

Buddhism Beyond Nations and Empires: Mapping Transnational Buddhist Networks From Early Twentieth-century Inner Mongolia and Manchuria

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Focusing on interwar Inner Mongolia and Manchuria, an understudied region within the postwar academic disciplines of Buddhist Studies and Areas Studies, my dissertation project explores the history of transnational Buddhist networks in the region that went beyond the nation-building and empire-building efforts of modern China and Japan (1912-1949). I argue that these Buddhist networks not only engaged in various overlapping nation-building and empire-building projects in the interwar geopolitical landscape of Northeast Asia, but they provided alternative infrastructures for both Buddhist and non-Buddhist individuals to exercise cross-border agency and mobility to extend and maintain (dis)enchanted landscapes of their own that challenged the spatial-temporal orders of the modern nation-states and empires. This project is a history of religion on the “peripheries” of the modern Chinese state, the Japanese wartime empire, and the Tibetan Geluk Buddhist world. Using a transnational history approach, the project uses multilingual source materials collected from transnational archives located in China, Japan, Taiwan, and the United States and challenges traditional disciplinary categories and narratives in postwar Religious Studies and Area Studies.