

Not Quite a Hybrid System: Khubilai's Buddhist Administration in Southeastern China

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Introduction

After the Mongol conquest, Yuan political institutions evolved unique features as a result of the combination of Mongolian institutions with the pre-existing Chinese autocratic bureaucratic system. Something of an academic consensus has formed around the hybrid system of government during the Yuan dynasty.¹ However, debate continues to surround certain questions about the formation of this hybrid system. Taking into account the pressure from Mongolian aristocrats who insisted on preserving the Mongol traditional political system, Khubilai Khan (忽必烈汗, r.1260-1294) formulated a basic principle for constructing the early Yuan political system, namely “Refer to the previous Khans’ grand plan, while also discussing previous dynastic systems”.² Thus, most scholars credit

¹ John D. Langlois, Jr. ed., *China under Mongo Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 18; Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett ed., *The Cambridge History of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), vol.6, 414-608; Chen Gaohua 陳高華 and Shi Weimin 史衛民, *Zhongguo zhengzhi zhidushi—yuandaijuan* 中國政治制度通史—元代卷 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1996), 2;406-07; Li Zhian 李治安, *Yuandai zhengzhi zhidu yanjiu* 元代政治制度研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2003); Hsiao Ch’i-ch’ing 蕭啟慶, *Neibeiguo er waizhongguo: mengyuanshi yanjiu* 內北國而外中國：蒙元史研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 30-31.

² Song Lian 宋濂, *Yuanshi* 元史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), 4:65. “稽列聖之洪規·講前代之定制。”

Khubilai with having been the main formulator of a dual system, a hybrid that partially adopted Han ways(漢法) of government.³ Comparatively less attention has focused on administrative innovations in the mid and late Yuan. In recent years, some scholars have searched for traditional Chinese bureaucratic elements in the political system of the Mongol empire, placing the adoption of Han ways earlier in that era.⁴ In the midst of this ongoing discussion, the character of the dualistic system and the true role of Khubilai and his successors in its formation deserve further exploration.

In addition to the system of government administration, and intertwined with it, was a hierarchy of Buddhist administrative institutions. Most scholarship on this administration has focused on Buddhism in Tibet while overlooking other regions, especially

³ Zhou Liangxiao 周良霄, *Hubilie 忽必烈*(Changchun: Jilin jiaoyu chubanshe,1986); “Lun Hubilie han 論忽必烈汗, *Social Science in China*, 2(1981); Bai Gang 白鋼, “Guanyu Hubilie ‘fuhui hanfa’ de lishi kaocha”關於忽必烈“附會漢法”的歷史考察, *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 4(1981); Yao Dali 姚大力, “Lun menggu youmu guojia de zhengzhi zhidu” 論蒙古遊牧國家的政治制度(Nanjing University Dissertation, 1986); Morris Rossabi, *Khublai Khan: His life and Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1988); Wang Mengsun 王萌孫“Shisan shiji zhi menggu diguo yu hanwenhua”十三世紀之蒙古帝國與漢文化, ed. in *Yuanshi luncong 元史論叢*(第八輯)(Nanchang: Jianxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), vol.8.

⁴ Chen Dezhi 陳得芝, *Mengyuanshi yanjiu daolun 蒙元史研究導論* (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2012), 168-186.

Southeastern China.⁵ Little attention has focused on the Buddhist administration as part of the hybrid institutional history of the Yuan dynasty.⁶ After the Mongol conquest of China, the Yuan dynasty faced the difficult task of administering a culturally and religiously divergent population. Southeastern China, especially the Jiangnan region, posed special difficulties because it had been the seat of the Southern Song regime. This paper aims to contribute to the discussion of the Yuan's dualistic system by examining the administrative policies applied to Chinese Buddhism in the Southeast.

Traditions of Buddhist Affairs Administration before the Yuan

The two elements in the hybridization of Mongolian institutions with the Chinese administrative traditions of the Central Plains were summed up in two instructions. The Mongol aspects were based on the existing institutions of the current dynasty, while the Chinese aspects were based on Tang and Song statutes, with additional reference to the

⁵ Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing 蕭啟慶, *Mengyuanshi xinyan* 蒙元史新研 (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua chuban, 1994), 430-431; 498; Hu Qide 胡其德, *Mengyuan diguo chuqi de zhengjiao guanxi* 蒙元帝國初期的政教關係 (Taipei: Huamulan wenhua chubanshe, 2009), 1-2; Chen Dezhi, *Mengyuanshi yanjiu daolun*, 198-199.

