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Buddhism's Worldly Other: Secular Subjects of Tibetan Learning

Dominique Townsend

By analyzing the writings of select Tibetan authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this article reflects on the prestige attached to secular (but not anti-religious) knowledge, and the ambivalence prominent thinkers expressed around the proper relationship between worldly and religious learning. Tibetan lay and religious leaders have long been steeped in a classical Indic system of categorizing knowledge, known in Sanskrit as *pañcavidyāsthāna* and in Tibetan as *rikné nga* (*rig gnas lnga*). Sakya Paṇḍita first established the importance of these fields of knowledge in Tibet during the thirteenth century. Later intellectual figures such as the Fifth Dalai Lama Nga ang Lozang Gyatso and his cohort, including figures associated with the influential Nyingma monastery called Mindroling (*Smin grol gling*), all acknowledged the significance of *rikné* even as they struggled to balance their worldly interests with religious concerns. Their writing shows that worldly subjects, distinct from but in combination with the study of religion, have been important in shaping Tibetan thinking and social life for many centuries. Worldly knowledge was and is a basis for political and cultural prestige in Tibetan society as well as a common ground for connecting with the ruling classes of neighboring civilizations, also shaped in part by Buddhism. Over the centuries, the inculcation of *rikné* among educated Tibetans contributed to the development of a connoisseur class. Further, the Tibetan socio-political theory of the 'union of religion and the secular' (*chos srid zung 'brel*) and the closely related 'two traditions' (*lugs gnyis*) model, were primary concerns of the Fifth Dalai Lama and his colleagues. These theories articulated an ideal union between worldly and religious power. Precisely how Tibetan literati have understood and valued worldly fields of learning in relation to religious subjects has varied across time, place, and religious tradition. Investigating particular Tibetan statements on the significance of *rikné* reveals the strong, if notably ambivalent, presence of secular values in Tibetan history and culture.

Keywords: Tibet, Buddhism, education, art, literature, history.

Introduction

In Tibet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Tibetan literati worked to reconcile the world-bound demands of constructing a unified polity with the world-renouncing values of Buddhism. This was not a new struggle. Across the many times and places where Buddhism has taken root, worldly engagements and renunciation often have been in productive tension.[1] For centuries prominent Tibetan Buddhist practitioners who also held temporal authority argued for a balance of religious and worldly learning. A key example is the thirteenth century scholar Sakya Paṇḍita (Sa skya paṇ ḍi ta, 1182-1251). He is known even today as a paragon of the Buddhist intellectual thanks in large part to having mastered the classical Indic system of learning (Skt: *pañcavidyāsthāna*) known in Tibetan as *rikné nga* (*rig gnas lnga*). Sakya Paṇḍita's writing on *rikné nga* helped make him famous beyond Tibet. Most significantly, his reputation as an enlightened intellectual was instrumental in drawing the support of the Yuan court to his family's religious tradition and monastery, eventually establishing the powerful Sakya-Mongol alliance of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Gold 2007). From at least that time forward, Tibetan intellectuals debated the value of the worldly subjects of *rikné* and the proper relationship between worldly and religious learning.[2]

Beginning in 1642, under the aegis of the Koshot Mongol Gushri Khan (1582-1684), the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rygya mtsho, 1672-1682) and his inner circle strove to build a political union across Tibetan regions that had not been united since the fall of the powerful Tibetan Yarlung dynasty in the ninth century. This time was marked by extreme sectarian strife between Tibetan religious groups, as well as tensions between various Tibetan, Mongol and Qing factions all vying for influence. The Dalai Lama's Geluk (*dge lugs*) or 'virtuous' tradition, known for strict monasticism and scholasticism, was pitted against other Tibetan religious traditions, in some cases with dire consequences. At the same time, there were notable examples of inter-sectarian collaborations. The Dalai Lama's direct support of the founding of Mindroling (*Smin grol gling*) Monastery, an important institution affiliated with the Nyingma or 'ancient' tradition (*rying ma*) is an example of a major effort across sectarian divides. The reasons for this alliance are too numerous to mention here, but they involved familial, political, and historical factors.[3]

One distinction between the Geluk and Nyingma groups was and is that the Nyingma tradition has a significant contingent of religious professionals who are non-celibate and might be householders as well as teachers and ritual masters. This is in addition to monks and nuns. The Nyingmapa founders of Mindroling, with strong ties to the eighth-century Indian tantric adept Padmasambhava, were especially well known for mastery of Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*), a distinctive philosophical, meditative, and ritual system. The Fifth Dalai Lama's family had diverse religious affiliations and he was extremely interested in Great Perfection practice, to the chagrin of some of his orthodox Gelukpa colleagues (Karmay 1988). He looked to Nyingmapa masters, including the founders of Mindroling, for Great Perfection teachings. In addition, and most relevant to this article, from its founding in 1676, Mindroling Monastery was a center for the Tibetan literati to study both Great Perfection and the fields of classical learning known in Tibetan as *rikné* which included worldly and religious subjects (Townsend 2012).

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries cogently can be called Tibet's early modern period. Janet Gyatso describes the period as "roughly corresponding with the development of Tibetan self-consciousness of its political and cultural position vis-à-vis other powers in the region" (Gyatso 2015: 409). During that time, highly influential Tibetan intellectuals and political leaders, most notably the Fifth Dalai Lama's powerful regent Desi Sangyé Gyatso (Sang rgyas rgya mtsho, 1653-1705), helped establish *rikné* as indispensable to the learned, cultured Tibetan person. Inspired by Sakya Paṇḍita and previous Indian Buddhist masters, those same thinkers (and the wide circle of Tibetans whose views they helped shape), asserted that total mastery of *rikné*, sometimes translated as the 'sciences,' or 'arts and sciences,' is necessary for the attainment of full enlightenment. In sum, the category of *rikné* is said to encompass all that is knowable (Dungkar 2002: 1902). Therefore mastery of *rikné* is tantamount to omniscience.

The assertion that worldly knowledge is essential to enlightenment might come as a surprise to readers familiar with Tibetan Buddhism and culture. This surprise is due in part to the fact that the same Tibetan authors who established the importance of *rikné* also used rhetoric that favored religious knowledge. It might also be that the rhetoric claiming worldly learning to be essential for enlightenment eventually was overwhelmed by Buddhists who feared the distracting power of secular concerns. Be that as it may, the same Tibetan authors who stressed the importance of *rikné* also demonstrated conflicting views on how worldly and religious values should be balanced, demonstrating a climate in which this question was contested.

