rule.

111. For another imperial portrait of the Chenghua emperor with a Mongolian cap and his eunuch attendants with waist pouches, see the anonymous, *Emperor Xianzong with Birds*, reproduced in *A Journey into China's Antiquity*, 4: 100, plate 94.

continued to play several key roles in the Yuan empire. The *kesbig* symbolized the imperial Mongol family's power, facilitated relations with other aristocratic steppe families, and figured in the maintenance of Mongol identity.

As a military institution, the *kesbig* represented the khan's personal forces, which answered not to the Bureau of Military Affairs but to the emperor directly. Drawn largely from the empire's elite families, the *kesbig* was dominated first and foremost by Mongols and Central Asians: Jurchens, Koreans, and Chinese members were a distant second. They enjoyed privileged political, economic, and social status within the Yuan.¹¹² Incorporating potential political rivals into the imperial bodyguard was a central pillar in the Yuan's strategies to forge a more unified pan-empire elite.¹¹³

The Ming founder continued many important Yuan military institutions, including the hereditary military household system. He also actively recruited former Yuan military personnel, both Mongols and Chinese, into the ranks of the Ming army. Henry Serruys has shown that Mongols were regularly appointed to posts within the elite Brocade Guard (Jinyiwei 錦衣衛) in Nanjing.¹¹⁴ As Thomas Allsen has noted, the Brocade Guard "is certainly a direct inheritance of the Yuan, which as Marco Polo testifies, dressed its *kesbig* in sumptuous clothes."¹¹⁵ In 1374, the Ming founder ordered outriders in his imperial guard to wear Mongolian *jisün* tunics.¹¹⁶ When Yongle relocated the capital to the north, most of those Mongols also moved to Beijing. The Ming court incorporated large numbers of recent immigrant Mongol families into elite capital units through the first half of the fifteenth century and on a more limited basis early into the sixteenth century.¹¹⁷ Late in the sixteenth century, military appointment

books indicate that officers of Mongol descent still constituted approximately one-third of the Brocade Guard officer corps and similarly high percentages in at least two other important units in or near the capital.¹¹⁸

The Ming court's motivations for incorporating Mongol personnel into imperial military units were multifaceted. The fledgling Ming dynasty strove to increase its military advantage vis-à-vis the Yuan by bolstering its ranks with experienced cavalry fighters. The Ming court was also competing for political legitimacy on the larger Eurasian stage. Winning adherents among Mongols through promises of munificent treatment was a way to undermine support for the Yuan and dash whatever hopes it may have had for unification of the steppe.

The means through which the Ming court attempted to bolster military support and political legitimacy among Mongols, Jurchens, and others owed much to Yuan practices. Under the Great Yuan *ulus*, the *kesbig* served simultaneously as a potent military force, a personal entourage of the *keaghan*, and as a way to forge personal loyalty and a sense of elite cohesiveness within the empire. One of the striking elements of the *kesbig* was its cosmopolitan composition. Mongols, Jurchens, Koreans, Uighurs, Tibetans, and Kipchaks served. The Ming Brocade Guard and other elite capital garrisons certainly differed from the *kesbig* in important ways. However, certain similarities deserve mention.

First, as noted above, men of Mongol and Jurchen descent constituted a surprising percentage of the Brocade Guard until nearly the end of the dynasty. Early in the sixteenth century, newly arrived Mongols and Jurchens, albeit on a modest scale, were still being incorporated into the emperor's personal bodyguard. Second, as an institution, the capital units under the Ming, like their counterparts during the Yuan, were more closely aligned with the emperor and his interests than with the civil bureaucracy. It is no accident that officials frequently criticized the practice of appointing high-ranking palace eunuchs, who served the emperor, to command key units. Third, one can discern elements of the Brocade Guard as a personal entourage. For instance, many court painters were granted posts within the Brocade Guard. Usually seen as sinecures, these appointments may have resulted from an understanding of the elite capital units as a personal or private entourage, just as the Mongols had viewed the *kesbig*.

118. Robinson, "Images of Subject Mongols Under the Ming Dynasty," pp. 85–92. Further research has shown me that I overstated the reliability of these military appointment books.

112. Xiao Qiqing, "Yuandai de suwei zhidu," pp. 71–72.

113. Morihira Masahiko, "Genchō keshike seido to Kōrai ōke." The *kesbig* left its mark in the Koryō and Chosŏn dynasties in the formation of domestic political alliances. For King Kongmin's use of ties forged during his decade-long tenure in Toghön Temür's *kesbig* in Dadu, see Kim Tang'aek, "Koryō Kongmin wang ch'ŏ ūi muchang seryŏk," pp. 28–37. For King Ch'unghye's emulation of the *kesbig* on his return to Koryō, see Kim Tang'aek, *Wŏn kansŏpha ūi Koryō chŏngch'isa*, p. 109.

114. Serruys, "Foreigners in the Metropolitan Police."

115. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire*, p. 95.

116. "Yu fu zhi" 輿服志, in Zhang Tingyu et al., *Ming shi* (hereafter cited as *MS*), 67.1648. For further discussion of the *jisün* at the Ming court, see Robinson, *The Ming Court in Eurasia*.

117. Serruys, "Foreigners in the Metropolitan Police."

However thoroughly integrated into Chinese administrative systems the Mongols may have been, their foreignness was not obscured. In fact, bodyguard units adopted elements of Mongol clothing. The majority of figures in the late-sixteenth-century *Emperor's Departure from the Capital* and *Emperor's Return to the Capital* scrolls show the imperial honor guard in Mongolian hats and riding tunics (see Fig. 8.8).¹¹⁹ Like Tibetan Buddhism, foreign military personnel in the capital provided a visible link to the Great Yuan *ulus* and offered sources of support and legitimacy to the Ming imperial family beyond the control of the civil bureaucracy. The next section examines the use of Mongol personnel and clothing in figurines of honor guards interred within princely tombs.