⁶ Certain scholars have contributed a great deal of research about Yuan institutions of Buddhism administration, such as Guo Peng 郭鵬 in *Songyuan fojiao* 宋元佛教 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1981); Xie Chongguang 謝重光 and Bai Wengu 白文固 in *Zhongguo sengguan zhidushi* 中國僧官制度史 (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1990); Ren Yimin 任宜敏 in *Zhongguo fojiaoshi—yuandai* 中國佛教史—元代 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2005), and others. However, little of this work takes the perspective of dualistic comparison and historical transition that links the perspective of culture history.

systems in place under the Liao and Jin dynasties.⁷ The “Current dynasty” referred to the Mongol empire. The adoption of Chinese structures relied at its core on the Tang and Song traditions, with reference to the northern regimes as well.⁸ If we examine the Buddhist administrative institutions in Southeastern China from the perspective of the hybrid system, it is important first to survey these distinct administrative traditions.⁹

After its introduction to China around AD 100 the influence of Buddhism gradually expanded, and correspondingly an integrated administrative system took form. Institutions for Buddhist administration were founded during the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-420) and expanded gradually in the following years. Under the Tang an institutional framework emerged which largely persisted until the Song dynasty. The secular administrations of the General Secretariat (*zhongshu* 中書), Chancellery (*menxia* 門下), Court of State

⁷ Hao Jing 郝經, *Lingchuanji* 陵川集, *Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書, 32:361. “以國朝之成法·援唐宋之典故·參遼金之遺制。”

⁸ Bai Gang, “Guanyu Hubilie ‘fuhui hanfa’ de lishi kaocha”, 95; 100-02.

⁹ In Hao Jing’s words, the adoption of Chinese structures is defined as including traditions of the Tang, the Song, and the northern regimes. Song traditions here refer mainly to the Northern Song rather than Southern Song practices. Yuan’s usage of *hanfa* 漢法 means the “Northern China ways” or more specifically the “Jin ways”. (Hao Jing, *Lingchuanji*, 32:361). However, within the realm of Buddhist administration, there was little difference between Northern and Southern Song. Moreover, as far as the main administrative principles are concerned, the traditions of the northern regimes and the Song dynasty were also largely identical. (Bai and Xie, *Zhongguo sengguan zhidushi*, 155-207). Therefore, following Hao Jing’s usage of *hanfa*, I will use the term “Han traditions” throughout this paper to indicate the main policies that the Yuan inherited from Western Xia, Jin and Song and which existed alongside the Mongol institutions in the hybrid system.

Ceremonial (*honglusi* 鴻臚寺) and the Ministry of Sacrifices from the Department of State Affairs (*shangshu cibubu* 尚書祠部) – all working within the central government administration – regulated organized Buddhism, granted religious certificates as well as titles to Buddhist clergy and temples, and selected abbots. Meanwhile, the Buddhist Registry for the Avenues of the Capital (*zuoyoujie senglusi* 左、右街僧錄司), which worked as the central government's direct administrator of Buddhist institutions, was only responsible for the policy implementation and various lower-level affairs of Buddhist accounting, examination, and practice. Real administrative power sat with the Ministry of Sacrifices from the Department of State Affairs, and the Court of State Ceremonial, rather than with the authorities from the Buddhist Registry for the Avenues of the Capital, whose policymaking relied on the previous two offices.¹⁰ In short, Buddhism was mainly administered by lay central governmental institutions during the Song dynasty, with Buddhist administrative offices only playing a minor role.

The situation was similar at the provincial level. After studying Jiangnan's temple gazetteers and works by literati discussing the histories of local Buddhist temples, it becomes obvious that it was not Buddhist administration offices such as the Subprefectural Buddhist Registry (*sengzhengsi* 僧正司), but rather local lay officers who had the greater role in supervising Buddhism.¹¹ Chi-Chiang Huang's research on the relationship between

¹⁰ Bai and Xie, *Zhongguo sengguan zhidushi*, 210.

¹¹ There are various primary sources that lead to this particular notion, see for instance: Wu Zhijing 吳之鯨, *Wulin fanzhi* 武林梵志 in Bai Wenhua 白文化 ed., *Zhongguo fosizhi congkan* 中國佛寺志叢刊 (Yangzhou: Guangling guji keyinshe, 1996).

Hangzhou literati and Buddhism in the Northern Song demonstrates that literati of both private and official status maintained positive and reciprocal relations with Buddhists in order to preserve the effectiveness of their governance.¹² My estimation is that this situation increased during the Southern Song period because Jiangnan became the core region of the regime. An obvious example of this process was the forced occupation of many temples for the use of government institutions or as private temples, residences and gardens after Gaozong (高宗, r.1127-1162) moved to the south.¹³ This suggests the enormous extent to which Buddhism might have been controlled by lay governmental offices in applied administrative practices in Jiangnan.

