On December 24, 1904, after an arduous journey of 14 weeks along the southern road linking Chengdu with Lhasa, recently appointed Assistant Amban to Tibet Fengquan (鳳全) reached Batang (巴塘), a lush green valley at the western edge of Sichuan astride the province’s border with central Tibet. A fearless and diligent official, Fengquan had a successful history of suppressing bandits. Most recently serving as Commissioner of Chengdu’s new police force, Fengquan was accustomed to bending the will of both his men and his opponents, described by fellow officials as occasionally displaying an arrogant streak. (“Duxian zong” 1905; NA, “Thibetan Affairs”: FO 228/1549) This last character trait was on display when he was greeted on the outskirts of Batang by the polity’s two dépa (governor and vice-governor) and a group of local headmen. As the welcoming party kowtowed, Fengquan did not allow them to rise. Instead he stepped forward, extended the long stem of his cigarette filter, and rapped the red, plumed cap atop the head of senior Dépa Tashi Jetsun (Luo Jinbao 羅進寶). “How is it that a barbarian dog can sport a red button and a peacock feather atop his head? I can see that your yak butter-smeared cap will not stay on your head for long!” 蠻狗頭配載紅領花翎？鳳老子看你這個酥油頂子已快載不久了！ (Batang xianzhi 1993, 251) Both dépa held tusi (土司) titles, typically wore Qing official dress, had adopted Han Chinese names, and had been described by the local Qing official as “loyal and submissive,” (“Weiguan Batang” 1904) yet in Fengquan’s eyes, they were little more than impostors.

This encounter speaks to the power of perception to influence action, even when confronted with a perhaps discordant reality. Despite the outward appearance of these two dépa, Fengquan “knew” that Khampa Tibetans were uncivilised; every book or memorial he had read confirmed this. Thus in Fengquan’s view, merely donning Qing imperial garb, topped with a peacock feather, or adopting a Chinese name did not demonstrate a Khampa ruler’s embrace of “civilisation,” and thus his absolute submission to the Qing. Similarly, demarcating external borders, replacing these same

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1 Peacock feathers were a symbol of high status during the Qing.
native rulers with administrators from *neidi* (内地),\(^2\) and designating new Chinese county names was insufficient to render the polities of Kham integral parts of Sichuan, the Qing and later Republican states, or make their inhabitants Chinese. Each of these actions was superficial, Qing and Republican officials neglecting the cultural self-conception of those inhabiting the renamed spaces of Kham, and the native rulers concealing their cultural core. Feng’s perhaps astute presumption that, despite titles and seals, the Qing had yet to transform the core identity of the two *dépa* who lay prostrate before him parallels the belief of his successors in Kham, first among them Zhao Erfeng (趙爾豐), who perceived acculturating the commoners of Kham as crucial to his own endeavour’s success. The policies of Zhao and other Qing and Republican Chinese officials in the wake of Fengquan’s slaughter the following April, however, were betrayed by the rigidity of this very perception, that the Khampas could not at the same time both revere the Dalai Lama and submit to the Emperor or be patriotic citizens of the Republic of China (ROC), could not thus be both culturally Tibetan and politically Chinese. It was a common perception of state-builders in newly incorporated spaces throughout the globe, that the borderland population’s identity needed to be changed.

This unidimensional conception of identity was a response to the geopolitical position of Kham in the early twentieth century, at the edge of Qing imperial and state space, situated between Sichuan and central Tibet along the Empire’s southwestern border with British India. Informed by an absolutist conception of territorial sovereignty, Sichuan officials in the late Qing and early Republican eras sought to shield Kham from all external influences and exclude any challenge to their exercise of absolute authority over the territory and its inhabitants, an exclusive authority they perceived could be legitimised only by the absence of such challenges. The resulting policies were premised on two intertwined misperceptions. The first, evident in Fengquan’s initial encounter with the *dépa* and his tumultuous tenure in Batang, was the widespread conceit that Khampa opposition to Qing and Republican policies was solely external, the influence of the monasteries of Kham as conduits of the spiritual—and subversive—authority of the Dalai Lama. This misperception was based on a flawed understanding of the character of the Khampas and an implicit rejection of the validity of a competing set of cultural mores.

The second misperception, grounded in an absolutist conception of territorial sovereignty adapted from the ideal Euro-American rhetoric of international law introduced to China in the late

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\(^2\) *Neidi* refers to the ‘inner lands,’” sometimes called “China Proper.” This term appears frequently in Sichuan documents of both the Qing and early Republican eras to contrast Kham with the rest of Sichuan east of Dartsedo.
nineteenth century, (see Relyea 2017) was the conviction that Sichuan officials under the Qing, and
later ROC, possessed the power to arrest undesirable external flows, material or otherwise, across
newly delineated and strengthened borders encircling the Kham borderlands. Whereas the British
Indian challenge to Chinese authority was limited largely to the realm of commerce, Lhasa’s spiritual
challenge was more fundamental, threatening to obstruct Qing and Republican efforts to
incorporate Kham and its inhabitants into the burgeoning Chinese state and nation. Simultaneously
dependent on, and indicative of the exercise of exclusive authority within Kham, this presumed
power was fundamental to policies enacted to thwart both regional and local challenges, yet
ultimately incapable of excluding all external influences from the borderlands.

This article explores the intersection of perception and reality and the influence of these two
misperceptions on late Qing and early Republican efforts to exert absolute and exclusive authority in
Kham by arresting two powerful flows: the material, rupees from India, and the spiritual, cultural
identity entwined with Buddhism from Lhasa. Both regional and local, respectively, each presented
different challenges to Chinese authority in Kham during the borderland region’s tumultuous
transition from empire to nation-state in the early twentieth century. The first section introduces the
contentious local and regional situation in the Kham borderland at the turn of the nineteenth
century manifest in a bifurcated structure of competing authority between the Sichuan and Lhasa
governments, and the influence of an absolutist conception of territorial sovereignty on policies
implemented by Sichuan officials in the succeeding two decades to confront their tenuous situation.
This article then turns to each of the two flows in turn.