Funerary Figurines

Long used as a lens on material culture during the Ming, funerary art provides another avenue for reconstructing lost elements of Ming court culture.¹²⁰ The tombs of Ming princes were meant to replicate the pomp and grandeur of their temporal courts. For instance, located in two small side chambers and a slightly larger posterior chamber of Prince Duanyi's 端懿 王 1495 tomb were clay models of three houses, seventeen pieces of furniture (including an ornate bed, a large wardrobe, and several varieties of chairs), and three incense burners. Also interred with the prince's corpse were sacrificial vessels, a wooden seal, two pieces of jade jewelry, his funerary inscription, and thirty-five strings of copper coins. Arrayed in three rows on the right and left sides of the large rectangular anterior chamber were seventy-nine clay figurines representing the princely honor guard: eunuch attendants dressed in silk gowns; men at arms holding spears, swords, or lances; musicians playing flutes or gongs; cavalry outriders; and grooms with their mounts.¹²¹ Such documentary sources as the *Collected Administrative Statutes of the Great Ming Dynasty* (*Da Ming huidian* 大明會典)

119. For discussion of the painting, see Na and Kohler, *The Emperor's Procession*. For a preliminary description and effort to identify various weapons, musical instruments, and palanquins in the scrolls, see Lin Lina, "Mingren *Chuying rubi tu zhi zonghe yanjiu*."

120. For a recent overview of early (to the Tang period) funerary figures, see Bower, "From Court to Caravan." Scholarship on funerary figures strongly emphasizes Tang and pre-Tang periods. The materials from the Yuan and Ming periods are often covered in a cursory fashion or dismissed as aesthetically inferior. See Till and Swart, *Images from the Tomb*, p. 26; and Paludan, *Chinese Tomb Figures*, pp. 57–59.

121. Xi'an shi wenwu baohu kaogusuo, "Xi'an nanjiao Huang Ming zongshi," pp. 29–30, 34.

prescribe personal retinues for imperial princes that indeed included eunuchs, musicians, attendants, and military outriders. The tomb complexes of more eminent imperial clansmen were even larger and more lavishly appointed.

This attention to detail was critical to the efficacy of the tomb and its contents. Jessica Rawson has argued in regard to funerary figures, "If an image was convincing, that is, if it had the correct features, then these features gave the image the powers of thing or person depicted."¹²² Particularly relevant here are Marc Abramson's observations about foreigners and mortuary art. He notes that "Tang families commissioned tomb figurines and murals with representations of barbarians in large part because of the particular potencies associated with the human 'originals' of these representations."¹²³ These qualities included "supernatural potency," "barbarian skills," and "martial virtues."¹²⁴ Thus, the large number of funerary figures dressed in Mongolian garb excavated from Ming princely tombs raises intriguing questions about Ming court culture and the Yuan legacy. Since mortuary art from the Ming period has never been considered before in this light, a brief review of the evidence follows below.¹²⁵

Mongolian garb includes distinctive hats and robes. Glazed pottery pieces depicting a mounted honor guard excavated in Jianwangjing 簡王 井 in Chang'an 長安 county, Shaanxi province, reveal that many men wore several varieties of Mongolian and Yuan period hats. Several standing figures from the same site also wear Mongolian-style conical

122. Rawson, "The Power of Images," p. 126.

123. Abramson, "Deep Eyes and High Noses," p. 120.

124. *Ibid.*, pp. 142–43.

125. A more thorough treatment with greater attention to variation according to region, period, and individuals may be found in *The Ming Court in Eurasia*. For useful introductory comments on funerary figurines in Ming royal tombs, see Liu Yi, *Mingdai diwang lingmu zhidu yanjiu*, pp. 426–36. Many of the tombs excavated thus far were long ago plundered, usually more than once. For instance, the only thing left in the mid-sixteenth-century tomb of Zhu Bingmao, a descendent of the Prince Qin line in Xi'an, was the funerary inscription. See Sun Gang, "Ming zongshi Zhu Bingmao muzhikao," p. 67. The tomb of one grandson of Zhu Yuanzhang, enfeoffed in Chengdu, has also been plundered. However, more than 500 ceramic funerary figures have survived. Whether figures in Mongol garb number among these pieces is unclear. They are mentioned in the brief notes by Chen Jiang 陳江 and Hu Weimin 胡衛民 on the funerary figures; see Cao Zhezhi and Sun Binggen, *Zhongguo gudai yong*, pp. 432–39. Some of the figures are now held in the Sichuan Provincial Museum; the rest are in the Archeology Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.

hats.¹²⁶ Pottery figurines of the honor guard excavated from the tomb of one of the Shu Princes 蜀王 located east of Chengdu and dating from the first third of the fifteenth century provide further evidence that Mongolian caps and gowns were standard garb at the courts of the imperial Ming family (Fig. 8.9). Those men wore narrow-sleeved robes that buttoned on the right rather than on the left, as was more typical of Chinese preferences.¹²⁷ We may tentatively add to our list a wooden figurine wearing a gown buttoned on the right and what may be a Mongolian cap found in the mid-fifteenth-century tomb of Zhu Quan 朱權 (1378–1448; sixteenth son of Hongwu), Prince Liaojian 遼簡王 in Jiangling 江陵 county, Jingzhou 荊州, Hubei province.¹²⁸ Military figures dressed in Mongolian hats and riding tunics have been found in Prince Duanyi's late fifteenth-century tomb in a southern suburb of Xi'an.¹²⁹

Funerary statues of men in Mongolian garb have been found in the tombs of imperial clansmen from the sixteenth century. Among the 110 clay figures of the honor guard found in the 1530 tomb of one Yi Prince 益王, Zhu Youbin 朱祐檣 (Nancheng county 南城縣, Jiangxi province), are ten musicians on horseback wearing "pointed round hats" 尖頂圓帽, perhaps an indication of a sartorial connection to the Mongols.¹³⁰ The 1557 tomb of a later Yi Prince, Zhu Houye 朱厚燁, also contains several porcelain funerary figures from an honor guard with high pointed hats.¹³¹

Mongolian garb is found in nearly all extant examples of honor guards interred in tombs, including at least one example from the tomb of an in-

126. Photographs of the honor guard are reproduced in Cooke, *Imperial China*, pp. 165–66. More than 300 well-preserved funerary statues are held at the Shaanxi Provincial History Museum.