This article focuses on the writing of influential thinkers from Central Tibet's ruling class during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to analyze their shifting perspec-

tives on the proper place of worldly learning in Tibetan society and culture. It should be noted that, while focusing on the early modern period, the article considers materials that span a long and diverse history, from fourth- and fifth-century Indian texts to thirteenth-century Tibetan texts to early modern texts. My own academic perspective and the perspectives of my contemporary sources also come to bear. These sources show that while attitudes on the category *rikné* have changed over time, what appears to remain consistent is the co-existence of multiple perspectives that sometimes conflict. The ambivalence around *rikné* in the early modern period in Central Tibet, where the dominant paradigm was the ideal union of religion and worldly concerns (with a strong rhetorical favoring of the religious), reflects and reverses the modern 'Western' mentality that insists religion and secular concerns should be independent and distinct (with a rhetorical favoring of the secular). In both frameworks, there inevitably is slippage between the mutually defining spheres, regardless of whether religious or secular values are prioritized.

The early modern Tibetan authors this article focuses on were concerned with the reception of their writing on multiple levels and therefore deployed rhetoric to serve different aims in different contexts, as will be illustrated below. For instance, when the Fifth Dalai Lama reflected on his early education, he assessed his tutors in part based on whether they focused on writing skills, philosophy, or religious doctrine. In instances where his main concern was soteriological he bemoaned the wasted time he spent with tutors who taught him the worldly subject of composition, and yet as a statesman who corresponded with the Qing emperor, it is clear that he needed and valued erudite writing (Karmay 2014). On the other hand, Terdak Lingpa (Gter bdag gling pa, 1646-1714), who was widely recognized as a visionary religious master, frequently gave his powerful lay disciples extremely pragmatic advice, encouraging them in his letters to abridge the religious practices he had assigned them in order to make time for their duties as political leaders. In all cases there was a high degree of alertness to the tensions between religious and worldly concerns and to the difficulty of striking the right balance within one's own practice as a Buddhist and as a person of influence.

What does this tell us about seventeenth and eighteenth century Tibetan culture and politics? I suggest it shows recognition of the proven potential for the Buddhist model of joining the religious and the temporal to shape structures of power. This model is exemplified by the ideal of the Cakravartin ruler. And at the same time, it shows an acute anxiety about whether the Buddhist model of enlightened statecraft could win out among competing models in the changing world of the early modern period, actively occupied by various Tibetan, Mongol, Qing, and South Asian powers and arguably impacted by the presence of Jesuit missionaries as well. For the many who attribute Tibet's loss of autonomy to the rigidity of conservative Buddhist institutions in the twentieth century, this anxiety will appear entirely justified

To begin to understand the spectrum of perspectives on *rikné*, it is significant to note that aristocratic Tibetans such as Terdak Lingpa and the other leaders of Mindroling Monastery had held local political and religious authority jointly since at least the twelfth century.[4] Based on centuries of experience, those lamas who were also householders, landowners, and political leaders stood as models for the Fifth Dalai Lama as he strove to balance his new joint role as temporal ruler and religious hierarch over Central Tibet in the late seventeenth century. There were multiple means by which Tibetan Buddhist thinkers worked to balance the two conceptual spheres of Buddhism and worldly life. How they prioritized the various subjects of *rikné*, discussed in detail below, was one such means. Another expression of the proper relationship between the two spheres came through the theory referred to as the ideal union of religion and the secular. In Tibetan history, perspectives on how the religious and temporal spheres should be prioritized have shifted depending on the context, but have long been of central importance (Cüppers et al. 2000). In contrast to some Gelukpa hierarchs, and with the exception of certain members of the Mindroling lineage, the founding lamas of Mindroling appear to have taken for granted that worldly and religious knowledge were essential for their success as worldly and religious leaders.

Defining the Fields of Kn wledge

Rikné is an extremely salient but under-analyzed aspect of Tibetan culture.[5] According to this epistemological system, the five major fields of knowledge *rig gnas che ba lnga*) are logic (*gtan tshigs kyi rig pa*), medicine (*gso ba'i rig pa*), visual arts (*bzo gnas rig pa*), grammar (*sgra'i rig pa*), and 'inner knowledge,' generally translated as dharma, Buddhism, or religion (*nang gyi rig pa*).[6] The categories not designated expressly as dharma can be called worldly, since they primarily are associated with navigating the temporal world (*'jig rten*). Nothing in this rubric suggests that the worldly categories are less valuable than the religious and nothing suggests that the various fields are incompatible with each other. Certainly in the Tibetan context that this article focuses on, the ideal was to balance them. Tibetan sources often refer to the first four categories as the 'outer' or

conventional (*tha snyad*) subjects and religion as the 'inner' (*nang*) subjects (Dungkar 2002: 1901). This distinction inevitably is blurred in application, as explained below. The five major fields of knowledge appear in varying orders i Tibetan writing, perhaps suggesting different perspectives on the subjects' relative significance. Sometimes inner knowledge is first, sometimes last, and sometimes, it falls in the middle. To a striking degree, Tibetan treatments of the worldly and dharmic subjects resonate with broad categories of secular and religious across times and places far beyond Tibet.

The fields named above are the five generally invoked b the term *rikné*, but it also applies to a larger classification of ten or eighteen fields of knowledge, which include subjects that can be referred to generally as the arts and sciences. A classical list of the ten fields includes the fiv major fields listed above as well as the five minor field *rig gnas chung ba lnga*): poetics (*snyan ngag*), composition (*sdeb sbyor*), the study of synonyms (*mngon brjod*), drama (*zlos gar*), and astrology (*skar rtsis*). The further list of eighteen fields expands on related themes, which can help complete the picture of what the worldly fields of knowledge enco - pass. There are six standard versions of the list of eighteen fields of knowledge (Dungkar 2002: 1900-1901). Again, they vary in order but include comparable subjects. The version attributed to the *Abhidharmakośa* (*Chos mngon pa'i mdzod*) includes music (*rol mo*), sexual intercourse (*'khrig thabs*), earning a livelihood (*'tsho tshis*), accounting (*grangs can*), elocution (*sgra*), administering medicine (*gso dpyad*), traditions of dharma (*chos lugs*), craftsmanship or architecture (*bzo bo*), archery or the judging of archery (*'phong spyod*), logical argumentation (*gtan tshigs*), yoga (*rnal 'byor*) hearing (*thos pa*), remembering (*dran pa*), astrological analysis (*skar ma'i dpyad*), calculation (*rtsis*), optical illusions (*mig 'phrul*), history (*sngon rabs*), and historiography (*sngon byung brjod*).[7] According to the explanations represented in the *Dungkar Tibetological Dictionary*, these epistemic lists enumerate all that can be known.