In response to the ubiquity of Empress Victoria rupees as currency across the plateau as far
east as Dartsedo (Dajianlu 打箭爐, known today as Kangding 康定) and the debilitating effects of
the corresponding devaluation of Qing sycee (yinding 銀錠), in 1902 Sichuan officials started to mint
a new silver coin, the Zangyuan (藏元), for exclusive use in Kham and Tibet. Modelled after the
rupee, the coin remained in circulation in Kham until the late 1950s. As part of a comprehensive
plan for the region’s transformation and incorporation, Zhao established a network of schools
throughout the Kham borderland and commissioned special textbooks to acculturate young
Khampa boys and girls in the mores of neidi. His goal, and that of the education proposals of his
Republican successors, was to inhibit the monasteries’ cultural hold over Khampa society, thereby
undermining Lhasa’s spiritual influence and competing authority. In seeking to transform the
Khampas into loyal subjects of the Emperor and patriotic citizens of the Chinese state, the content
of these textbooks resonated with both the conviction of exclusive authority in an absolutist conception of territorial sovereignty and the conceit exemplified by Fengquán’s presumption that the two dépa could embody only a single identity.

The policies implemented to arrest these flows were informed by the misperceptions noted above. Sichuan and later Republican officials’ assertion of inviolable borders around the Kham borderland simultaneously made possible and necessitated the quashing of ambiguity, whether of identity or authority, in the commercial, spiritual, and temporal realms. They perceived that only subversion of the monasteries’ influence as a conduit for Lhasa’s spiritual and cultural authority could free the Khampas to become ‘Chinese.’ The relative success and failure of these efforts to sever Kham from commercial and spiritual networks, from the greater region and from Lhasa, were determined at the intersection of Chinese perception and reality, by the degree of each flow’s integration into Khampa society and the persuasive power of each Chinese alternative. The presumption that it was necessary—or even possible—to sever local cultural or spiritual influence on a borderland population, or to enforce a single cultural or national identity, to effect acceptance of a new political authority and inclusion in a new body politic, was a flawed axiom of state- and nation-builders the world over.

**Inner and Outer Borders**

When Fengquán met his fate in 1905, Kham was a complex patchwork of relatively independent polities beyond the direct authority of Qing and Tibetan officials, a borderland on the cusp of political and economic change. Though situated entirely within the territory of the Qing Empire, Kham became a borderland caught between Tibetan and Sichuanese ambitions beginning with its nominal division in 1727 by the demarcation not of a border, but of a point of interaction, a sandstone stele erected alongside a pass high in the Markhamgang Mountains (宁靜山), west of the Dri River (金沙江, an upper tributary of the Yangtze River (see Figure 1). The stele designated the lands to its west the “land of burning incense,” ruled by the Dalai Lama, those to its south part of Yunnan Province, and those to its east, the largest part of Kham, under Sichuan jurisdiction. (Chen 1986, 125; Kolmaš 1967, 41) This ended Lhasa’s tenuous claim to temporal authority over the polities east of the stele, initiated only several decades earlier with the

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3 Though southernmost Kham was part of Yunnan and much of northwestern Kham was under the jurisdiction of the Xining Amban, since the actions of Sichuan officials form the basis of this paper, Kham, unless otherwise noted, refers to that part of the ethnographic region extending east and west of the 1727 stele.
despatch of commissioners, census takers, and tax collectors as far east as Dartsedo. (Shakabpa 1984, 113, 122)

Rather than incorporated into Sichuan’s territorial bureaucracy, however, these polities were administered indirectly via indigenous lay rulers invested with *tusi* titles and seals of imperial imprimatur in exchange for nominal tribute. Though also patronising several of the largest monasteries in eastern Kham, the Qing focused on temporal rulers as conduits of its authority, while Lhasa exerted spiritual authority on Khampa society via monasteries, appointing abbots, and training Khampa monks. What evolved in eastern Kham by 1905 was tenuous accommodation of a bifurcated structure of competing authority, the Qing loosely exerting control over Kham in the temporal realm through its invested *tusi*, Lhasa maintaining spiritual influence on society through Khampa monasteries, both Gelukpa and less so those of other schools, which played a dominant role in the region’s economy and often also held sway over lay rulers.⁴ Only two polities could be considered under direct, external administration, the Chakla domain, which capital Dartsedo was

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⁴ Not every polity in Kham hosted a Gelukpa monastery or one with any stature, thus the Dalai Lama’s spiritual influence in some polities might have been only slight. On the early twentieth century struggle for authority in Kham between the Dalai Lama in the spiritual realm and the Qing in the temporal, (Relyea 2015)
designated a Qing sub-prefecture (*ting* 廳) in 1729, and Nyarong (Zhandui 瞻對, today’s Xinlong 新龙), to which Lhasa despatched a *chikhyap* (commissioner) beginning in 1866. (Tsomu 2014, 222–224; Rockhill 1891, 276) By the turn of the nineteenth century, the presence of the latter official, his penchant for subverting Qing authority over its *tusi* and threatening the flow of goods and couriers across Kham was perceived as fostering instability not only locally, but also regionally, weakening Qing influence on the Dalai Lama, perceived as opening the door for Russian overtures.