In the Central Plains, the administrative institutions of Buddhist affairs had been affiliated with the civil administrative system since they were founded in the Eastern Jin dynasty. A continuous trend toward secularization is perceptible during the Song dynasty, as broader interaction with lay society promoted lay officials' intervention in Buddhist administration.¹⁴ The general development of secularization pertains also to the

¹² Chi-Chiang Huang, "Elite and Clergy in Northern Sung Hang-chou: A Convergence of Interest" in Peter N. Gregory and Daniel Getz ed., *Buddhism in the Sung* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 295-339.

¹³ Zhou Mi 周密, *Guixin zashi* 癸辛雜識 (後集) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 73; Huang Minzhi 黃敏枝, *Songdai fojiao shehui jingjishi lunji* 宋代佛教社會經濟史論集 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1989), 289-300.

¹⁴ Liu Pujiang 劉浦江, "Songdai zongjiao de shisuhua yu pingminhua" 宋代宗教的世俗化與平民化, *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 2(2003); Mark Halperin, *Out of the Cloister: Literati Perspectives on Buddhism in Sung China, 960-1279* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 61-65.

development of institutional settings in Southeastern China. The main feature of Buddhist administrative policy under the Song was its largely secular institutional mode of governing Buddhist affairs, including both issues related to the court and disputes between Buddhist and other organizations. The term “secular” as used here originally comes from a Yuan comment about the Song dynasty’s Buddhist administrative mode, which describes it as governance by lay officials.¹⁵ This feature was noted by many contemporary scholars.¹⁶ Furthermore, the policies of the two contemporary northern regimes of the Jin dynasty (1115-1234) and Western Xia dynasty (1038-1227) were to a large extent influenced by Buddhist administration as practiced by the Song, aside from the granting of the titles of National Preceptor (*guoshi* 國師) and Imperial Preceptor (*dishi* 帝師). The management of Buddhist affairs in these states was not free of lay officials’ intervention, even though the Buddhist authorities’ status was higher than under the Song dynasty.¹⁷ The Mongols, in contrast, adopted substantially different strategies to govern Buddhism.

¹⁵ Shi Nianchang 釋念常, *Fozu lidai tongzai* 佛祖歷代通載, ed. in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1998), 22:460. “以俗制於僧.”

¹⁶ See Ruth Dunnell, “The Hsia Origins of the Yuan Institution of Imperial Preceptor,” *Asia Major* 1(1992), 86; Bai and Xie, *Zhongguo sengguan zhidushi*, 4; You Biao 游彪, *Songdai siyuan jingji shigao* 宋代寺院經濟史稿 (Baoding: Hebei daxue chubanshe, 2003), 1-29.

¹⁷ Yuwen Maozhao 宇文懋昭, corrected by Cui Wenyin 崔文印, *Dajin guozhi jiaozheng* 大金國志校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 36:517-18; Shi Jinbo 史金波, *Xixia fojiao shilue* 西夏佛教史略 (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1988), 150-154; Ruth Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High:*

With the collapse of the Song regime and the start of Mongol rule, the nature of religious administration entered a new period, influenced by Mongol attitudes and strategies towards religion in general and Buddhism in particular. While Shamanism was the original belief of the Mongols, Buddhism had started to capture Mongol rulers' attention since the era of Chinggis Khan (成吉思汗, r.1206-1227), who established relations with several Buddhists. After the conquest of the Jin dynasty, the eminent Chan master Zhongguan (中觀 d. 1220) and his disciple Haiyun (海雲, 1203-1257) met a Mongolian prince in 1214. Under the recommendation of Muqali (木華黎, 1170-1223), they were granted the status of Darqan, and allowed by Chinggis Khan to gather monks under their protection in 1219.¹⁸ This could be seen as the earliest record of the connections between Mongol administration and Chinese Buddhism. However, Buddhism was treated differently from the Daoist religious community until the reign of Ögedei Khan (窩闊台汗,

Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-century Xia (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 63;145-156.

¹⁸ Nianchang, *Fozu lidai tongzai*, 21:417; Christopher P. Atwood, "Validation by Holiness or Sovereignty: Religious Toleration as Political Theology in the Mongol World Empire of the Thirteenth Century," *The International History Review*, 26:2(2004), 244-45; Qiao Ji 喬吉, *Menggu fojiaoshi: beiyuan shiqi (1368-1634)* 蒙古佛教史—北元時期 (1368-1634) (Huhehaote: Neimenggu renmin chubanshe, 2007), 3-4.

r.1229-1241) when its status changed due to the efforts of Yelu Chucai (耶律楚材, 1189-1243) and Haiyun.¹⁹

After Chan master Zhongguan died in 1220, Haiyun became the head of the Chan school. He was well respected by the Mongol regime to govern the empire's Buddhist affairs.²⁰ In 1231, he was granted a reward by Ögedei Khan.²¹ After Güyük Khan (貴由汗, r.1246-1248) succeeded to the throne of the Mongol Empire in 1247, he also issued an imperial decree which distributed an enormous grant of gold to Haiyun and additionally appointed him chief of all the Buddhist monks of the empire.²² This suggests that the initial basic strategy of the Mongol rulers was to nominate Buddhists to govern Buddhist affairs. When Möngke Khan (蒙哥汗, r.1251-1259) succeeded Güyük, he nominated Haiyun again in the first year of his succession, confirming the policy of previous Khans. More importantly, he granted him an official seal of authority to governing Buddhist affairs, a token of power normally granted to officials charged with civil or military responsibilities in previous dynasties, but not for Buddhist affairs.²³ Haiyun died in 1257,

¹⁹ Christopher P. Atwood, "Validation by Holiness or Sovereignty: Religious Toleration as Political Theology in the Mongol World Empire of the Thirteenth Century", 249.