To draw out a few of the fields that are most remarkably worldly – sexual intercourse, earning a living, architecture, calculation, archery, and historiography all stand out for their worldliness. This is true even allowing for a broad view of the necessary skills for monastic life, which of course involve administrative, culinary and housekeeping responsibilities as well as religious ones. Especially in the context of Tibet's tantric tradition of Buddhism, the fields of learning could be and are used to express religious content, but they equally could be and are used to express purely temporal content.

Reflecting further on the lists above, especially the fiv major fields and five minor fields, makes it clear that th system of learning is largely concerned with language and literary arts. Notice that grammar, dialectics, poetics, composition, and the study of synonyms make up five of the ten primary *rikné*. These fields in particular can serve rel - gious and worldly purposes in equal measure and in some sense might be understood as bridges between the religious and the secular. Expression and communication are fundamental aspects of learning, teaching, and discussing religious doctrine, and they are also critical to diplomatic, political, social and artistic expression. Grammar and logic can just as easily express political rhetoric, deceit and power mongering as they can express the teachings of the Buddha. Poetry was and is of central importance in Tibetan religious and lay society as a means of communicating and demonstrating engagement with the high culture aspects of Tibet's literati connoisseur class, as well as a means of taking part in broader 'folk' traditions. Being well educated in the fields of language arts would prepare a student to compose poetry that might be used for personal use (such as composing a love letter) religious use (such as making an offering to one's teacher), and professional expression and correspondence (such as composing official letters). With some variation, the Tibetan fields of knowledge bear a strong resemblance to the trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy) that made up the seven 'liberal arts' of medieval European universities. In both Tibetan and European contexts, the divisions of these subjects allowed for the cultivation of a connoisseur class that was concerned not just with political power but also with style, taste, and cultural distinction. Without diminishing the particularities of the content expressed, there are clear parallels in how knowledge is parsed and managed, and in both cultural cases the link between knowledge and authority is apparent. Mastering *rikné* or the arts and sciences can directly lead to power in temporal and religious spheres.

The Perspectives of Early Modern Tibetan Thinkers

At this point it is worthwhile to consider the topic of enlightenment, as the ultimate (or at least rhetorically ultimate) aim of learning in Buddhist contexts. According to many Indian and Tibetan thinkers, worldly or 'outer' knowledge is necessary for enlightenment. In other words, not only religious insight but also mastery of worldly knowledge is necessary to achieve the primary professed Buddhist soteriological goal. This point is made throughout Indian and Tibetan sources. However, it is easily overlooked since Buddhist values have tended to predominate Tibetan culture and society, and further, since there

is a strong current of ambivalence in how Tibetan scholars treat worldly learning. Even from a point of view that values Buddhism above all else and that posits the 'inner' knowledge of dharma as the most precious content, the worldly fields of knowledge provide the forms through which that essential content of dharma is employed and expressed in the world. The worldly fields provide the means to gain understanding, to analyze others' needs, and to benefit others on the path by teaching. This makes it hard to dismiss the importance of worldly learning in a Tibetan Buddhist context. Insisting that all the fields of knowledge are necessary for enlightenment can allow a religious goal to be understood as the highest priority, but this framework also justifies spending time on worldly pursuits. Against this backdrop of *rikné* broadly defined, it will be useful now to provide a brief overview of the perspectives some seminal early modern Tibetan thinkers presented.

The Fifth Dalai Lama: Religious and Temporal Head of Tibet

In some of his writing, such as letters to his longtime student and advisor Terdak Lingpa, the Fifth Dalai Lama was adamant that religion (*chos*) and worldly life (*srid*) should be joined (*chos srid zung 'brel*).[8] However, he also appears to have been keenly aware of the danger of imbalance between the two spheres. In his autobiography, the Fifth Dalai Lama writes almost enviously of lamas (such as those at Mindroling Monastery) who were born into hereditary lineages (Karmay 2014: 17). He indicates that those lamas were trained automatically in the two traditions of worldly and religious subjects. Stating explicitly that such lamas are guaranteed a high level of prestige and respect since they have the pedigree attached to *rikné*, the Dalai Lama practically bemoans the difficulties of his own position as a Gelukpa lama. In his group and in his day, the two traditions often seem to have been treated as mutually threatening, thereby making it hard for someone in his position to gain the worldly and religious respect required to succeed. His description of his early training is moving and even pitiable because of the confusing layers of disagreement between his teachers about what he should learn. In some passages, he treats religious and worldly subjects as starkly distinct, even recounting that one influential teacher asserted that the study of logic or dialectics (*tshad ma*) is a distraction from dharma practice (Karmay 2014: 73). This suggests that Gelukpa scholars such as the Dalai Lama and his tutors were attentive to the ideal of the two traditions working in harmony, yet the ideal was only strived for in particular contexts.

Desi Sangyé Gyatso: Powerful Regent and Master Politician

In a similar vein but from a slightly different perspective, consider the Dalai Lama's powerful regent Sangyé Gyatso, himself not a monk but a layman. In his history of Tibetan medicine he went to great lengths to establish *rikné*, the five fields of knowledge or 'five sciences' as they a also called, as essential to the bodhisattva path and to the development of full omniscience (Kilty 2010). As demonstrated below, the regent extensively quotes Indian and Tibetan masters of various lineages to show that *rikné*, both the worldly and the religious subjects, are vital fare for all students interested in enlightenment. The lengths to which he went to establish the importance of *rikné* seems to indicate a pervasive ambivalence about how valuable the worldly subjects were. Especially regarding the study of medicine, the regent was determined to establish *rikné*'s importance. However, it is also the case that during his tenure, monks at the major Geluk monasteries in Lhasa were barred from studying *rikné*. Therefore any monks who required knowledge of the literary arts and so forth often studied under Nyingma teachers, and in particular teachers from Mindroling (Dreyfus 2003).