Two important roads stretched westward from Dartsedo, tethering Tibet to Sichuan. Though both accommodated all types of travellers, the northern road, higher in altitude with fewer mountain passes, was the conduit of commerce, also known as the “tea road,” and the southern road, also known as the “officials’ road,” was the route of Qing couriers, officials, and soldiers. Though foreigners could travel along both roads, if often endangered by bandits, they were not allowed to cross the “border” into Tibet, marked in the south by the 1727 stele and southeast of Jyekundo (Geguduo 盖古多, today’s Yushu 玉樹), a town nominally under the jurisdiction of the Amban in Xining (西寧) in the north. Indeed, on a specially arranged visit to the stele in 1904, British diplomat Alexander Hosie (NA, *Report by Mr. A. Hosie*. 1904, FO 228/1549) encountered a row of Tibetan soldiers facing an equal row of Qing soldiers crowding the pass on each side of the border stone, the former determined to prevent even his glancing its face in Tibetan territory as the latter were nervously uncertain just how the Tibetan soldiers would act. This may have been a special show for Hosie, though, as other foreign travellers encountered both resistance and indifference, suggesting the border may have had more meaning on maps and to distant officials than in the region itself. (e.g., Edgar 1908, 47) Keeping the two roads open, flowing with commerce and couriers was essential to Qing authority in both Kham and Tibet and thus one of the main tasks of Qing soldiers. But after 1905, their once limited role changed.

Since the last decade of the nineteenth century, Qing gentry and officials perceived increasing threats to Qing authority on the plateau not only from Lhasa via the monasteries and the Nyarong *chikhyap*, but also from the British and Russian empires. The convergence of two events, the Younghusband Expedition reaching Lhasa from India in 1904 and the 1905 Khampa uprising in Batang, only exacerbated their fears, simultaneously rendering bifurcated authority locally untenable and the promised benefits of the globalising norm of territorial sovereignty appealing. The expedition seemed to validate the assertion of former Sichuan governor-general Lu Chuanlin (鹿傳霖) (1900, 5) that demonstrating sufficient control in Kham as the basis for appeal to the
international law principle of non-intervention could protect Sichuan. The uprising, of which local monks were the primary instigators, seemed to justify the subsequent endeavour to expunge monastic influence on Khampa society. The efforts to arrest threatening flows, discussed below, originated with the 1907 promulgation of forty-three “Regulations for the Future of Batang” (*Batang shanhou zhangzheng* 巴塘善後章程), Zhao’s blueprint for Kham. (SA, Qing 7-74)

During his four-year tenure as the first Sichuan-Yunnan Frontier Commissioner (*ChuanDian bianwu dachen* 川滇邊務大臣), Zhao oversaw implementation of *gaitu guiliu* (改土歸流), or bureaucratisation, in every Kham polity both east and west of the stele, as well as several polities outside the traditional Kham region west to Gyamda (Jiangda 江達), 250 kilometres from Lhasa. Bureaucratisation was a frontier policy through which a local indigenous ruler was stripped of his *tusi* title and replaced by a civil magistrate appointed by the central Qing government in Beijing. These polities were then incorporated into the Chinese territorial bureaucracy, typically as a district (*xian* 縣), sometimes with a new name. Yet a report from May 1911 (“Huiyi zhengwu” 1911) suggests that few if any civil officials had been despatched to Kham, the polities bureaucratised by Zhao administered instead by military officials temporarily occupying the new civil posts.

In spite of the unfinished state of bureaucratisation, Zhao’s successor, Fu Songmu (傅嵩炑), submitted a memorial in late 1911 proposing establishment of Xikang Province (*Xikang sheng* 西康省) across the entire region purportedly “pacified” by Zhao’s frontier army. Earlier that year, Zhao wrote, “… With danger on all sides, certainly we must establish a province [in Kham], otherwise the territory cannot be controlled and Tibet cannot be saved.” (QCBDS, No. 0808 1911 (XT3.3), 920–921) Embodying the misperception that regional flows could be arrested by proclamation of inviolable borders encircling a borderland territory, establishing a province evinces the influence of Sichuan officials’ adaptation of an absolutist conception of territorial sovereignty. Thwarted by the Xinhai Revolution (1911) and subsequent Qing abdication, Fu’s memorial was published as a book, (Fu 1988) then serialized in the Beijing periodical *Eastern Miscellany* in late 1913 (*Xikang jiansheng tan* 1913) on the eve of the Simla Conference, convened between the British, Tibetan, and ROC governments to determine the territorial extent of Chinese sovereignty on the Tibetan plateau. (see McGranahan 2003) As the conference collapsed, the ROC central government established the Sichuan Frontier Special

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5 For example, Batang was designated Ba’an Prefecture (*Ba’an fu*) in 1908.
Administrative Region (SAR, Chuanbian tebie xingzhengqu 川邊特別行政區) in June 1914 within the same borders delineated in Fu’s proposal. (SA, Min 195, juan 9, 1914) (see Figure 2) Chinese authority, though, remained but the figment of a distant bureaucracy. In 1939 the territory was reconstituted yet again on the establishment of Xikang Province, which disappeared from Chinese atlases in 1955.

Formalised by Fu’s memorial and the SAR, the geographic extent of Zhao’s bureaucratisation fostered conceptions of both an external border, protecting Kham from British Indian intervention, and an internal border, severing it from Lhasa. Sichuan officials’ conception of territorial sovereignty was absolutist not because they believed universal respect for the inviolability of borders (intrinsic to the ideal sovereignty conveyed in the Euro-American rhetoric of international law) to be true in global practice in the early twentieth century. Rather, they perceived that global recognition of a principle of non-intervention, initially referenced by Lu Chuanlin, shielded their exertion of absolute and exclusive authority within a Kham encircled by clearly delineated borders. An absolutist conception of sovereignty thus fostered the misperception that Sichuan officials possessed the power to exclude external influence, such as Indian rupees, and

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6 The name was later changed to the Xikang Special Administrative Region (Xikang tebie xingzhengqu).
affirmed that demonstration of such power, along with exclusive authority, in Kham would substantiate assertion of sovereignty in the global community, thereby legitimating an appeal to non-intervention. This in turn informed actions taken in relation to the other misperception, that Khampa opposition to Qing and ROC policies derived solely from the presumed deleterious influence of monasteries on society, and the attempt through education to arrest the spiritual influence flowing from Lhasa. In effect, the self-reinforcing exercise of globally accepted principles of sovereignty sustained Qing and especially ROC claims to sovereignty in Kham—and Tibet— premised on the absence of competing authority originating both locally and regionally, and the imposition of Chinese identity on the Khampas.