127. Chengdushi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, "Chengdu Mingdai Shu Xi wang ling fajue jianbao," pp. 47–50.

128. See the line drawing and brief description in Jingzhou diqu bowuguan and Jianglingxian wenwu, "Jiangling Balingshan Mingdai Liao Jian wang mu fajue jianbao," pp. 708–9.

129. For black-and-white photographs and textual descriptions, see Xi'an shi wenwu baohu kaogusuo, "Xi'an nanjiao Huang Ming zongshi," pp. 32–35, 37–38.

130. See Jiangxisheng bowuguan, "Jiangxi Nancheng Ming Yiwang Zhu Youbin mu fajue baogao," p. 39.

131. The tomb contained 202 porcelain funerary figures. Three standing musicians and two figures mounted on horseback can be seen in the black-and-white photographs accompanying the archeological report; see Jiangxisheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, "Jiangxi Nancheng Ming Yizhuangwang mu chutu wenwu."

fluent eunuch. The tomb of Wu Jing 吳經 (d. 1533), located near Nanjing, includes an honor guard of more than 120 funerary figures. As was true in the case of princely honor guards, Wu Jing's honor guard includes several figures, both mounted and on foot, that feature Mongolian hats and riding tunics buttoned on the right.¹³²

Much more consideration is needed of the variety of ways Yuan Mongol influences manifested themselves. For instance, even a cursory examination reveals that some funerary figures in Mongolian garb have a markedly martial bearing, whereas others were entertainers. The use of Mongolian tunics and caps likely became customary over time. An honor guard rider or musician may have donned Mongolian garb not because it was Mongolian but because it had become the standard expected uniform. How conscious people were of the provenance or significance of the clothing requires further research.

These caveats aside, what significance can be drawn from the tomb figurines? First, the appearance of Mongolian caps and tunics among members of the princely honor guards closely resembles the imperial honor guard as depicted in the sixteenth-century *Emperor's Departure from the Capital* and *Emperor's Return to the Capital* scrolls. Both the funerary figurines and the scrolls reveal a variety of men—musicians, cavalry troops, and foot soldiers—with Mongolian garb. Second, the figures suggest some degree of consistency in court ritual protocol in the capital and the provinces. Third, the funerary figures in steppe gear illustrate once again the close tie between imperial power and the Mongols. If Ming emperors maintained large contingents of Mongols in the elite military units of the capital as a sign of personal power and their unique ability to transcend the Central Plains, Mongolian dress in princely honor guards may have served a similar function in the provinces (albeit on a more modest scale).

The Ming imperial family and its local scions systematically differentiated themselves from the rest of the population.¹³³ Control over foreign

132. For black-and-white photographs and brief textual descriptions, see Gu Suning's 顧蘇寧 notes in Cao Zhezhi and Sun Binggen, *Zhongguo gudai yong*, pp. 442–59. Cao notes the Yuan origins of some of the hats, but does not comment on the Mongolian riding tunics. Nor does he consider the significance of an honor guard garbed in Mongolian clothes. The specific references to Mongolian caps and gowns appear on pp. 444–45, 447–49, 454–55. The figures are now held in the Nanjing Municipal Museum.

133. The Ming court paid close attention to the details of the size, structure, and decoration of the physical plant of princely estates in an attempt to allow them suffi-

peoples was one way they made manifest their special status. Several court dances performed at banquets in the imperial palace featured men dressed in steppe, Central Asian, or Korean costume.¹³⁴ The dances were one facet of a larger ritual program intended to exalt the Ming court's position through the incorporation and subordination of neighboring peoples.

A Universal Ming Emperor?

The concept of universal rulership under the Mongols and Manchus has long formed a central element in understanding imperial rule during these "conquest dynasties." As foreign rulers who sought to legitimize their reign in the eyes of several constituencies, the Yuan and Qing emperors adopted a variety of identities—Buddhist deity, Islamic patron, Confucian sage, steppe warrior, and even European monarch.¹³⁵ Less carefully examined have been the identities adopted by Ming emperors, presumably because they did not answer to such a wide array of subject populations. The most developed studies devoted to Ming rulership have explored the often-acrimonious conflicts between the emperor and his civil bureaucracy over the Son of Heaven's proper role.

At the risk of oversimplification, by no later than the mid-fifteenth century, the civil bureaucracy had made major inroads in defining the emperor's job. He was to be a Confucian sage, to cultivate his morality assiduously and safely within the confines of the Forbidden City, to solicit humbly the opinions of his high officials, to accept their criticisms with gratitude, and to devote himself to important ritual matters. This particular vision of imperial rule left little room for many of the activities that emperors of previous dynasties or even of the early Ming would have taken for granted. These included the emperor's persona as warrior and military strategist, active formulator of government policy, traveling lord inspecting his domains, vigorous huntsman, or ruler over peoples beyond the Central Plains.

Ming emperors and their intimates bitterly contested this narrowing of the ruler's identity. As noted above, mid-fifteenth-century emperors

cient grandeur without exceeding their proper status; see Ruo Ya, "Mingdai zhuwangfu guizhi shulüe."

134. See Yu Ruji, "Yanli" 宴禮 under "Yizhisi zhizhang" 儀制司職掌, in *LBZG*, 21.16b–17b, 26a; Shen Shixing et al., *Da Ming huidian*, 73.14a–b.

135. For a discussion of universal rulership during the Yuan, see Franke, "From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God." For the Qing case, see Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, and Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*.

continued to support Tibetan Buddhist monks despite the opposition of their civil bureaucracies. Mid- and late Ming emperors, too, fought against this vision, with increasingly deleterious consequences for the dynasty.¹³⁶ A full treatment of this complex question far exceeds the scope of this chapter. Here, I offer a preliminary reconsideration of Zhengde as a universal ruler in light of the Ming imperial family's continuing engagement with the Yuan legacy.