Terdak Lingpa: Visionary, Aristocrat, Hereditary Lama

Terdak Lingpa, the founder and first throne-holder of Mindroling, seems to have taken for granted that the two traditions could and should balance each other. He designed the curriculum at Mindroling so that students trained in all the subjects of *rikné*. Only when well versed in the classical subjects of learning would students begin to practice meditation or engage in solitary retreats. He had many high ranking lay pupils as well as monks and nuns. His written correspondence with lay students, who had careers in civil service and government, demonstrates a sense of balance between religious practice and worldly work. In every instance he prioritizes religion as the superior force that should color and shape worldly engagements, but he allows for the necessities of daily life, rooted in a solid *rikné* education and guided by knowledge of dharma. His collected writings seem to reflect an implicit view that dharma and worldly life operate interdependently. Terdak Lingpa's younger brother Lochen Dharmaśrī (Lo chen dharma shri, 1654-1717), a great monk scholar, worked hand in hand with Terdak Lingpa to establish the curriculum at Mindroling. In the many biographical works he composed on his illustrious family members, he indicated numerous examples of ancestors who were renowned for mastery of the two traditions of worldly and religious activities and learning. The strong implicit suggestion is

that it was considered a great accomplishment to be recognized for both, and it was largely taken for granted that to be educated and cultured involved mastering all the fields of knowledge. The degree to which this was true for women of noble families is a worthwhile question that demands further research.

Miwang Polhané: King of Tibet

Another example related to Mindroling but more firmly rooted in the sphere of high society and politics is the King of Tibet Miwang Polhané (Pol ha nas, 1689-1747). The scholar and civil servant Dokharwa Tsering Wangyal (Mdo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal, 1697-1763) wrote a detailed account of the period Polhané spent studying at Mindroling in his biography. In it, Terdak Lingpa is portrayed as the beloved charismatic lama, and his brother Lochen Dharmaśrī is described as the ultimate scholar. The description of Polhané's studies begins with worldly subjects of *rikné* and touches on the Indic approach to aesthetic discernment, culminating in training in dharma. The section of the biography devoted to Mindroling addresses worldly pursuits (including sex, diplomacy and power politics) as well as religious devotion. Polhané is primarily a political figure and his biography interweaves his worldly life with his religious training at Mindroling in ways that are striking and surprising. There are no discernible boundaries between one sphere and the other. The use of literary training for the purpose of expressing the dharma is a perfect example of how the worldly and religious fields of *rikné* can be integrated.

Mingyur Paldren: Female Master of Esoteric Philosophy & Meditation

By contrast, the biography of Terdak Lingpa's treasured disciple and daughter, Jetsun Mingyur Paldren (Rje btsun Mi 'gyur dpal sgron, 1699-1769) shows a more conflicted stance on *rikné* within the Nyingma tradition. Her biography presents her in such a way that she stands out as an adamant opponent of the worldly subjects of *rikné*. There are several salient reasons for her stance, all of which are quite particular to her context (i.e. time, place, and gender) but which nonetheless help demonstrate the spectrum of views on the proper relationship between the temporal and religious in early modern Tibet. Likely, one reason for her dismissal of worldly subjects was that her father and uncle chose not to educate her in the worldly subjects of *rikné*, but for complex reasons focused exclusively on dharma (Khyung po ras pa 1984: 66). Gender was a factor, but not a simple one. The biography also stresses a sense of urgency for the young woman to learn as much as possible from her father before he passed away since she was understood through prophecy and direct observation to be especially inclined to religious learning. Terdak Lingpa suggested she was so gifted in dharma that her rigorous and extensive education should be limited to religious teachings, to make the most of her talents.

Another sensible reason for Mingyur Paldren's rejection of rikné was that her youth was severely traumatic due to the persecution of her family's lineage and the destruction of the monastery. Mindroling was targeted in 1717 because of its reputation as a vibrant Nyingma center, known in large part for *rikné*. The perception of Gelukpa zealots (such as the Zungar Mongols) of Nyingmapa practitioners like those at Mindroling as corrupt led directly to their persecution. Later, after the rebuilding of Mindroling under Mingyur Paldren's leadership, Qing rulers continued to be suspicious of Nyingma institutions, frequently forcing the adherents to convert to Geluk practice (Mdo mkhar ba 2002: 482). Mingyur Paldren's biography suggests that she was dismayed by practices such as sexual yoga, the imbibing of alcohol by religious practitioners, and violent rituals intended to overcome enemies of the Dalai Lama's central government. These were all practices associated with her family tradition, which integrated worldly and religious activities. Her disavowal of such practices may reflect an effort to appear taintless in the eyes of Gelukpa authorities who would likely disapprove of these activities. Perhaps she rejected worldly subjects in an effort to avoid more of the devastating persecution she and her relatives suffered when she was a youth. It might also be argued that her lack of early education in *rikné* simply made her less worldly and therefore less tolerant of behavior that was ambiguous in regards to the proper balance of worldly and religious values.

In sum, even among this small circle of thinkers who shared much in common both in terms of high culture and an interest in certain esoteric philosophical and meditative methods (the Great Perfection in particular), there was a spectrum of views on how to balance the religious and worldly fields of *rikné* in educating the ruling literati class. This ramified the broader question of how to balance religious and temporal power expressed through the theory of the ideal union of religion and secular life. In the cosmopolitan and high culture milieu of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Lhasa and the surrounding region, the prestige of the worldly fields was significant and yet at the same time worldly learning was perceived by some as a threat to the primacy of religious learning and commitments.[9] The Fifth Dalai Lama, when faced with the challenge of ruling a unified Tibetan polity, looked to

preexisting Nyingma models of leadership. In his role as a Gelukpa monk, however, he demonstrated ambivalence, as I demonstrate in the following section.

Contested Values: Worldly and Religious Subjects

In Central Tibet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there seems to have been some debate among Tibetan literati about whether the worldly subjects were in keeping with the values of Buddhist monasticism and dharma more generally. Cultivating such learning might distract one from the Buddhist teachings and lead one into worldly pursuits such as politics or amorous adventures. The tension over how the religious and worldly fields should be balanced plays out in different ways.