Empresses and “Vagabond Lamas”

By most accounts, the first silver rupees crossed the Himalayas as early as 1835, bearing either the stamp of the East India Company or the visage of the British monarch. Two decades later the first extensive wave of British Indian currency infiltrated markets across the plateau in the aftermath of the two-year Nepalese-Tibetan War, the result of a provision in the 1856 Treaty of Thapathali which obligated the defeated Tibetan government to remit an annual indemnity of 10,000 Indian rupees. (Chen 1983, 75) The coins riding this wave were emblazoned with a new monarch, whose silver face proved more capable than either Lhasa-minted tangka coins or Qing sycee of challenging the monastery-centred barter economy which persisted across much of Kham through the late nineteenth century. Writing in 1882, the English adventurer Edward Colborne Baber (1882, 198) explained, “Georgian and Victorian rupees are distinguished as p’o-tu and mo-tu, meaning male-head and female-head. Those which bear a crowned presentment of Her Majesty are named Lama tob-du, or vagabond Lama, the crown having been mistaken for the head-gear of a religious mendicant.”

The English explorer T.T. Cooper (1871, 456) found that some Khampas even believed the image represented the Dalai Lama. These perceived resemblances may have abetted Empress Victoria’s subsequent eastward journey to Dartsedo where the coin, composed of slightly more than ninety percent silver, would pass current by the 1880s with a base value of three qian (錢 mace) two fen (分 candareen), the equivalent of approximately one third of a silver tael (liang 兩).\(^7\)

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\(^7\) Both the qian and the fen are measures of weight, the former equal to 1/10th of a tael, or approximately 3.7 grams, the latter 1/10th of a qian.
Before the Indian rupee’s arrival, bricks of border tea (biancha 边茶) produced in the factories of Yazhou (雅洲, today’s Ya’an 雅安) were the primary currency across Kham, (see Bertsch 2009) alongside the barter of goods such as tsampa, butter, and horses. In the 1870s, foreign travellers venturing west from Dartsedo were advised to travel with horse loads of brick tea or turquoise beads in lieu of Qing sycee. In the 1880s, the French missionary Auguste Desgodins (Rockhill 1891, 279–280) observed wages for workmen and servants paid in bricks of tea, and in Kandzé (Ganzi 甘孜) in the early 1890s, the American adventurer William Rockhill (1894, 326; 1891, 221) reported fines imposed on Tibetans for murder calculated in tea: 120 bricks for someone of high social standing, forty for a woman, and a mere two or three if a pauper or wandering foreigner were slaughtered. Control of the trade and transhipment of border tea in and across Kham was a crucial component of the monasteries’ authority, entwined in the commercial and spiritual realms, over Khampa commoners and native rulers, who also held Qing tusi titles.

As merchant houses, money-lenders, and landlords, these monasteries regulated the distribution of brick tea alongside providing Buddhism to the families of Kham, while extracting labour and recruiting young male initiates. Similarly influenced by perceptions of Tibetans’ dependence on tea in their everyday lives, this perhaps paralleled in form the policy of “using tea to control the Tibetans” (yicha yufan 以茶驭番) through tight regulation of the volume of border tea shipped annually to Kham and Tibet initiated by the Ming dynasty and subsequently adopted by the Qing. On a journey in 1870, Cooper (1871, 410) witnessed this control and its reliance on tea, writing, “Grain, yaks, sheep, horses, and even children, are given to the rapacious priesthood in payment for tea.” Three decades later, an officer in Zhao’s army noted, “Tibetans are addicted to tea as if it were life itself. Each time they drink it, they empty no fewer than ten cupfuls.” 藏民嗜此若命。每飲必盡十餘盞。 (Chen 1940-42, 9) The Victorian rupee’s potential to supplant brick tea as the currency of exchange threatened to weaken the commercial component of the monasteries’ authority in Kham. Indeed, Baber (1882, 198) observed this potentially destabilising result in Batang, describing the exchange of “a great treasure of [tea] bricks” amassed by the monks of Ba Chöde Monastery at a loss of some thirty-eight percent in its initial value.

Counted, rather than valued by weight, the coin also complicated the Kham market for Chinese merchants. When the Empress burst into the guozhuang (鍋莊 trading houses) of Dartsedo in the early 1880s, the English explorer Capt. William Gill (1880, 170) observed that Tibetan merchants, weary of being cheated by their Chinese counterparts, “have abandoned the
cumbersome method of making payments by weight, which lends itself so easily to every kind of trickery, and have adopted the rupee.” By the early 1890s, Indian rupees had largely superseded the tea brick as currency. Rockhill (1891, 271) on a journey along the northern road found only Indian rupees current in each polity, including the large market towns of Degé (德格) and Jyekundo. In the latter, his Qing sycee was “reluctantly changed for coin by the Chinese as a personal favour, for they said they could do nothing with it.” A second, more significant wave of Indian rupees flooded the plateau after the signing of the Trade Regulations of 1893, which established a trade mart for British Indian exports at Dromo (Yadong 亞東). Another sign of its growing influence, in 1897 the rupee replaced the tael as the trade mart’s currency of record for import and export duties. (Tao 1907, 370; Chen 1983, 75–76)

One Chinese researcher (Zhong 1993, 19) estimates that more than forty million rupees crossed the Himalayas from their first appearance in Tibet until 1911. The effect on military provisions despatched annually from the Sichuan Provincial treasury was devastating. By the early years of the twentieth century, the value of the 103,000 tael disbursements had fallen by roughly one third, such that for every ten thousand tael in remuneration received, garrisons in Kham, especially along the southern road, could purchase goods valued at the equivalent of only 6,800 tael. (Zhang 1907, 1361) Thus for Sichuan, the presence of Indian rupees on the plateau had become unacceptable, not only weakening the morale—and discipline—of Qing soldiers, but also further destabilising their already tenuous authority east of the stele. The last time the Qing sought to replace a foreign-minted coin circulating on the plateau came the year after victory in the Sino-Nepalese War (1788-1792), when the first silver baozang (寶藏) were minted with the Qianlong Emperor’s name on the obverse and Tibetan script on the reverse, signifying Qing control in Tibet. Though initially successful in arresting Nepalese influence in the Tibetan economy and in spite of subsequent minting of Jiaqing, Daoguang, and finally Xianfeng baozang, as Qing imperial influence waned throughout the nineteenth century, the coin fell out of favour, (Rhodes 1990, 115–134) replaced by a pretty face.