From the very first days of his reign, Zhengde's efforts to reclaim a more martial and cosmopolitan identity as emperor provoked sharp criticism. As James Geiss has shown, he spent tens of thousands of taels of silver constructing and appointing his Leopard Quarter outside the imperial palace.¹³⁷ These living arrangements, and Zhengde's later decision to build a tent city in Xuanfu, north of Beijing, are strongly reminiscent of the Mongol emperors, who also inhabited two worlds through residence in both Chinese-style palaces and steppe-style *ger*. He staffed the Leopard Quarter, the real site of policy formulation during his reign, with many of the people his civil officials found most offensive. Not only did palace eunuchs accompany Zhengde in his varied pursuits, Tibetan Buddhist monks, Central Asian singers and dancers, Jurchen and Mongol (both first-generation and descendants of earlier immigrants) bodyguards, Muslim clerics, and Chinese military men were all frequent guests at the Leopard Quarter.¹³⁸ Zhengde frequently visited the official lodgings of foreign envoys in Beijing, spending time with the heads of Mongol and Muslim missions, trying on their clothes, and sampling Muslim cuisine.¹³⁹

Zhengde showed a keen interest in foreign lands and cultures. In the first year of his reign, he informed the Ministry of Rites, "Henceforth when various foreign (barbarian) tribute envoys come to the capital, the food and drink at banquets should be plentiful and clean. Food supplied by the postal stations along their route [to and from the capital] will be according to regulation. [It] should be supplemented to demonstrate Our intention of cherishing those from afar."¹⁴⁰ He possessed at least elementary Tibetan- and Mongolian-language skills. Chinese and Korean sources

136. In 1587, *A Year of No Significance*, Ray Huang offers a subtle evocation of Wanli's efforts to pursue interests deemed inappropriate to his exalted position.

137. Geiss, "The Leopard Quarter During the Cheng-te Reign."

138. Ibid.; Li Xun, *Zhengde huangdi daxuan*, pp. 70–94.

139. *Chungjong taewang sillok* 中宗大王實錄, 十四年九月乙巳, in Wu Han, *Chaoxian Lichao shilu zhong de Zhongguo ziliao*, 3: 929.

140. *LBZG*, 6.26a–b.

indicate (with derision) that he often spoke Mongolian with his Mongolian companions and that he wore Mongolian riding garb, including a close-fitting gown with narrow sleeves, boots, and a Mongolian cap. Chinese and Korean sources also indicate that Zhengde observed Muslim dietary restrictions at least some of the time and allowed the Muslims around him to follow these prescriptions more scrupulously.¹⁴¹ The emperor shared his bed with Central Asian women. Shen Defu notes in his miscellany that the emperor “selected the daughters of Central Asian dukes and marquises and Tatar officers for the imperial harem.”¹⁴²

Information contained in the *Veritable Records of the Chosŏn Dynasty* indicates the cosmopolitan nature of Zhengde’s entourage. One Korean observed in 1520: “Whenever the emperor ventures out on excursions, he selects two or three envoys each from the kingdoms of the Mongols, Muslims, Portuguese, Champa, and Lama 刺麻 [Tibetans?] to include in his entourage. Sometimes he studies their language; sometimes he views their skills.”¹⁴³

These were activities that violated the sensibilities of the majority of the civil bureaucracy. Late in his reign, Zhengde went so far as to prohibit the slaughter of swine, an order that flew in the face of the dietary habits of most of his subjects, especially those of the Jiangnan region. James Geiss has argued that his actions should be understood in view of Zhengde’s interest in improving relations with China’s Islamic neighbors to the west.¹⁴⁴

141. Robinson, “Disturbing Images,” p. 108.

142. Shen Defu, “Diwang qu waiguo nü,” in *YHB*, *juan* 3, 1: 74.

143. *Chungjong taewang sillok* 中宗大王實錄十五年十二月戊戌; cited in Zheng Ke-cheng, “*Chosŏn Yicho sillok* zhong zhi Ming Wuzong,” p. 153. The claims regarding the Portuguese ring true. Although Korean observers stressed the alien nature of Portuguese clothing and outlandish eating manners, they noted that the accommodations for the Portuguese envoys “were no different from those for other kingdoms.” Zhengde spent most of 1520 in Nanjing; the Portuguese arrived there in the fifth month of the same year; see *Chungjong taewang sillok* 中宗大王實錄五年十二月戊戌 in Wu Han, *Chaosian Li shilu zhong de Zhongguo ziliao*, 3: 933. For Chinese evidence of Zhengde’s interaction with the Portuguese and their interpreter and guide, a Chinese Muslim merchant named Hōja Asan, see Qiu Shusen, “Ming Wuzong yu Mingdai Huihuiren.”

144. Geiss, “The Cheng-te Emperor’s Injunction Against the Slaughter of Swine.” In “Ming Wuzong yu Mingdai Huihuiren,” Qiu Shusen also contextualizes Zhengde’s action in terms of relations with Central Asian rulers. See also Toh Hoong Teik, “Sahkyh ‘Alam.” In contrast, Li Xun (“Ming Wuzong yu zhujin”) has argued that Zhengde’s prohibition was the act of a beleaguered ruler desperate for a measure of solace and control.