At the heart of that debate was the figure of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Within his early modern context, he strove to rule in a way that: (1) found roots in Indic Buddhist values and aesthetics; (2) fit within the mythic narrative of Buddhism's special role in Tibet; (3) could unify a diverse populace spread out over a massive expanse of land; and (4) satisfied the tastes and expectations of neighboring Mongol and Qing rulers. It seems that at the same time that he wanted to be powerful politically, he wanted to accrue merit as a good Buddhist. This is in keeping with the Cakravartin ideal. Culturally, this required displaying mastery of *rikné*, for instance through writing fine ornate poetry. On the socio-political front, it required demonstrating the concept of religious and temporal power in union as the ideal worldview for Tibetans in the new polity. The Fifth Dalai Lama and his regent Desi Sangyé Gyatso turned to earlier Indian and Tibetan models for inspiration in understanding what it meant to be a scholar of the fields of knowledge. Again recall the crucial example of the famed Sakya Paṇḍita, who established *rikné* as the model for Tibetan education in the thirteenth century. In his work entitled, *Gateway to Learning*, in an effort to validate the fields of knowledge, Sakya Paṇḍita quoted the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*:

> Without becoming a scholar in the five science
>
> Not even the supreme sage can become omniscient (Gold 2010: 155).

Sakya Paṇḍita, like Indian Buddhist scholars before him and key Tibetan thinkers after him, was concerned with establishing the validity of all the fields of learning while maintaining the primacy of Buddhism. As much as Buddhist learning was positioned at the highest peak of learning, Sakya Paṇḍita asserts other subjects to be essential for becoming a genuine master or a truly cultured and knowledgeable person. To be omniscient, you have to know it *all*; in other words, all the subjects of *rikné* are necessary for enlightenment. Among the Tibetan writers this article considers, the formal fields of knowledge, like all things Indian, also carried the powerful aura of coming from the land of Buddha himself. And in the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic world in which the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Tibetan thinkers interacted with their diverse neighbors, the Indic system appealed to a range of cultural groups who to a greater or lesser extent embraced Buddhism. Both in the time of Sakya Paṇḍita, during the Yuan dynasty, and in the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, during the early Qing dynasty, worldly subjects provided a framework for Tibetans to become articulate, sensitive, and discerning. These were all qualities necessary to govern the Tibetan polity and to connect diplomatically to the various forces vying for power in the cosmopolitan Tibetan cultural milieu.

Although overall the Fifth Dalai Lama's position toward *rikné* appears ambivalent, there is clear evidence that the argument that mastery of all the fields was necessary for the attainment of omniscience or enlightenment made an impression on him. In presenting his position, the Dalai Lama drew upon literary devices such as particular metaphors with roots in respected Indian and Tibetan sources to establish the superiority of the fields of knowledge. In the following stanza, he compares the five major field of knowledge, here translated by Gavin Kilty as the 'five sciences', to the sun:

> In the field of the doctrine of the Buddha,
>
> his soil made fertile by the doctrine of pratimoksha ethics
>
> the shoots, leaves, and flowers of transmission and insight
>
> grown by language, healing, logic, arts and the three baskets
>
> weighed down by harvest of method and wisdom union,
>
> on the definitively secret path of Vajrayan
>
> this sun of the five sciences correctly applied,
>
> pulled by the horses of merit gathered in the past...
>
> (Kilty 2010: 45).

This statement, attributed to the Dalai Lama, is but one of many examples that the regent Sangyé Gyatso collected to prove the fields of knowledge as worthy of study. The

following excerpts, also extracted from Sangyé Gyatso's *Mirror of Beryl*, aim to establish the validity of the rubric of *rikné* in the newly unified Tibetan polity. The regent goes to great lengths to cull evidence from Indian and Tibetan Buddhist sources, and he comes up with nearly twenty discrete examples that verify the importance of the five major fields of knowledge for those engaging in th Buddhist path. His extensive citations might suggest that a significant sector of his contemporaries did not value, or even denigrated, the worldly fields of knowledge.

The regent built his argument by drawing upon Indian sources, such as the *Ornament to Mahayana Sutras* (*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*), Asanga's work *Stages of the Bodhisattva from Stages of the Yogacaryā* (*Yogacaryābhūmaubodhisattvabhūmi*) and the works of the eminent Tibetan master Sasang Mati Paṇchen (sa bzang ma ti paṇ chen blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1294-1376), among others (Kilty 2010). All of the statements support the importance of worldly knowledge, *rikné*, the fields of knowledge, here translated as 'fiv sciences.'[10]

An example of the regent's rigorous list of supporting quotes is from the *Sutra of Repaying the Kindness of the Skillful Buddha*:

> If a bodhisattva does not first train in the fiv sciences, he can never attain the gnosis of omniscience, the highest and perfect enlightenment. Therefore, in order to attain the highest enlightenment, train in the five sciences (Kilty 2010: 41)

Another supporting statement is attributed to Asanga's work *Stages of the Bodhisattva from Stages of the Yogacarya*. Having posed the rhetorical question: "What is the wisdom of the bodhisattva?" Asanga answers:

> It is the discernment of phenomena and focuses on and engages in the five sciences of inner science, logic, healing, language, and arts and crafts (Kilty 2010: 43).

Desi Sangyé Gyatso also cites the eminent Tibetan master Sasang Mati Paṇchen, which can serve as an example to succinctly sum up his argument:

> Those who desire enlightenment
>
> Should know the five sciences (Kilty 2010: 45).

This is just a taste of the thoroughgoing evidence the regent gives of historically significant masters arguing for *rikné*. As strongly as the regent argued this point, citing the Fifth Dalai Lama among many other Indian and Tibetan masters, the Dalai Lama himself fluctuated in his perspe - tive about the value of *rikné*. To begin to illustrate the Fifth Dalai Lama's ambivalence around the relationship between worldly and religious knowledge in Tibetan culture, consider the following passages from his autobiography, *The Play of Illusion* (Karmay 2014).

In the first pages of his memoir, the Dalai Lama rues that he was born into a reincarnate line rather than a hereditary line of lamas. As previously mentioned, he states that hereditary lamas are more fortunate because they are trained in the 'two traditions,' of religion and worldly subjects, as a matter of course (Karmay 2014: 17). Specifically, he contrasts the authority and prestige such an education ensures with the travails of reincarnate lineages like his own. Without the guarantee of training in both the worldly and religious aspects of *rikné*, he suggests that reincarnate lamas must establish their authority anew every generation. By contrast, in his estimation, the pedigree that comes from being born into a hereditary line of lamas is connected to the expectation that such lamas would be trained in all the formal subjects in the course of their youth, without the need to defend the worldly fields of knowledge. He writes that a hereditary lama, "is learned in the two traditions, like a son capable of continuing his father's heritage. There is no interruption and his followers can have peace of mind" (Karmay 2014: 17).