It was imitation of the “vagabond lama”—the face of Empress Victoria—which distinguished the Qing’s second effort to eliminate a foreign currency’s influence on plateau commerce. Commonly known as the Zangyang (藏洋) or Sichuan rupee (Sichuan lubi 四川卢比), the Zangyuan was the first and only imperial coin in general circulation to depict the face of a Chinese emperor. (Bailey 1945, 68; Chen 1983, 79) Yet in its initial minting, the facial features of the young
Guangxu Emperor seemed to trace those of Her Majesty. *(see Figure 3)* Over time, his nose, his eyes, even his lips would change, but his identical vestments and the headpiece, a cap which similarly evoked that of a “vagabond lama,” remained the same. Trial minting commenced in small numbers late in 1902, but the *Zangyuan*’s impact was slight and mint runs small until Zhao Erfeng changed the complexion of authority on the plateau, prompting some to refer to the coin as “Zhao Erfeng money” (*Zhao Erfeng qian* 趙爾豐錢).

A year before Zhao’s appointment as Frontier Commissioner, Sichuan Governor-general Xiliang (錫良)(QCBDS, No. 0058, 71) equated the task of eradicating Indian rupees with the Qianlong Emperor’s presumably successful assertion of authority over Tibet through minting *baozang* a century earlier. “Currency is related to our state’s power to govern (*zhuquan*, sovereignty),” he proclaimed in 1906, “and Tibet is our vassal.” 国幣關係主權，西藏為我朝藩屬。 Asserting that Han and Khampa alike happily welcomed the *Zangyuan*’s initial circulation in Luding (瀘定) and environs, he went on to express his belief that the coin “would protect our economic power and authority.” Emblazoned with a Victorianised Guangxu, this coin evinced the influence of the first misperception, carrying the weight of expectations that its introduction could repel the rupee invasion and assert absolute and exclusive economic authority. Perhaps reflecting the importance of

*Figure 3. (left) “Vagabond Lama,” Obverse of 1885 Empress Victoria silver rupee; (right) Obverse of silver Zangyuan, ca. 1905. Source: Zhang 2011, 15.*
this goal, in the half decade through 1911, more than sixty percent of all coins minted in the Qing
realm were Zangyuan, worth some 7,283,934 yuan.\(^8\) (Chen 1983, 80)

Despite the Emperor’s resemblance to the Empress, a pretty face alone was insufficient to
propel the Zangyuan to dominance, the Khampas comfortable with their “vagabond lamas’ and the
Han merchants unwilling to endure sizable losses on exchange. Composed of 93.5 percent silver, the
Zangyuan’s initial value was set at three qian five fen, slightly less than the rupee’s exchange rate of
three qian seven or eight fen. After its first large-scale minting, however, the Zangyuan fell to only two
qian four or five fen, with merchants rarely receiving more than the equivalent of three qian in goods
per coin. (QCBDS, No. 0264, 284; Wu 1979, No. 14, 8) Acknowledging that Guangxu could not
compete unless the Han merchants of Kham were provided additional incentive, in 1909, Zhao
accommodated merchants’ repeated request, reducing the government exchange rate for Zangyuan to
two qian two fen. (QCBDS, No. 0264, 284) Even before this devaluation, however, the commoners
of Kham faced mandates to remit tax payments in the weaker currency.

In the “Regulations for the Future of Batang,” Zhao banned payment in kind for land taxes
and directed local officials to accept only Zangyuan or Qing sycee as payment, implicitly forbidding
the use of Indian rupees. (SA, Qing 7-73 and 7-74) Two years later, sycee was no longer accepted,
and new regulations governing Khampa nomads similarly mandated payment of livestock taxes
exclusively in Zangyuan. (QCBDS, No. 0390, 436–437) Reflecting and strengthening this new
currency environment, beginning in 1907 most financial reports used Zangyuan as the sole currency
of record, and all salaries and military provisions despatched from Chengdu were paid in Zangyuan,
as were debts and payments to Khampa merchants and commoners.

Suggesting the success of these policies, by spring 1911 Han merchants in Kham reportedly
transacted all business in Zangyuan and a new copper tongyuan (銅元) coin, ten million of which were
minted two years earlier, (Chen 1938) and English Lt-col. F. M. Bailey found that the Zangyuan held
a higher value than the Indian rupee. (Bailey 1945, 68) This tenuous market stability and Zhao’s
endeavour enticed enough new Han merchants to ascend the plateau that a branch of the Dartsedo
Chamber of Commerce opened in the Guandi Temple in Batang, (“Batang chuangshe” 1910) on the
southern road. And on the northern road, new Han businesses opened in Degé, which their
brethren had rarely visited before 1909. One Shaanxi merchant established a teahouse with an
accompanying distillery, and another opened a restaurant serving “fine foods” alongside a

\(^8\) The Zangyuan circulated in one yuan, half yuan, and quarter yuan denominations.
department store, Cuibua Baibuo Gongsi (萃華百貨公司), which sold both Chinese and foreign goods. ("Dege shangye" 1910)

Yet, the Zangyuan successfully supplanted the Indian rupee only in politics reached by Zhao’s frontier army, the coin’s influence decreasing where his soldiers were few and authority thus weak, particularly west of the stele and in Tibet proper, where Indian rupees remained ubiquitous. Even east of the stele, the Zangyuan—and its tongyuan partner—were not the only currencies exchanged in the marketplace, joined by Qing sycee, bankai from Yunnan, Tibetan tangka, Indian rupees, French Francs, Russian Roubles, and several paper notes from both neidi and Tibet. (Ganzi xianzhi 1990, 195) Despite this mélange of currencies, however, the growing dominance of the Zangyuan in the Xikang region suggests a measure of success arresting the flow of some economic forces along borders newly delineated by Fu.