Perhaps most intriguing, however, is Zhengde’s adoption of multiple personas. During his reign, Zhengde adopted a Mongolian name (Khubilai 忽必例) that unambiguously evoked Khubilai khan’s legacy; a Buddhist title, Dabao fawang 大寶法王, granted to ‘Phags pa; a Persian title, 沙吉教爛, Sahkyh ‘Alam, for a Muslim king; and high-ranking title in the Ming military, Weiwu dajiangjun taishi zhenguo gong 威武大將軍太師鎮國公.¹⁴⁵ Again, none of this endeared Zhengde to his Chinese civil officials. They instead remonstrated heatedly that he had failed to fulfill his obligations as a Chinese Son of Heaven and that he made a mockery of his position. After Zhengde’s death, editors of his reign’s Veritable Records repaid his intransigence with an unflattering, even ridiculous, portrait of his reign.¹⁴⁶ The resultant documentary record almost completely obscures Zhengde’s efforts to forge, or perhaps more accurately revive, an imperial identity as universal ruler. Below, I sketch only one facet of this identity—Zhengde’s involvement with Tibetan Buddhism.¹⁴⁷

Shen Defu, the author of a well-informed late Ming miscellany, notes that “Zhengde was enormously fond of Buddhist doctrine. He arrayed himself among the Tibetan monks, chanting [in a manner] indistinguishable from them. He went so far as to use the title Daqing Dharma King 大慶法王. [Zhengde] smelted an official seal of [precious] metal that he granted [to this fictitious personage] as a patent.” Zhengde also used 1,300 taels of gold to gild Buddhist statues.¹⁴⁸ During his reign, Zhengde ordered the construction of Wanshou Temple 萬壽寺 within the precincts of the Forbidden City, “where the emperor personally chanted [sutras] with the

145. The titles are given in Tan Qian, *Guo que*, 49.3077, cited in Satō Hisashi, “Min no Busō no ‘katsubutsu’ geisei ni tsuite,” p. 276. Information on the emperor’s titles is not included in the *Wuzong shilu* entry for this date (121.3b–4a). A slightly different version of this passage may be found in Huang Jingfang 黃景昉, *Guo shi wei yi* 國史唯疑, *juan* 5 (Xuxiu siku quanshu, 432: 83), cited in Zheng Kecheng, “*Chosŏn Yicho sillok* zhong zhi Ming Wuzong,” p. 151. The translations here follow Toh Hoong Teik, “Sahkyh ‘Alam,” pp. 6–8. Zhengde also adopted the Tibetan name Rin chen dpal ldan, or “Glorious Gem” (Toh, p. 7).

146. For discussion, see Robinson, *Bandits, Eunuchs, and the Son of Heaven*, pp. 117–19.

147. In addition to the essays by Geiss and Toh noted above, Ma Mingdao 馬明道 has also explored Zhengde’s engagement with Islam. Ma argues that the Leopard Quarter was actually a mosque. See Ma Mingdao, *Mingchao huangjia xinyangkao chugao*, pp. 69–76.

148. Shen Defu, “Shi jiao sheng shuai” 釋教盛衰, in *YHB*, *juan* 27, 3: 679. Ming- and Qing-period authors seem to have used the titles *Daqing fawang* and *Dabao fawang* interchangeably.

Tibetan monks.¹⁴⁹ In 1512, the year that one of the dynasty's largest rebellions was quelled, Zhengde arranged for such Tibetan monks as Daqing Dharma King 大慶法王 Rin chen dpal ldan 領占班丹 and Dajue Dharma King 大覺法王 Bkra shis bzan po 著藏肖卜, to reside in the Da longshan huguo 大隆善護國寺 Temple, which was significantly expanded at this time.¹⁵⁰ As noted above, the temple complex had enjoyed Ming imperial patronage for more than a century by this time.¹⁵¹ The same year, two imperially commissioned steles written in Tibetan (梵字) were erected near the relics (*sheli* 舍利; Skt. śarīra) pagodas.¹⁵² The Ming court also commissioned the production of Tibetan *thangkas* during Zhengde's reign.¹⁵³

Much of the emperor's personal interest in Tibetan Buddhism was firmly rooted in long-standing customs of the Ming court. Perhaps wishing to squelch the young emperor's interest in activities inappropriate to his office, immediately upon Zhengde's accession to the throne, the minister of rites submitted a memorial protesting religious activities within the Forbidden City:

I have recently learned that the Daoist Perfected One 真人 Chen Yingxun 陳應循, the Tibetan Dynastic Preceptor 西番國師 Nor bu rgyal mtshan 那卜堅參, and others each lead their disciples, gaining praise for their exorcisms [purification rituals]. On several occasions, they have entered the Hall of Imperial Tranquility. In front of the tablets honoring the dead, they [behave] without a shred of decorum. There is no one in the capital that is not astounded.¹⁵⁴

149. Shen Defu, "Zhushang chong yijiao" 主上崇異教, in *YHB*, *juan* 27, 3: 683.

150. Reconstruction of the Tibetan names based on Satō Hisashi, "Mintei ni okeru ramakyō sūhai," p. 292.

151. "Chongguo si" 崇國寺, *DJJW*, 1.33; Yu Minzhong et al., "Chengshi" 城市 under "Neicheng xi cheng si" 內城西城四, in *Qinding xixia jiuwen kao*, 54.843.

152. "Chongguo si," *DJJW*, 1.33; Yu Minzhong et al., "Chengshi" under "Neicheng xicheng si," in *Qinding xixia jiuwen*, 54.843. The account in *DDJW* explicitly comments on the foreign nature of the Tibetan inscriptions, which the authors could not read.

153. Kidd, "Tibetan Painting in China." Kidd discusses *thangkas* with Chinese inscriptions from the years 1477, 1478, 1479, and 1513. The inscription from the 1513 *thangka* appears to link it to the Huguo si.