²⁰ Cheng Jufu 程钜夫, "Haiyunjian heshang tabei" 海雲簡和尚塔碑, in *Xuelouji* 雪樓集, *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, 6:70-2.

²¹ Nianchang, *Fozu lidai tongzai*, 21:418.

²² Nianchang, *Fozu lidai tongzai*, 21:420.

²³ According to the *Fozu lidai tongzai*, in 1251 Möngke declared that Haiyun would continue to govern matters related to Buddhism, while the religion's institutions would continue to be exempt from taxation.

and in approximately the same year, another Chan master, Xueting Fuyu (雪庭福裕, 1203-1275), was summoned by Möngke Khan and granted the tally of the Chief Office of Buddhist Affairs (*dusengsheng* 都僧省). Khubilai cited his appreciation for this officer.²⁴ Thus, every Mongolian Khan since Chinggis had been connected with eminent Chinese Buddhists and had appointed them to govern the affairs of their religion. With Möngke Khan, this policy gradually become formalized through the granting of official seals and tallies, and a Chief Office of Buddhist Affairs was established.

However, besides Chinese Buddhists, the Mongol rulers had also established ties with Tibetan and Kashmiri Buddhists. Chinggis Khan became acquainted with one Tibetan

This continuity indicates that Haiyun must already have been appointed in the time of Güyük Khan (*Fozu lidai tongzai*, 21:420). In his own tower inscription, however, it is recorded that the year was 1252 (“Haiyunjian heshang tabei”, *Xuelouji*, 6:70). Given that these two records combine records from the *Yuanshi*, it seems that 1251 is more reasonable. (Song Lian, *Yuan shi*, 3:45).

²⁴ Cheng Jufu 程钜夫, “Shaolin chanshi yugongbei” 少林禪師裕公碑, in Ye Feng 叶封 ed., *Songyang shike jiji* 嵩阳石刻集记 ed. in *Shike shiliao xinbian* 石刻史料新編(二) (Taibei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 1979), b:10234. Regarding Fuyu’s appointment, Jan Yun-hua has proposed that he was appointed Superintendent of Buddhist Teaching (釋教總統) by Ögedei Khan. It would be a valuable point for this paper, but having been unable to find relevant historical records in primary resources, I start the discussion about him under Möngke Khan. Please see Jan Yun-hua, “Chinese Buddhism in Ta-tu: The New situation and New Problems”, ed. in Hok-lam Chan and Wm. Theodore de Bary, *Yuan Thought: Chinese Thought and Religion Under the Mongols* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 391.

Buddhist from the Western Xia regime when he conquered it.²⁵ Tibetan Buddhism was formally introduced into the Mongol empire under Ögedei Khan after Prince Köten's (1206-1251) military conquest of Tibet in 1239. During the reign of Möngke Khan the influence of Tibetan Buddhists gradually transcended that of Chinese Buddhists, as contacts between Mongol Princes and Tibetan Buddhists increased. Namo, a Kashmiri Buddhist, had attended the Mongol court under Ögedei Khan, and was appointed National Preceptor in charge of the empire's Buddhist affairs by Möngke Khan in 1253, becoming chief of all the Buddhist monks of the empire. It is notable that the office of National Preceptor was granted an official seal, Namo's status clearly surpassing that of Haiyun.²⁶ It was just at this time of frequent contacts between Mongol Princes and Tibetan Buddhists, that 'Phags-pa (1235-1280) was summoned from the late Köten's camp to that of Khubilai.²⁷ This laid a foundation for the formation of an unprecedented Buddhism administration system under the Mongols, which will be discussed further in the pages below.

With the conquest of the Jin dynasty, Western Xia dynasty and Tibet, Buddhism attracted increasing attention from Mongol rulers. The Buddhists played an essential role in the empire through their close connection with Great Khans, offering prayers for the

²⁵ Zhiguanba Gongquehudaanbaraoji 智觀巴·貢卻乎丹巴饒吉, trans by Wu Jun 吳均 etc., *Anduo zhengjiaoshi* 安多政教史 (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 1989), 161-62.