Yet later in his autobiography the Dalai Lama suggests that his focus on studying worldly subjects, and even dialectics which is arguably religious, detracted from the ultimate purpose of learning. Throughout the memoir he varies his stance on the subject, for example appreciating in some passages the tutors who taught him to write well: "I began to learn calligraphy from Khardrong Chodze, a subject that seemed to have no end, but at least since then I have been capable of writing a letter" (Karmay 2014: 108).

Thus the Dalai Lama acknowledges the need to be a capable writer. It was, after all, an essential part of his role as a major temporal leader. And yet at the same time, he suggests that spending time learning calligraphy, which is primarily an aesthetic endeavor concerned with form rather than content, is a relative waste of time. While he needed the prestige that comes with the best education in writing and calligraphy to establish his position, he nonetheless expresses apprehension about the demands such studies placed on his time and attention. And in other passages the Dalai Lama chides one lama for focusing too much on logic, to the detriment of the study of doctrine:

> Dialecticians are not considered real religious practitioners, and he as a lama should do some spiritual exercises. It would not do if he keeps up like that! (Karmay 2014: 73).

The study of dialectics is widely considered a religious pursuit, particularly among his Geluk tradition, and yet the Dalai Lama presents cultivating logic as diametrically opposed to religious practice. This raises the question of the general viewpoint (if there was a generally held view) of his perceived audience, presumably Gelukpa leaders and Mongol or Qing supporters. Elsewhere, the Dalai Lama further minimizes the importance of training in logic and the other outer fields of knowledge in favor of a strict focus on the inner science of dharma. For instance, when reflecting on a particular tutor of his, he wrote:

> ... this master was one who spent day and night practicing religion and one could not but have faith in him no matter what he uttered. All the advice and whatever he said were directed towards religion only. Up to that time, the way I studied was just for the sake of wanting to be a learned man and have a reputation, which made my disposition as stiff as an untanned leather rope. From that time, I began to direct my thoughts inwardly and came to realize that I must practice religion in order to obtain salvation and this I owe to the favor of this master (Karmay 2014: 108).

Here the Dalai Lama pits the inner field of knowledge against the outer fields of knowledge, and by extension he contrasts those who are focused on religious practice to those who are concerned with 'reputation' and prestige. By focusing on the outer fields, he claims to have cultivated a rigid mind like 'untanned leather.' Clearly he spent a great deal of time engaged in studying the outer subjects of *rikné*. The quality of his formal writing required years of training. Moreover, elsewhere in his own writing he connects *rikné* to the project of cultivating Tibet as a Buddhist land. This inconsistency might be interpreted as convoluted or dishonest, but more likely it demonstrates a genuine and deep ambivalence about how to prioritize worldly and religious knowledge. This ambivalence was not of his own making. Rather, throughout his autobiography, one gets the impression that his tutors vied for authority in defining his path of study, and various fields of knowledge were pitted against each other, even among the outer or worldly fields such as logic and composition (Karmay 2014: 74). His own family ties to multiple religious traditions also likely contributed to his ambivalence.

Discounting the worldly in favor of the religious is perhaps what readers would expect from the Dalai Lama, but it is crucial to note that this is but one of the several perspectives he expresses on the proper relationship of the religious and the worldly. Further, this special praise for one of his tutors as truly religious suggests that his other teachers (such as the tutor who spent so much time teaching him calligraphy) must have been, by contrast, committed to teaching and studying the worldly fields. Throughout the Dalai Lama's autobiography there is a strong sense of contested values and strife over temporal and religious demands, all suggesting that the worldly subjects were a major focus of study that some seventeenth and eighteenth century Tibetan thinkers feared to be in unhealthy competition with the dharma.

Fields of Knowledge at an Influential Nyingma Monaster

Members of a hereditary aristocratic lineage like the ones the Dalai Lama claimed to envy, known as the Nyo (gnyos) clan or extended family group, founded Mindroling with the help of the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1676. The two main figures involved in establishing the monastery were the visionary Terdak Lingpa and his younger brother the great scholar Lochen Dharmaśrī, mentioned above. Due to their family group's prominence, both social and religious, particularly in regards to the practice of Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*) philosophy and meditation, the brothers had contact with the Dalai Lama and his court from their early childhood.[11] They both took their novice vows with him and over the course of their lives they all exchanged teachings and advised each other in various contexts. Terdak Lingpa's biographies (composed by his younger brother) suggest that he spent more of his time at the Dalai Lama's court in Lhasa than he spent at Mindroling for much of his mature life. As a further indication of his insider status at the court, Terdak Lingpa was one of a small group of people whom the regent Sangyé Gyatso informed about the hidden death of the Fifth Dalai Lama.[12] Lochen Dharmaśrī, known as a great painter as well as a scholar, was specially commissioned to create a scroll painting on a black background to encourage the well-being of the Dalai Lama near the time of his death (Stoddard 1991: 11).13 He was clearly a great master of *rikné*.

In all the literature associated with Mindroling, the expectation that heirs to the lineage throne would be expert in both religious and worldly subjects is evident. This is true except for in the notable and instructive exception of the education of Terdak Lingpa's daughter, the renowned teacher and practitioner Mingyur Paldren, who was singled out for special training in the field of dharma but was not taught worldly fields of knowledge. In keeping with the Dalai Lama's comment on hereditary lineages, the Nyo family members were trained in and excelled in the two traditions of worldly and religious learning. Although all the fields of knowledge were taught at Mindroling, the