Perhaps the most important factor in the Zangyuan’s success vis-à-vis the Victorian rupee was that, unlike the flow explored in the next section, both coins were relatively new to Kham, the “vagabond lama” rupee claiming no special cultural virtue which could not be mimicked by Victorianising the Guangxu Emperor. Thus the Zangyuan, once forcibly infused into the economy by Zhao’s mandates, encountered little resistance to becoming current, particularly as Indian rupees had already initiated a decline in Kham’s monastery-centred tea brick economy. Late Qing minting of Zangyuan planted the seed of currency exclusivity and absolute economic authority which expanded during the Republican period when the coin—still adorned with the Guangxu Emperor—became an important regional currency by the late 1930s, coincident with the next governmental delineation of borders, establishment of Xikang Province.

Zangyuan were minted in Chengdu from 1902 to 1917. By 1916, more than three million coins were in circulation, but their value had fallen, fluctuating between two qian eight fen and two qian two fen, (Zhang 2011, 23–25) and their geographic influence remained limited. Traversing Kham in 1914 following six years in Lhasa, the Han merchant Wei Sufen, (2013, 66) found Indian rupees, valued at approximately four qian, outnumbered Zangyuan everywhere west of Chamdo, the furthest extent of stable authority maintained by Sichuan’s frontier army. Interestingly, he also reported that merchants selling border tea from Sichuan all conducted business in Zangyuan, while those selling border tea from Amdo.

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9 The Sichuan Zangyuan also circulated in the northwestern Kham town of Kyegundo, in today’s Qinghai Province, and both Chamdo and Markham (Mangkang), just across the Ningjing mountains. A distinctive Zangyuan adorned with a smiling Guangxu Emperor might have been minted in Xining and circulated in Amdo in 1930. (Zhang 2011, 29-30)
Indian tea used rupees. When Zangyuan minting was revived in Dartsedo, from 1930 to 1942, the coin was used for most transactions in Xikang, including commerce; money-lending by monasteries, village headmen, and local rulers; and land rent paid to monasteries by both short-term Khampa tenants and foreigners. (Yang 2006, 103) In 1952, the newly established central People’s Bank of China attempted to replace the currency by introducing a “three no’s” policy, neither accepting or converting Zangyuan, nor prohibiting its use, but some two million remained in circulation through 1958. (Zhang 2011, 25)

This persistence is perhaps testament to the Zangyuan’s success arresting the material flow of Indian rupees in the early twentieth century, strengthening Sichuan’s commercial authority in Xikang. Yet in 1947 the French traveller André Migot (1955, 142) discovered that the Zangyuan had not eliminated all competitors in Kham. “Tea is much the most useful form of currency for a traveller in Tibet. Silver coins, though easier to transport, are less convenient, for there are several different kinds, each of which only has its full value in one particular part of the country… Tea, on the other hand, is readily accepted everywhere.” That tea bricks were still used as currency in the late 1940s evinces their continued importance to the region’s commerce. Thus, in addition to stabilising and controlling currency within the newly delineated borders of what would become Xikang, exerting authority over all aspects of the border tea trade was crucial not only for asserting commercial authority in Kham in the late Qing and early Republican eras and merging its economy with that of Sichuan and the burgeoning Chinese state, but also for challenging the monasteries’ local authority.

Termination of the prohibition of Indian tea sales in Tibet in the 1904 Treaty of Lhasa, a product of the Younghusband Expedition, provoked concern among Sichuan merchants and officials of another regional flow mirroring the Indian rupee’s challenge to Qing commercial authority in Kham. In early 1909, Zhao (SA, Qing 7-469) proclaimed, “In this time of acute commercial warfare, to maintain their financial strength, the government must encourage and invite all merchants in this area to cooperate, otherwise there is no way to counter [Indian tea] or to emerge victorious.”

To counter this flow, Zhao on May 20, 1910, officially established the Merchants Frontier Tea Joint Stock Company (Shangban biancha gufen youxian gongsi 商辦邊茶股份有限公司), a merchant-government partnership which monopolised the border tea trade by

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10 The company was initially known as the Merchants Tibetan Tea Joint Stock Company Limited (Shangban
conglomerating all tea merchants from the five tea producing districts of Yazhou, Qiongzhou (邛州, today’s Qionglai 邛崃), Mingshan (名山), Tianquan (天全), and Rongjing (榮經).

Though perceptions of tea leaves from Darjeeling and Assam flooding the plateau proved to be a phantom, (Booz 2011) by undermining the economic component of the monasteries’ authority in Kham, the Frontier Tea Company, like minting Zangyuan, further supported efforts to arrest the flow into Kham of cultural identity entwined with Buddhism originating in Lhasa. Despite nominal extension of Sichuan’s border west to the Markhamgang Mountains, the province’s economic authority effectively ended at Dartsedo. The majority of Han tea merchants ventured no further west, leaving shipment of their tea bricks to Lhasa and lucrative sales en route entirely in the hands of Khampa merchants and monasteries. One tea brick of average quality sold for approximately one half Indian rupee in Dartsedo, for one rupee in Batang, and double that in Lhasa. (Little 1901, 216)

In part to capture this profit, in its first year, the Frontier Tea Company opened branch sales offices (shoucha fenhao 售茶分號) in Dartsedo, Litang, Batang, and Chamdo along the southern road, and Jyekundo along the northern road (with more planned for the latter), each with exclusive rights to sell border tea in Kham.

Akin to bureaucratisation, these branch offices promised to replace indirect commercial authority with direct oversight of all aspects of the border tea trade. Inflected with an absolutist conception of territorial sovereignty, this goal paralleled that of the network of schools constructed across Kham to inject “civilisation” directly into Khampa society by acculturating its youth. Zhao perceived this as further facilitating Sichuan’s exertion of absolute and exclusive authority.