²⁶ Song Lian, *Yuanshi*, 125:3075; Luciano Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols: the Yüan Sa-Skya Period of Tibetan history* (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990), 4; Qiao Ji, *Menggu fojiaoshi: beiyuan shiqi (1368-1634)*, 4-7.

²⁷ Christopher P. Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 48.

Khans and the empire.²⁸ Accordingly, the status of Buddhists rose substantially in the Mongol-Yuan period, especially compared with the Song dynasty.²⁹ This special attitude of the Mongol rulers to Buddhists and Buddhism deeply influenced their administrative strategy, as they favored appointing eminent Buddhists to govern Buddhist affairs rather than placing them under the same administration as the ordinary masses.

To conclude, although a mature administrative system had not yet formed under the Mongol empire, the Mongol rulers had already begun to develop a corresponding strategy in social management. Since Chinggis Khan, eminent Buddhists were appointed to govern Buddhist affairs, normally by being awarded imperial edicts assigning the tasks of “being chief” (做頭兒), “being chief of all monks” (統僧), “administering all Buddhist affairs” (領天下僧事), “commanding Buddhism” (總領釋教), and so on. All of these appointments described the appointees’ responsibilities without clarifying related institutionalization. Accordingly, there may not have been a specific institution for Buddhist administration until Möngke Khan. Under Möngke, besides the position of National Preceptor, there was a Chief Office of Buddhist Affairs, though unfortunately we lack the necessary records to know more than that its leaders were eminent monks. More

²⁸ Igor de Rachewiltz, Hok-lam Chan, Hsiao Ch’i-ch’ing and Peter W. Geier ed., *In the Service of the Khan: Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yuan period (1200-1300)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1993), 224-242;646-654.

²⁹ Paul Ratchnevsky, trans. and ed. by Thomas Nivison Haining, *Genghis Khan: His Life and Legacy* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 206; Hsiao Ch’i-ch’ing 蕭啟慶, “Yuandai de ruhu: Rushi diwei yanjinshi shangde yizhang” 元代的儒戶：儒士地位演進史上的一章, ed. in *Neibeiguo er waizhongguo*, 372-376.

importantly, those appointed eminent monks were granted official seals or tallies to confirm their power, gradually formalizing the appointment of eminent monks to independently administer Buddhist affairs under Möngke Khan. As this strategy was appearing for the first time in Chinese Buddhist history, to a certain extent it can be seen as a particularly Mongol method of Buddhist administration. There was a transitional trend from Chinese Buddhists to Tibetan Buddhists under Möngke Khan, which presaged Khubilai's preference for Tibetan Buddhism afterwards. Anyhow, the transition did not change the nature of this policy through appointing eminent monks to implement independent administration. This is totally different from the Song approach to Buddhist administration, which had placed Buddhists under the same administrative system as the general population governed by lay officials. The Great Khans' management strategy and attitude toward Buddhism during the Mongol imperial period deeply influenced the policies of the following Yuan emperors, especially Khubilai Khan.³⁰ Beginning with the strategies of the four previous Great Khans, he carried systematization and formalization further forward.

Khubilai's Policy: The Establishment of the Regional Supervisory Office for Buddhist Teaching

We have seen distinctions between the Mongol empire and the Song dynasty in the administration of Buddhist affairs. Now we shall address Mongol strategies after the conquest of Southeastern China. After examining the concrete organizational setting, we will show Khubilai's policy to have been more inclined to further impelling the strategies of the previous four Great Khans rather than adopting policies that had been implemented

³⁰ Nianchang, *Fozu lidai tongzai*, 21:419.

under the Song dynasty. We will analyze Khubilai's appointment of the Tibetan Buddhists Yang Lianzhenjia and Shal-lu-pa to demonstrate how he put this policy into practice until the end of his reign.

As mentioned above, Khubilai had contact with some Buddhists, both Chinese and Tibetan, when he was a prince under the influence of other Great Khans. In 1260, Khubilai ascended to the throne of the Mongol Empire to become the fifth Great Khan. He appointed 'Phags-pa to serve as national governor of Buddhist affairs with an official seal, and granted him the title of National Preceptor during his first year in power.³¹ Khubilai also appointed some Chinese Buddhists to certain posts and bestowed them with high honors, but this was mostly before the establishment of Yuan dynasty rather than after it.³² Even though some Chinese Buddhists were appointed under the Yuan, their influence and duties cannot be compared with those of Tibetan Buddhists. For example, Xueting Fuyu was also appointed to administer Buddhist affairs (總教門事), but his power was limited to Shaolin Temple and several nearby institutions.³³ In some ways, Khubilai continued the strategy of the previous four Khans to administer Buddhist affairs through appointing monks, transitioning towards the dominance of Tibetan Buddhists.