154. *Wuzong shilu* 武宗實錄, 1.172–b; Shen Defu, "Zhushang chong yijiao" 主上崇異教, in *YHB*, *juan* 27, 3: 683. The minister of rites requested that these men's titles be revoked, the gifts, seals, and title patents 誥命 granted by the throne be seized, and that they be driven from the court. The emperor agreed to revoke the title of one or two men and reclaimed their gifts. He also forbid, upon penalty of severe punishment, the practice of gaining access to the Forbidden City through personal connections. Al-

The minister's complaints about Tibetan monks' unfettered access to imperial space at the turn of the sixteenth century are entirely consistent with what we have seen of officialdom's objections during the fifteenth century. His claims that people in the capital were astonished at the alleged impropriety of Tibetan monks within the imperial palace, however, ring hollow. The population of the capital was well aware of the close ties between Tibetan Buddhism and the imperial family. Like Ming emperors before him, Zhengde continued to send bilingual letters of patent to leading Tibetan clerics.¹⁵⁵ Patronage of Tibetan Buddhism was a defining element of imperial identity during the first half of the Ming dynasty.¹⁵⁶

To return to Zhengde's personal interest in what officials of the day declared "heterodox doctrines," I would suggest that he intended to construct a portfolio of identities in harmony more with his vision of imperial rule rather than with the models advanced by the civil bureaucracy.

Evidence from blue-and-white porcelains poses intriguing questions about Zhengde's aspirations as universal ruler. Although research related to the aesthetics and technical details of production of Ming porcelains has advanced to a high level in recent decades, many questions relating to the social, cultural, and political history of porcelains remain unclear. Among them is that throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, imperial kilns produced Chinese blue-and-white porcelains bearing Sanskrit and Tibetan inscriptions.¹⁵⁷ These porcelains offer further evidence of the imperial family's continuing engagement with Tibetan Buddhism. Specimens have

though Shen Defu writes with apparent approval of the emperor's strict observation of the *Ancestral Injunctions*, we know from later developments that during the Zhengde reign, such prohibitions were not observed with any great punctiliousness. The minister was not alone in his protests. In September 1505, another official called for razing temples and monasteries in and around the capital, driving off the Dharma King Tibetan monks, and halting imperial patronage for "useless ceremonies" (*Wuzong shilu*, 4.16a). The reconstruction of the Tibetan monk's name comes from Satō Hisashi, "Mintei ni okeru ramakyō sūhai," p. 292.

155. For two bilingual examples dating from 1507 and 1515 held in the Potola Temple, see Su Bai, "Lasa Budalagong zhuyao diantang he kuzang de bufen Mingdai wenshu," p. 44.

156. For further details of Zhengde's interest in Tibetan Buddhism, see Nan Bingwen, *Fojiao mimi zongjiao yu Mingdai shehui*, pp. 64–69.

157. For an argument that dates the establishment of the Ming imperial kilns to the Xuande reign, see Wang Guangyao, "Mingdai yuqichang de jianli." Zhengde-period imperial porcelains with Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit inscriptions also survive. I thank Jan Stuart of the Freer Museum, Washington, DC, for generously providing me with information regarding a Zhengde blue-and-white porcelain with an Arabic inscription.

surfaced in the former Qing imperial collections, in various temples in Tibet, and in temples in Beijing. Zhengde seems to have commissioned porcelains bearing an especially wide variety of foreign inscriptions.

Based on dating inscriptions, shape, and painting styles, Lü Chenglong has recently argued that several blue-and-white porcelains with 'Phags pa script inscriptions formerly attributed to the late Yuan period were actually produced during the Zhengde period by imperial kilns located in Jingdezhen in emulation of Yuan pieces.¹⁵⁸ Named after its developer, 'Phags pa, the eponymous script was designated one of the official writing systems of the Great Yuan *ulus*, which used it extensively but never exclusively in administrative documents and seals. Lü's explanations for why imperial kilns might have produced such imitations include efforts "to satisfy the Zhengde emperor's worshipful attitude toward the Yuan period Dynastic Preceptor 'Phags pa or to provide for use by national preceptors and Living Buddhas within the Leopard Quarter, or possibly as rewards to Mongolian and Tibetan lamas."¹⁵⁹

A more likely interpretation is that Zhengde was attempting to establish a series of flattering historical connections that linked himself to Khubilai khan. James Geiss has demonstrated that Zhengde attempted to revive the martial traditions of the early Ming rulers. In fact, one might easily extend these early Ming traditions back to the Mongols. As we have seen above, court paintings from the first half of the Ming dynasty reveal extensive Mongolian influences in terms of martial activities, hunting on horseback, archery, and clothing. That Zhengde would attempt to portray himself as a direct descendent of Yongle, and ultimately of Khubilai, is thus not unexpected.

Zhengde's posturing was also diplomatically astute. Although the 'Phags pa script did not gain wide acceptance during the Yuan period, it was inextricably tied to Khubilai and his famed Tibetan monk and advisor 'Phags pa. Thus even if the Tibetan religious leaders to whom Zhengde presented

158. Lü Chenglong, "Guanyu Basibazi kuan qinghua ciqi niandai zhi wojian." Lü's work builds upon the observations of Ge Shike, "Yetan Basibawen kuan qinghua ciqi de niandai." On the debate whether porcelains with the Zhizheng reign title were produced during the late Yuan or the mid-Ming, see Cao Ganyuan, "'Zhizheng nianzhi' kuan caiciwan yu Jiajing honglü caici"; Zhang Ying, "Cong 'Zhizheng nianzhi' kuan caiciwan de faxian"; idem, "Dui 'Yetan Basibawen kuan qinghua ciqi de niandai' yiwèn de shangque." See also Liu Zhenhua, "Jingdezhen Longzhuge cang qinghua ciwan Basibazi kuan kaochaji."