Monks and Textbooks
In 1907, Zhao (QCBDS, No. 0108, 119) identified the establishment of schools as the most important task for transforming Kham. “It is not urgent that we mould the Khampa barbarians into talented individuals. They are simple-minded and muddle-headed by nature, and still naïve. If we do not educate them, they may be seduced by evil thought and heresies, which in the future would make rescuing them [from ignorance] even more difficult.” 非急求造就人才也。之以蠻民性質渾渾噩噩，尚具天真，當此向化之初，咸以入為主，可與為善，亦可與為惡。若置而不教，設為邪說異端所誘，則將來挽救甚難。 While Zhao worried that new “heresies’
introduced by Christian missionaries could further muddle Khampa minds, for him and many Sichuan officials, their fundamental “ignorance” originated in the monasteries of Kham, conduits for Lhasa’s spiritual and cultural authority which alone fostered opposition to Qing policies. An opinion piece in a Chongqing newspaper (“Kaitong Xizang” 1906) exemplifies this misperception that Khampa commoners were easily manipulated by external forces. “Because of the profound stupidity of the evil lamas imbued with wickedness, up to the present Tibetans are still an absurd and muddled people.” 以喇嘛之愚冥安僿，致令至今猶為荒謬混沌之民族。 Thus in Zhao’s view, the Khampas were not responsible for rebelling in 1905, nor were they opposed to his efforts to improve their lives, rather they were being led astray. A proclamation penned in both Chinese and Tibetan posted in every rest-house along the southern road between Dartsedo and Batang made this assertion explicit, stating that “the lamas had kept people in ignorance, and that Chao was determined to break their power, and work entirely for the benefit of the people.” (Bailey, “Report on a Journey from Peking to Assam” 1911, IOS: MssEur F157/304C)

The monasteries’ influence on native rulers continued to undermine Qing efforts to exert authority in Kham even after bureaucratisation. J. H. Edgar, a long-time missionary in Batang, affirmed this perception (IOS, “Chinese colonization of S.E. Tibet” 1910, L/P+S/20/87-2), observing that Qing authority was “asserted rather than exercised”:

China has by wily devices and stern decrees vainly sought to make both her Capital and Emperor objects worthy of Tibetan interest and homage. But Lhasa remains the true mother of all Tibetan-speaking people, and her priests, when the crisis is acute, will recognise her mandates alone; and as agents of the Dalai Lama—the Spiritual Power—will steal the hearts of the people in spite of Chinese mandarins and Tibetan Princes.

The real degree of the Dalai Lama’s influence in areas of Kham both with and without Gelukpa monasteries notwithstanding, Edgar pointed to Qing inability to exert an exclusive authority both made possible and required by an absolutist conception of territorial sovereignty. Just as Zangyuan sought to arrest the flow of Indian rupees at the external borders of Kham and Tibet, inhibiting their subversion of Qing and later ROC commercial authority, so too the establishment of schools sought to arrest the flow of spiritual influence from Lhasa at the internal borders of Kham/Xikang. Both promised to undermine the monasteries’ influence on Khampa society, the Zangyuan weakening their hold over both Khampa commoners and rulers in the commercial realm, the schools subverting the determinant role they played in Khampa identity in the spiritual realm.

Zhao’s government schools were unlike previous schools set up in imperial borderlands. Modelled after the system of national schools established under the New Policies (xinzheng 新政)
(see Reynolds 1993), which were transforming society in *neidi*, they introduced a curriculum designed to remodel not only the morality of Khampa children, and by extension their adult relatives, but also their identity, undermining the monasteries’ spiritual influence with instruction in science and mathematics—and a dose of patriotic nationalism. The first Mandarin school (*Guanhua xuetang* 官話學堂) opened its doors on December 2, 1907 initially in Batang’s Chenghuang Temple (城隍廟) with just two teachers and 35 students. (QCBDS, No. 0136, 153; *Batang xianzhi* 1993, 357) Attendance was compulsory for children aged seven and above, but many parents were reluctant to send their sons and daughters to the new schools. As a result, the first students were predominately Han, the children of merchants selected by local officials who, along with the children of native rulers, served as models encourage suspicious Khampas to enrol their children. In the subsequent four years, increasing numbers of students attended an expanding network of schools. In Batang alone, by autumn 1908 almost three hundred students attended lower primary schools (*chudeng xiaoxue*) and Mandarin schools, including two exclusively for girls, of which there were sixty-four students. With the total student population in Kham exceeding three thousand by 1910, schools continued to appear in new towns both east and west of the stelc. (Zhang 1939; “Ba xue” 1908) While these statistics seem impressive, the schools’ geographical reach remained limited to major towns and their close environs. (see figure 4)

Only after attaining a level of linguistic proficiency in the Mandarin schools could students enrol in lower primary schools and study such subjects as cultivation of moral character, history, mathematics, hygiene, and the natural sciences. (“Ba xue”; Bailey 1945, 74–75; Zhang 1939, 77) Infused with the hybrid Qing-Chinese nationalism introduced to their teachers in the Tibetan Language School (*Zangwen xuetang* 藏文學堂), established in Chengdu in 1907 (see SA, Qing 7-971), textbooks specially prepared by the Frontier Educational Affairs Bureau (*guanwai xuewuju* 關外學務局) were written in vernacular Chinese (*baihua* 白話) and an early iteration of simplified Chinese

Figure 4. Distribution of government schools in 1908 and 1910.
characters (*Zhongguo qianjin wenzi* 中國淺近文字). Grounded in the misperception that Khampas freed from the monasteries’ influence would become amenable to Sichuan’s authority in Kham, two representative passages embody themes central to Zhao’s educational assault on monastic authority.