After the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, the whole political system became increasingly regularized. Regarding the administration of Buddhism, Khubilai made some adjustments based on previous policies of the empire. In 1270, he promoted 'Phags-pa once again, this time granting him the title of Imperial Preceptor. This position was broadly

³¹ Nianchang, *Fozu lidai tongzai*, 21:425.

³² Frederick W. Mote, *Imperial China 900-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 448; 501.

³³ Cheng Jufu, "Songshan shaolinsi yuheshang bei" 嵩山少林寺裕和尚碑, *Xuelouji*, 8:95.

charged with the supervision of all Buddhist matters, making this Preceptor the chief of a national Buddhist administrative system. Additional Buddhist institutions created or enhanced during Khubilai's reign included the first Supervisory Office for Buddhist Teaching (*shijiao zongtongsuo* 釋教總統所), created in about 1260.³⁴ The Bureau of General Regulation (*zongzhiyuan* 總制院) was established in 1264. Its name was changed to the Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs (*xuanzhengyuan* 宣政院) in 1288. Led by the Imperial Preceptor, it was responsible for Buddhist issues across the empire and for Tibetan military and political issues. Provincial levels of government also had subordinate provincial subdivisions of the Supervisory Office for Buddhist Teaching. At lower levels, there were other local administrative institutions such as the Central Buddhist Registry (*senglusi* 僧錄司) at the level of the Circuit (*lu* 路) or Prefecture (*fu* 府); the Subprefectural Buddhist Registry at the level of the Sub-Prefecture (*zhou* 州), and the Prefectural Buddhist Registry (*dugangsi* 都綱司) at the level of the District (*xian* 縣).³⁵ In sum, an integrative system was formed in the early Yuan whereby the Imperial Preceptor supervised the inside (central government) and Buddhists administered the outside

³⁴ Bai and Xie, *Zhongguo sengguan zhidushi*, 210. The precise date of establishment is unclear from extant records, but research thus far places it at least before 1265.

³⁵ Lai Tianbing 賴天兵, "Guanyu yuandai sheyu jianghuai/jiangzhe de shijiao duzongtongsuo" 關於元代設于江淮/江浙的釋教都總統所, *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究 1(2010), 66.

(provincial districts). The Imperial Preceptor and his institutions administered Buddhism from the national level down to the provincial level.³⁶

Table of Buddhism Administration Institution in Southeastern China under the Yuan

Central Government	Imperial Preceptor (1270, National Preceptor 1260)	
	Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs (1264,1b)	
	Supervisory Office for Buddhist Teaching (1260-1311)	
Southeastern China	Jianghuai Supervisory Office for Buddhist Teaching (1277-1299, 2b-3b)	Branch Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs (1291, 2b)
	Fujian Supervisory Office for Buddhist Teaching	Directorates-General for Religious Affairs(1328-1334, 3a)
Circuits or Prefectures	Central Buddhist Registry	
Sub-Prefectures	Subprefectural Buddhist Registry	
Districts	Prefectural Buddhist Registry	

This complex political and inter-institutional architecture was probably created gradually. From the aspect of institutional setting, it was to some degree influenced or inspired by previous regimes. The title of National Preceptor had been established under Möngke Khan, but it had first been created under the Northern Qi (550-577), continuing through the Five Dynasties (907-960), only to be abolished during the Song dynasty. However, the Jin and Western Xia dynasties carried on the granting of this title and

³⁶ Xizhong 熙仲, *Lichao shishi zijian* 歷朝釋氏資鑿, ed. *Xuzangjing* 續藏經 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 1977), 12:239. “內立帝師·為舟航於法海。外設僧統·乃撫治於教門。”

provided it with even more political capital.³⁷ As noted earlier, these earlier dynasties brought both Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism to the Mongols through their conquest. According to Ruth Dunnell's research, the Yuan dynasty's National Preceptor position is to some degree borrowed from the Western Xia dynasty. As for the office of Imperial Preceptor, earlier scholars have insisted that it was originally invented by Khubilai. However, this title actually had already been granted since the late Western Xia dynasty.³⁸ Moreover, the establishment of local Buddhist institutions and the method of recruiting officers from among Buddhists was also in part an imitation of the approaches employed during the Jin dynasty.³⁹ In short, policies towards Buddhism under the early Yuan partially imitated the traditions of the Jin and Western Xia states that the Mongols had assimilated before their conquest of the Southern Song. There is no evidence that Khubilai's Buddhist administration policies implemented in the Southeast reflect the continuation of existing institutions of the Song dynasty.

Although Khubilai imitated certain institutions from the Jin and Western Xia dynasties, he also originally invented some of the institutions listed in the table above. More importantly, even those inherited institutions operated differently than they had under previous dynasties. Combined with Khubilai's new institutional inventions, the whole Buddhist administration system bore significant signs of Mongol development. According to Shi Nianchang (釋念常, 1282-1341), a Chinese Buddhist of the Yuan

³⁷ Bai and Xie, *Zhongguo sengguan zhidushi*, 206; Shi Jinbo, *Xixia fojiao shilue*, 143-147.