monastic catalogue and curriculum shows an overarching tone of flexibility and attention to individual capacities in the approach to education there. The monastic population there seems to have been fairly diverse, and different types of students were provided with radically different training. Biographical sources demonstrate that their male ancestors on the father's and mother's side had long been known for expertise in *rikné*, both religious and worldly. The focus on language inherent in the fields of knowledge is also evident in the formal curriculum at Mindroling, forming a bridge between two of Mindroling's seemingly incongruent functions: training in esoteric Buddhist practices (which require a specialized knowledge of language), and training in the skills necessary for a bureaucrat working in a diverse cultural context with Tibetan, Mongol and Qing actors. This was important for students at Mindroling, who frequently went on to hold positions of authority in the Tibetan government. It is also significant that the Fifth Dalai Lama discouraged the fields of arts and sciences of *rikné* at Lhasa's major Geluk monasteries, while at the same time he patronized the establishment of Mindroling, where *rikné* flourished (Dreyfus 2003: 121). The worldly subjects were crucial for developing writing skills, social mores, aesthetic sensibilities, and a cosmopolitan worldview. Training in religion was also crucial, even for lay aristocrats, since dharma was both a basis for Tibetan ethics as well as a major aspect of social life, such as major rites of passage, festivals, and end of life events. The ideal that worldly and religious subjects should go together was easier to realize for Nyingmapa religious experts who were also householders and aristocrats than it was for Gelukpa monk officials. That said, at Mindroling there was a strong focus on monastic law and vows, in part to fend off suspicion that monks in a Nyingma institution might be corrupted by the focus on the outer fields. The ambivalence about how to balance the fields of knowledge was notably less pronounced for Terdak Lingpa and Lochen Dharmaśrī than for the Fifth Dalai Lama, but as the example of Mingyur Paldren shows, the relationship between worldly and religious knowledge was not always clear cut in the Nyingma community either. Later in her life Mingyur Paldren received significant support from Polhané, who held a very different societal role from hers, but whose perspective was apparently not incompatible.

The 'King' Polhané's Education at Mindroling

Broadly, the marriage of the religious and worldly categories of learning at Mindroling Monastery and in comparable spheres of Tibetan society gave rise to an attitude of cosmopolitanism and fluency with worldly matters that is in keeping with Buddhist values but does not strictly serve religious purposes. Another important figure whose story can help illustrate this point is Miwang Polhané, who was the lay ruler referred to as 'king' of Tibet from 1728-1747. His biography, by the great writer and civil servant Dokharwa, who likewise studied at Mindroling as a youth, recounts that Polhané traveled to Mindroling when he was a young man and spent two or three years studying there. As a member of the aristocracy whose family made a sizeable donation of three hundred pieces of silver and other valuables to the monastery upon his arrival, Polhané studied under the best teachers at Mindroling, primarily Lochen Dharmaśrī. What he learned from the great monk scholar included worldly as well as religious subjects. To paint the backdrop for Polhané's studies, Dokharwa first provides the teacher's credentials and specifies what Polhané aspired to learn from him.

In keeping with Buddhist literary conventions of praising Buddhist masters, the biography depicts Lochen Dharmaśrī's learning as utterly extraordinary. His studies are said to cover all the fields of knowledge mentioned in this article, as well as the fine points of taste and aesthetics. The biography notes that Lochen Dharmaśrī mastered ritual technologies, fine arts, and medicine. He was trained to speak with elegance, expertly compose poetry, and distinguish between grammatical tenses and nomenclature. In addition, he was a master of astrology, Buddhist tantra, ritual, logic, etymology, and the physical sciences. His formal aesthetic training, also based in the Indic Buddhist tradition, gave him expertise in distinguishing between good and bad quality individuals, gemstones, cloth, horses, elephants, wood and terrain, and bodies of water. This type of worldly concern is balanced with attention to enlightenment and compassion (Mdo khar ba 2002: 102-103). The overarching message in this passage on Lochen Dharmaśrī is that he had gradually achieved mastery of all subjects related to aesthetics, exposition, philosophy, the sciences, and written composition, as well as religion. While Polhané could not have hoped to attain such mastery in just three years of higher learning, this portrait of Lochen Dharmaśrī as an ideal scholar demonstrates the level of learning Mindroling was renowned for and reveals the expectations of its lay students to gain a degree of mastery of the fields of knowledge.

Polhané's education under Lochen Dharmaśrī is described as challenging him "like a cripple who endeavors to climb the rocky precipice of a terrifying cliff" (Mdo khar ba 2002: 103). The progression of his studies from that point shows that just as monks at Mindroling had to meet set scholarly standards through study and examinations before engaging in meditation, the lay students studied the arts and

sciences before learning Buddhist topics. Again the focus on language arts is clear and, in particular, the biography claims that Polhané achieved the highest honors for his skills in writing and composition. Further, after he had mastered various scripts used to write the Tibetan language, he went on to study six different Indic scripts. This raises the question of what use Indic scripts would have served for a man like Polhané. Whereas good writing skills and beautiful handwriting in the Tibetan language were of clear practical value for him as a political ruler and diplomat, learning Indic scripts must have served a more symbolic purpose. These were likely used on official letters to demonstrate his learnedness. Knowledge of this kind would have indicated an impressive level of elite learning and high culture since it was associated with the perceived grace and authority of Indian Buddhism. But only after Polhané had gained a firm basis in the worldly subjects of handwriting, poetics, and astrology did his training in Buddhist doctrine begin.

The biography implies that Polhané emerged from Mindroling well versed in *rikné* and ripe with an awareness of Buddhist ethics rooted in the practical skills necessary for a ruler. All of this contributed to his credentials as a ruler and seems to have impacted his style of governance as well. Both the worldly arts and the dharma were essential to establishing a person as an 'enlightened' leader who was cultured and savvy enough to make sense of a complicated cosmopolitan political scene. Interestingly, Dokharwa frames the period when Polhané was studying at Mindroling with a steamy description of his last tryst with a favorite lover. Just as much as the biography seeks to demonstrate that Polhané was well trained in *rikné*, well versed in Indic aesthetics, and steeped in the dharma, the life story also seeks to portray Polhané as a powerful and masterful lover. These seemingly incongruent aspects all add up to a ruler who is a 'great man' – learned, cultured, charismatic, virile, and ethically sound. These were the promises of his education at Mindroling, which map out the image of a person shaped by the classical fields of knowledge

In considering the place of the worldly in Tibetan culture, it is salient that Polhané's training at Mindroling included Indic scripts and learning to discern good and poor quality phenomena. The focus on literary skills reflects the centrality of writing as a qualification for Tibetan leaders in all spheres. The cultivation of a distinct sensibility and the development of aesthetic discernment shows that the training at Mindroling encompassed skills beyond Buddhist ritual and doctrine. While there are many examples of rulers being 'empowered' through *abhiṣeka* (which can refer to a rite of anointment, empowerment, or initiation) conducted by Buddhist lamas, the power of this cultural training exemplifies how Buddhist learning impacted soc - ety and culture more practically. Students like Polhané and his biographer Dokharwa, who were trained in and perceived to excel in all the fields of knowledge, were literally endowed with the authority of being cultured.