The first from *Popular Songs of the Frontier* (*Guansu ge* 關俗歌) was sung aloud:

“Nyingmapa and Gelukpa are as disorderly as hemp. It is clear that weakening their race is their primary goal. Not loving their country? Not caring for their mothers and fathers? What are they droning on about? What is the purpose of wearing the *putan* (woollen cloth)? From now on, I know not to pay attention to lamas, and certainly not to learn from them.” (Zhang 1939, 76)

紅黃兩教紛如麻，明明弱種第一法。不愛國家，不養爹媽，口中喃喃說些煞？身披氆氈為的煞？從今悟了莫睬他，再不學喇嘛。

The second is from *Three Character Rhymes of the Western Lands* (*Xiyu sanzi yunyu* 西垂三字韻語):

“You are very far away and lack knowledge. By going to school, you will understand the great meaning, which essence is in two phrases, loyalty to country and respect for Confucius.” (QCBDS, No. 0848, 963–964)

爾邊遠 少知識 入學堂 知大義
其要旨 兩言總 一忠國 一尊孔

While the song dissuades Khampa youth from pursuing monastic study by highlighting the deleterious effects monks have on society, in effect arresting the monasteries’ spiritual challenge to Qing authority, the rhyme awakens them to the nationalism at the core of their obligations to China, the legitimate source of authority—and identity—in Kham.

This effort to undermine the monasteries’ influence in Khampa society through “nationalism” and “civilisation” also reached beyond school walls in the form of speaking societies (*xuanjiangzuo* 宣讲所), which were tested in 1910 in two small towns, Dappa (Daoba 稻壩, today’s Daocheng 稻城) east of the stele and Gonjo (Gongjue 貢覺) to its immediate west. When Khampa farmers gathered to pay taxes and obtain provisions, they were obliged to sit quietly for nearly two hours and listen to lectures while drinking tea provided by Qing officials. Later printed and distributed by local headmen, these lectures encompassed topics which paralleled those studied by teachers in the Tibetan Language School and featured in frontier textbooks. One such lecture was entitled “Loyalty, Filial piety, Honesty, and Shame—Learning means being loyal and patriotic, respecting your family; recognising the differences between men and women; trusting friends.”
孝、廉、耻。習指忠君愛國，親上事長，男女有別，朋友有信各節。Others addressed local topics, such as the punishment of oppressive Khampa tusi. (QCBDS, No. 0608, 664–665) Beyond increasing enrolment, this educational endeavour can be assessed by its apparent results. In 1909, Zhao (“Bianwu dachen” 1909) proudly reported, “Students of eight or nine years of age all are very courteous when they see other people, and when asked about their responsibilities, they know that they should be loyal subjects and love their country.” 八九齡之學生，見人皆彬彬有禮，問以義務，皆知忠君愛國。 By 1912, several thousand Khampas had gained at least a rudimentary command of Chinese language and in 1933 Wei Sufen (2013, 55) described students in Batang, both boys and girls, able to write in simplified characters. Yet by 1915, scarcely more than thirty of the perhaps three hundred total government schools remained in Kham, none with dedicated buildings. A 1919 article (“Jiaoyuan”) details the plight of two Batang teachers who offered classes continuously for a decade but for the previous three years had not received their full salaries. Most of their students had Han fathers, likely merchants or soldiers, and Khampa mothers. Thus it seems Zhao’s educational endeavour neither fostered acculturation of the Khampas nor the weakening of the monasteries’ influence on Khampa society.

Conclusion
Unlike material flows such as Indian rupees, spiritual or cultural influence, long-standing regional affinities and identities could not easily be arrested at a physical border slicing through a region which shares a connected past. Influenced by the misperception that Khampa opposition derived solely from external forces, Sichuan officials in the late Qing and early Republican eras perceived that the Khampas, once freed from these flows and enlightened to the monasteries’ deleterious influence could then be led to “civilisation.” Zhao and his successors in Kham disregarded the validity of Khampa civilizational mores by presuming they could be swept away by chanting songs in Chinese. Their policies, especially the school curriculum, were informed by absolutist conceptions of territorial sovereignty and the perception that legitimate authority within a Kham/Xikang, severed from central Tibet by newly delineated borders necessitated the inhabitants’ unambiguous identification as subjects of the Qing Emperor, then citizens of the Chinese nation-state. Sichuan officials believed this possible only by arresting the competing local flow of spiritual and cultural authority from Lhasa via Khampa monasteries, which both supported and justified arresting the regional flow of rupees from India.
These beliefs, however, were grounded in misperceptions of both Khampa society and the power of sovereignty itself, that exerting exclusive and absolute authority within the borderlands necessitated quashing internal ambiguity, that only isolating Kham from all but Chinese influence could simultaneously shield and effectuate the assertion and exertion of their rule. For Fengquan, the two dépa were an embodiment of that ambiguity, the reflection of a superficial Chinese cultural and temporal authority continuously subverted by a deeper spiritual power which persistence was untenable under an absolutist conception of territorial sovereignty. The intensity of the role Victorian rupees and Tibetan Buddhism played in forging Khampa identity defined the potential influence of Qing and Republican Chinese alternatives, just as the role of perception in their constitution and the actual power to enforce their adoption determined the transformative success of these alternatives. Thus the Zangyuan successfully arrested the flow of Indian rupees into much of Kham, but the schools and their textbooks rather than undermining the monasteries’ cultural influence seemed instead to add another dimension to Khampa identity. Yet it remains uncertain if the endeavour to arrest such flows into a contested borderland and to strive for absolute and exclusive authority were necessary to substantiate Qing and later Republican Chinese claims to sovereignty in Kham and ultimately across Tibet—or even possible.

Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>IOS</td>
<td>India Office Select Materials, The British Library, London</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>The National Archives, London</td>
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<td>QCBDS</td>
<td>1989. <em>Qingmo Chuandian biawu dang’an shiliao</em> [Studies of the reports of Sichuan and Yunnan affairs at the end of the Qing Empire]. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>Sichuan Provincial Archives, Chengdu, China</td>
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<td>SG</td>
<td><em>Sichuan guanbao</em> [Sichuan Officials’ Gazette]</td>
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