³⁸ Shi Jinbo, *Xixia fojiao shilue*, 137-142; Ruth Dunnell, "The Hsia Origins of the Yuan Institution of Imperial Preceptor", 85-111.

³⁹ Bai and Xie, *Zhongguo sengguan zhidushi*, 219-220.

dynasty, the Song and Jin dynasties had both appointed officials to administer Buddhist affairs, none of whom had seals of office. After the Yuan unification, however, the concept that “It is irreverent to govern Buddhist affairs by secular means” led the state to create a series of governmental institutions such as the Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs, the Central Buddhist Registry, the Subprefectural Buddhist Registry and the Prefectural Buddhist Registry. These offices were established throughout the empire, with official seals, solely to administer Buddhist affairs.⁴⁰

In contrast to the Song and Jin dynasties, Buddhist authorities appointed during the Yuan controlled official seals confirming their power to govern Buddhist affairs. The Mongols established these institutions because of concerns that the secular administration of Buddhist affairs might disrespect the religion. This might be seen as the fundamental administrative principle in regard to Buddhism during the early Yuan period.⁴¹ The institutions established in Southeastern China in the early years of the Yuan reflect the influence of Jin and Western Xia dynasties but not the Song. However, the operational principle of the institutions was totally different from either of these prior dynasties, its independence from civil officials mostly inspired by Mongol institutions.

As discussed above, the Mongols had appointed eminent monks to independently administer Buddhist affairs since Chinggis Khan. The following Great Khans granted official seals to make this policy increasingly formal. Khubilai Khan confirmed the

⁴⁰ Nianchang, *Fozu lidai tongzai*, 22:460. “宋金兩朝南北殊風而封釋官秩頗存典故，然猶遵律印信未聞。迨我皇元世祖皇帝混一海宇，條綱制度一出睿思。謂以俗制於僧殊失崇敬，諭天下設立宣政院僧錄僧正都綱司，錫以印信，行移各路，主掌教門護持教法。”

⁴¹ Nianchang, *Fozu lidai tongzai*, 22:455-6.

principle that Buddhist administration was independent from civilian officialdom, in direct contrast with the Song dynasty. Given the Mongol reverence for Buddhism, it is not surprising that the Mongols offered political convenience to Buddhists by establishing an administrative system that, by the time of Khubilai Khan, combined the experience of other Northern dynasties with the basic strategy of the four previous Great Khans. This was a Buddhist administrative institution full of Mongol characteristics. Below we will focus on how Khubilai put this strategy into practice in Southeastern China until the end of his reign.

The Mongols conquered Southeastern China in 1276. After one year the Jianghuai Supervisory Office for Buddhist Teaching (*jianghuai zhulu shijiao du zongtongsuo* 江淮諸路釋教都總統所, hereafter ‘Supervisory Office’) was established.⁴² It was the only body subordinate to the Supervisory Office for Buddhist Teaching for which we have specific records of the date when it was established, in contrast to the one set up in Fujian region called the Fujian Supervisory Office for Buddhist Teaching (Fujian dengchu shijiao zongtongsuo 福建等處釋教總統所). Thus we find a total of two subordinate bodies set up within Southeastern China, of which the one located in Jianghuai played the most significant role. Their heads were mostly Tibetan Buddhists.⁴³ While this is another indication of Khubilai Khan’s inclination towards Tibetan Buddhism, it might also represent Khubilai’s intention to utilize Tibetan Buddhism to counter or politically mitigate the predominant local culture. This could be explained through the comparison with his policy in Tibet. By contrast, the fact that the Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs and

⁴² Song Lian, *Yuanshi*, 9:188.

⁴³ Lai Tianbing, “Guanyu yuandai sheyu jianghuai/jiangzhe de shijiao duzongtongsuo”, 66-68.

its branch set in Tibet were charged with Buddhist issues as well as with Tibetan military and political affairs derived from the Mongol rulers' profound comprehension of Tibetan Buddhism and its possible clout with regard to current affairs in Tibet. They adjusted their mode of government to local conditions for the sake of imperial stability.⁴⁴ It would have been logical to apply this approach to Southeastern China as well, by putting Southern Chinese Buddhists in positions of religious administration rather than Tibetans. However, Khubilai's policy indicated that political supervision of Southeastern Buddhism would be achieved by Tibetan Buddhists.

One example of this policy was the appointment of Yang Lianzhenjia (楊璉真加).