159. Lü Chenglong, "Guanyu Basibazi kuan qinghua ciqi niandai zhi wojian," p. 79.

these porcelains could not read the 'Phags pa inscriptions, they could readily understand the message. Through the distribution of these imperially manufactured gifts, the current leader of the Ming dynasty was adopting the role of a later-day Khubilai. The not-so-subtle inference was that these contemporary Tibetan leaders were then later-day versions of 'Phags pa.¹⁶⁰ It was a set of references flattering to both sides, and it owed nothing to Zhengde's Chinese bureaucracy. If anything, it suggested a time when Chinese officials were marginalized, when much of the most critical functions of government had been turned over to such non-Chinese groups as Persians, Arabs, Uighurs, Mongols, Khitans, and other Central Asians.¹⁶¹

Concluding Remarks

We are in the midst of an important re-evaluation of the Ming court. In an examination of the interplay of Buddhist art and architecture with Ming imperial modes, Marsha Weidner Haufler has noted the "exhilarating expansion of geographic and cultural horizons imposed by traditional, literati-centered accounts of Ming art" to be gained by considering the wider scope of participants (including women, ethnic minorities, and eunuchs in the capital and the provinces) involved in such dynamics.¹⁶² Recent studies by such scholars as Kenneth Hammond, Richard Barnhart, and others also amply demonstrate the value of decentering literati writings and trying to repopulate the Ming court in its full complexity and diversity. This re-evaluation of court dynamics is one element of a larger project, a reconceptualization of Ming history, indeed Chinese history as a whole, that attempts to put in more realistic perspective the roles, tastes, and views of the literati.

160. In 1578, the powerful Mongol leader Altan Khan and Bsod nams rgya mtsho, the head of the 'Bras spuns monastery in Lhasa, announced precisely this kind of relation. Altan Khan was named the reincarnation of Khubilai, and the Tibetan teacher the reincarnation of 'Phags pa. For a biographical note on Altan Khan by Henry Serruys that refers to this relation, see Goodrich and Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, pp. 6-9. For extended discussion of these historical allusions and the place of the Ming court in the revival of Lamaism on the steppe, see Serruys, "Early Lamaism in Mongolia."

161. Other blue-and-white porcelains produced in imperial kilns during the Zhengde period feature Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic inscriptions. See Geng Baochang, *Qinghua youlibong*, color plates, 53, 56, 66, and 77-79 (on pp. 58, 61, 71, 83-85, respectively); Li Yihua, "Liangjian Zhengde chao Alabowen Bosiwen ciqi," p. 50; and Zhao Hong, "Ming Zhengde qinghua ciqi ji youguan wenti," p. 30.

162. Weidner, "Imperial Engagement with Buddhist Art and Architecture," p. 139.

Ming literati wrote about elements of court life that interested them or flattered them or enhanced their role. Minimized or completely omitted were groups, ethos, practices, and objects that did not harmonize with literati tastes and perspectives. The resultant documentary record is often deeply flawed and misleading. This preliminary account of the Ming imperial family's engagement with the Mongol Yuan legacy has drawn on a variety of evidence: scattered casual observations by literati; evidence in government regulations that took for granted the presence of foreign and military personnel at the Ming court; and finally, materials not subject to the literati's brush. This last category includes pictorial representations of court activities that preserve elements bowdlerized from other accounts; funerary art buried in princely tombs that strongly suggests continuing concern with the Yuan legacy in clothing and material culture; and porcelains produced at imperial kilns.

During the first half of the Ming dynasty, the imperial family's identity was deeply influenced by the Mongol legacy. Even as Hongwu publicly strove to distinguish his new, pure-Chinese regime from what he described as the pernicious influences of the Mongols, he maintained many institutional practices from the Yuan period. The imperial family's links with the Mongols emerged with special clarity during the reign of his son, Yongle. In the public sphere, especially in the arenas of foreign policy, the military, and overseas trade, Yongle implemented a number of policies that bore more than a superficial resemblance to those of the Mongols.

In areas more narrowly related to the imperial family, Ming rulers preserved links to the Mongol legacy. During the fifteenth century, emperors periodically commissioned court painters to portray them in clothing styles and activities indistinguishable from those of steppe *khaghan*. Throughout the first half of the dynasty, Ming emperors included Mongol hats and riding tunics in their wardrobes. The large, finely detailed *Emperor's Procession* scrolls from the late sixteenth century include Mongol personnel or Chinese personnel dressed in Mongol clothing. Funerary figurines of men garbed in Mongolian dress have been found in the tombs of many Ming imperial princes from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Princely courts often replicated on a more modest scale the trappings of the imperial court in Beijing—bodyguards, legal privileges, impressive architecture, and incorporation into imperial sacrifices. All these features defined them as imperial relatives and distinguished them from the rest of the population. One facet of this greater Ming court was a lasting association with the Great Yuan *ulus*.

Another important element of Ming imperial engagement with the Yuan court included the patronage of Tibetan Buddhism. Under the Yuan, Tibetan Buddhist monks such as 'Phags pa enjoyed the generous patronage of the imperial family and considerable renown within capital society. If anything, the association between the imperial family and Tibetan Buddhism grew more exclusive during the first half of the Ming dynasty. Susan Naquin has noted that Tibetan Buddhism did not have a wide popular base of support among the broader population of Ming Beijing.¹⁶³ Tibetan monks, however, conducted court rituals, enjoyed privileged status, and gained access to the jealously guarded, private world of the emperors. Temples linked to Tibetan Buddhism through patronage, architectural style, or religious personnel dotted the Forbidden City, the capital, and surrounding counties.

Acknowledgment of the Ming imperial family's ongoing engagement with the Yuan legacy forces reconsideration of the tenth Ming emperor, Zhengde. Conventional wisdom portrays Zhengde as a bizarre aberration whose idiosyncratic interest in Mongols, Tibetan Buddhism, Central Asia, and Islam won him a deserved reputation for the absurd. There is no denying Zhengde's personal excess. However, when considered in terms of the ruling Zhu lineage's extensive engagement with the Yuan, many elements of his behavior seem far less eccentric. Zhengde's death in 1521 marked the end of an age.