⁴⁵ As one of the Commanders-General of the Supervisory Office, the Tibetan Buddhist Yang Lianzhenjia played a crucial role in the region. However, the hyperextension of his position and powers planted the seeds of his eventual failure in Jiangnan. In the year of Yang's replacement, the central court set up another institution, the Branch Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs (*xing xuanzheng yuan* 行宣政院, 'Branch Bureau' hereafter) in Southeastern China.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, however, the Supervisory Office continued to exist, and the Tibetan Buddhist Shal-lu-pa (沙羅巴, 1259-1314) was appointed in Yang's place. Unlike his predecessor, Shal-lu-pa was put in charge of both the Jianghuai and Fujian regions. Meanwhile, there was another Buddhist called Yuanjixiang (苑吉祥) who is

⁴⁴ Song Lian, *Yuanshi*, 202:4520.

⁴⁵ Herbert Franke, "Tibetans in Yuan China" in John Langlois ed., *China under Mongol Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 312-325.

⁴⁶ Song Lian, *Yuanshi*, 16:350.

recorded as having held the same title as Shal-lu-pa around the same time.⁴⁷ There is no direct record showing when the Fujian Supervisory Office for Buddhist Teaching was established. However, judging by the records of these two officials, it seems likely that the two regions were put under a single administration from the time they were appointed onwards. Among these regions, Jiangnan was regarded by the Yuan government as the core, as could be seen through the process of Shal-lu-pa's appointment.

Sources suggest that the institutional setting of Buddhist administration was in disorder, especially in Jiangnan, because of the power vacuum that Yang left. Khubilai felt anxious about this problem, a concern deriving no doubt from his realization of the great importance of Jiangnan to his empire, but neither he nor his central government was able to resolve the situation adequately. After Shal-lu-pa was recommended to Khubilai by Imperial Preceptor Jialuosi-bagan-jili (迦囉思巴幹即哩), the Khan even met and saw him off personally in order to promote him to the Supervisory Office.⁴⁸ Clearly, Khubilai's continued involvement in Jiangnan's religious affairs indicated the importance of Jiangnan Buddhism to him, which also helps to explain his protection of Yang. Moreover, Shal-lu-pa's appointment illustrates Khubilai's intention to continue employing Tibetan Buddhists to administer Buddhist affairs in Jiangnan. However, the influence and power of Shal-lu-pa and his colleague paled in comparison to that formerly wielded by Yang. Because the

⁴⁷ Lai Tianbing, "Guanyu yuandai sheyu jianghuai/jiangzhe de shijiao duzongtongsuo", 64.

⁴⁸ Nianchang, *Fozu lidai tongzai*, 22:461; Shi Ruxing 釋如惺, *Daming gaosengzhuan* 大明高僧傳, ed. in *Dazheng xinxiu dazangjing* 大正新修大藏經, 1:901.

Supervisory Office failed to reclaim the institutional prowess it had achieved under Yang's leadership, it was gradually replaced by another institution, the Branch Bureau.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Southeastern China, especially Jiangnan, was one of the core centers of national wealth and knowledge production, which in turn increased its importance for aspiring emperors and politicians. In that sense the Mongol rulers correctly assessed the value of Jiangnan after they had conquered it, and it can be fruitful to compare their policies towards Buddhism in comparison to other regions and dynasties. Khubilai Khan established an administrative system independent of the civilian bureaucracy to govern Buddhist affairs in Southeastern China, his policy largely influenced by strategies of the previous four Great Khans, including the appointment of Tibetan Buddhists to leadership roles. Although there was reference to Jin and Western Xia dynastic precedents in the arrangement of certain institutions, the overall setup and operational principles differed from those of earlier dynasties, especially the locally-centered Song dynasty. This demonstrates that Khubilai actually did not implement a hybrid system of Buddhist administration in Southeastern China; instead, his basic strategy was to continue and carry forward the Mongol institutions of appointing key Buddhists to govern their own affairs. Shagdaryn Bira has proposed that one important reason for the Mongol preference of Tibetan Buddhism was that Khubilai wanted to avert the possibility of the conquered people's spiritual predominance, and he realized the political value of Tibetan Buddhism

⁴⁹ Song Lian, *Yuanshi*, 20:427.

as a useful vehicle for consolidating his power.⁵⁰ The particularity of Southeastern China as the core of the Southern Song dynasty, combined with this particular perspective, may have been the main factors behind Khubilai's special policy. His original aim was well accomplished with the appointment of Yang and Shal-lu-pa, with the latter appointment especially reflecting Khubilai's strong wish to maintain Mongol institutions until the end of his reign even through another institution was established in his final years. A hybrid system incorporating both Mongol and Chinese traditions governance of dual combination system was implemented only later, after Khubilai's reign. Therefore, we should not over-emphasize Khubilai's influence in the implementation of a hybrid system, or ignore his heirs' policy innovations in Buddhist administration.

⁵⁰ Shagdaryn Bira, "Qubilai Qa'an and 'Phags-pa Bla-ma" in Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan ed., *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 1999), 242.