Zhengde's death without an heir led to the enthronement of his cousin, Jiajing, who had been raised in distant Anlu, Huguang. Many fine studies have examined the wide-ranging and intensely personal debates over the proper ritual treatment due the new emperor's parents that unfolded during Jiajing's reign.¹⁶⁴ This transition represented not only a shift in political power but also in the identity of the imperial family. Raised far

163. Naquin, *Peking*, p. 150. This point should not be overstated. Tantric statues were sold in upscale markets in Beijing. Jiajing was deeply worried that "the ignorant" in the city would rush to acquire the Tibetan relics if they were simply buried. He ordered them desecrated, and the ashes scattered. All told, 169 gold and silver statues and 13,000 *jin* of various bone relics were ordered destroyed. See *Shizong shilu*, 187.4b–5a 嘉靖十五年五月乙丑; Shen Defu, "Fei Fo shi" 廢佛氏, under "Shi dao" 釋道, *YHB bu yi, juan* 4, 3: 916. For a broad discussion of images of Tibetan Buddhism in Ming society, see Shen Weirong, "'Kaijū en-i' gensetsu ni okeru Mindai Chūgoku to Chibetto no seiji bunka kankei," pp. 264–310. See also He Xiaorong, "Mingdai huangdi chong-feng Zangchuan fojiao qianxi," pp. 136–37, for scattered references to the impact of Tibetan Buddhism in Beijing, Nanjing, and Mount Wutai.

164. Geiss, "The Chia-ching Reign"; Fisher, *The Chosen One*.

outside the walls of the Forbidden City and the center of Ming court culture, Jiajing's upbringing did not feature so prominently the trappings of the Mongol legacy. Perhaps princely courts distant from Beijing were more inclined to partake of new fashions and tastes, to shed their identification with the Great Yuan *ulus* more rapidly than the imperial court in the Forbidden City.

For instance, Jiajing severely curtailed imperial patronage of Tibetan Buddhism.¹⁶⁵ Shen Defu notes:

In general [the emperor] was happy [only with] the complete elimination of whatsoever pertained to the Buddhist faith. For instance, under previous reigns, Da Cien Temple was the most flourishing of Buddhist temples. During the reigns of Chenghua, Hongzhi, and Zhengde, the dharma king, the dynastic preceptor, [and others] who resided here [numbered] ten thousand men. All of them depended on imperial patronage. During the early Jiajing period, all were removed. [The court] drove the Tibetan *sangha* to other places. In the twenty-second year [of the Jiajing reign, 1543], [the emperor] ordered the temple razed. Not even a scrap of wood or piece of tile remained.¹⁶⁶

Shen here emphasizes a clear break not only from Zhengde but also from more long-standing family traditions. Some high officials attacked the Tantric statue of the Joyous Buddhas housed in the Da Cien Temple as "an ugly custom of the former Yuan dynasty that should be destroyed and discarded." Jiajing fully concurred, calling it a "licentious statue of the barbarian demons."¹⁶⁷

165. Turrell Wylie ("Lama Tribute in the Ming Dynasty," p. 338) has framed the question differently, stressing the fact that Tibetan monks stopped coming to the Ming court. He speculates that the return of the Mongols to the Kokonor region rendered Ming imperial patronage superfluous.

166. Shen's comments appear in a discussion of Jiajing's passion for Daoism. See Shen Defu, "Ci baiguan shi" 賜百官食 under "Liechao" 列朝, in *YHB*, *juan* 1, 1: 5. See also *Shizong shilu* 世宗實錄, 272.5a. See also Tan Qian, *Guo que*, 58.3642. Citing the *Qinding rixia jiuwen kao*, Naquin (*Peking*, p. 150775) dates the destruction of this temple to 1535.

167. Shen Defu, "Jingshi diwang miao" 京師帝王廟 under "Liechao," in *YHB*, *juan* 1, 1: 2; Sun Chengze, "Diwang miao" 帝王廟, in *Tianfu guangji*, 9.87. Jiajing failed to sever the Ming court's ties to Tibetan Buddhism. As noted above, the Ming court enjoyed an international reputation as a center for Tibetan Buddhism. When in the 1570s and 1580s, Mongols wanted to secure copies of Tibetan scriptures or to learn painting techniques in the Tibetan tradition, they turned to the Ming court. The Ming court often dispatched Tibetan monks to deliver these items to Mongolian leaders on the steppe. For more details, see Robinson, *The Ming Court in Eurasia*.

Also suggestive of the emerging new view of the Yuan legacy was an effort to remove Khubilai khan from the legitimate line of dynastic emperors. For instance, Jiajing's reign witnessed the abolition of offerings for Khubilai that had been conducted twice a year by Shuntian prefectural officials.¹⁶⁸ In 1545, after some debate, Jiajing struck Khubilai khan and his five ministers from the list of those who received offerings at the Rulers Temple.¹⁶⁹ Shen Defu offers an explanation of Jiajing's decision: "At the time, [the emperor] detested the caiff raiders for [their] incursions [into Ming territory]."¹⁷⁰ Perhaps, but the major raids into Beijing's suburbs by the great Mongol leader, Altan Khan (1508–82), were still five years in the future. Jiajing's actions suggest his awareness of the continued association between the Ming imperial family and the great Mongol ruler Khubilai khan. His rejection of that association demonstrates the importance of the Mongol legacy to understanding politics and identity at the Ming court.¹⁷¹

168. See "Diwang lingqin" 帝王陵寢 under "Cijisi zhizhang" 祠祭司職掌, in *LBZG*, 30.15a; and "Lizhi si jili si" 禮志四吉禮四 under "Jingshi jiumiao" 京師九廟, in *MS*, 50.1306. This passage does not make clear the location of the Temple for the Yuan Founder 元世祖廟.

169. See "Lidai diwang" 歷代帝王 under "Cijisi zhizhang" 祠祭司職掌, in *LBZG*, 29.2b. See *Shizong shilu* 296.2b; "Lizhi si jili si" under "Lidai Diwang lingmiao," in *MS*, *juan* 50; and Sun Chengze, "Diwang miao," in *Tianfu guangji*, 9.88.

170. Shen Defu, "Diwang peiting" 帝王配亭 under "Liechao," in *YHB*, *juan* 1, 1: 3.

171. The decision to eliminate offerings to Khubilai needs to be considered in the context of wider intellectual, political, and foreign-relations developments. See my *The Ming Court in Eurasia*.