Mingyur Paldren's Strictly Religious Education

In notable contrast to the general approach of the Mindroling curriculum, Mingyur Paldren was singled out for a strictly religious education. This seems to have contributed to her distaste for the worldly subjects of the fields of knowledge. (Khyung po ras pa 1984). To give a background sketch, in 1717 Mongols who were zealous supporters of the Geluk tradtion sacked Mindroling. Many members of the family lineage were killed, including Lochen Dharmaśrī. Mingyur Paldren fled to Sikkim, where she quickly established herself as a formidable teacher and religious authority in Great Perfection philosophy and practice. When Mingyur Paldren returned to Tibet a few years later and took up a position of authority at Mindroling, she stood in subtle contrast to the aspects of her family institution that were questionable to devout Gelukpa figures and, in some instances, to the Qing authority. As mentioned above, she downplayed and sought to curtail controversial yogic practices that were potentially embarrassing such as sexual yoga, the consumption of alcohol, and ritual violence.

With regard to the worldly subjects of *rikné*, her biography places her in contrast to the founders of Mindroling who showed great interest in propagating those fields. In this respect, she also stood out from other ancestors who were known and respected for their learning in the two traditions. Her biography suggests this contrast was a result of her father's decision not to educate her in worldly subjects. This decision, made when she was a young girl, was a complex one, based on prophecy, observation, and other practical concerns. For instance, her biography indicates that the high-ranking male tutors assigned to teach Mingyur Paldren as a child treated her harshly, drawing censor from Lochen Dharmaśrī. He chided the tutors by saying, "The tertön [Terdak Lingpa] says that the Dargyé Chöling lineage [of Mindroling] will not be carried by the desired sons. This undesired daughter will carry the lineage" (Khyung po ras pa 1984: 63). This gender-inflected statement preceded the decision to give up on teaching her *rikné*, which is summarized in a statement attributed to Terdak Linpa. He said, "This dharmic girl does not need to study *rikné*" (Khyung po ras pa 1984: 66). Rather, Terdak Lingpa said she should learn as much as possible

about her family's religious tradition as quickly as possible, since it was predicted that she would carry the lineage and teach many people. While the kinds of controversial practices she later sought to expunge from Mindroling are not identical with the worldly subjects of *rikné*, Mingyur Paldren treated them with a similar disdain. Lumping them together as unnecessary or potentially corrupting reflects a prevalent attitude among detractors of outer fields of *rikné* who feared any worldly learning as a slippery slope to corruption. In contrast, figures like Terdak Lingpa took for granted the value of the worldly subjects, ideally balanced by dharma.

From a secularist point of view, this might appear to be a negative assessment of Mingyur Paldren's legacy, in that she downplayed the aspects of Mindroling that can be characterized as cosmopolitan and modern. However, her life story fits neatly into an overarching narrative where different methods are appropriate in different circumstances. Mindroling documents such as monastic histories, biographies, letters and so forth, broadly suggest this attitude: there is a time and place for everything, and the appropriate measures are always posited as the best measures, whether for individual monks studying at the monastery, for lay aristocrats balancing practice with busy schedules, or for the monastery itself, in terms of its constitution and policies (Townsend 2012). In Terdak Lingpa's time, his ability to make connections across Buddhist schools and appeal to the ruling class was highly beneficial for Mindroling, as was the fact that his family was known for high culture aesthetics. It behooved him and his brother Lochen Dharmaśrī to be savvy and cosmopolitan, in other words, to be experts in all the fields of knowledge encompassed in the rubric of *rikné*. In the second generation when Mingyur Paldren came of age, she made connections with major leaders such as Polhané. He and his family expressed devotion for Mingyur Paldren and he arguably saved Mindroling from complete destruction later when the Qing emperor led a campaign against Nyingma institutions, again due to concerns about corruption, and Polhané convinced him to spare the monastery (Mdo khar ba 2002: 482). In this sense, it behooved the Mindroling community to be known as a place of pure dharma rather than *rikné* more broadly. Therefore Mingyur Paldren's attitude might have aided Mindroling, at least in regards to the perceptions of potential critics. This also reflects the geo-political tensions between Mongols, Qing rulers, and Tibetan religious figures during this period. By the second decade of the eighteenth century, Mindroling was under scrutiny as a prominent Nyingma institution that Mongol and Qing followers of the Geluk school suspected of being corrupt, namely as a hotbed for yogic practices associated with sex and violence. From one perspective, Mingyur Paldren was raised as if with this eventuality in mind, as reflected by her strictly religious training. From another perspective, it is worthwhile asking whether this coincidence reflects gender bias on the part of her father and uncle who oversaw her education, or whether they actually had some insight into what would be best for her and for the institution in the future.

Conclusion

In early modern Tibet many prominent thinkers were concerned with how to balance the religious and temporal spheres, and both were widely considered important. The problem of how to reconcile religious activities with worldly activities was debated both subtly and explicitly. Earlier Indian and Tibetan sources openly asserted that all the subjects of *rikné* were necessary in the cultivation of omniscience and therefore worthy of respect. The commonly held ideal seems to have been for the worldly subjects to serve the purposes of the dharma. In Tibet as in other strongly religious societies, the secular frequently has been framed as a potential threat to the presumed 'higher' sphere of religion, making the ideal balance a complicated one to achieve.

In Tibetan literature, the ideal of an integration of Buddhism and worldly life is expressed beyond the rubric of *rikné*. Important examples include the Tibetan ideal of the union of religion and the secular, or as it is more often rendered in English the union of religion and politics, or the related concept of the two traditions, referring to religion and worldly engagement as two mutually defining and dependent categories. Rhetorically (not to say disingenuously), in Tibetan discussions of these interrelated frameworks, religion is treated as the preeminent force in the conceptual pair, but that does not negate the power and significance of the worldly in Tibetan culture. The Fifth Dalai Lama's focus on the ideal union of Buddhism and society, in particular as a way to make sense of his role as religious and political leader, further demonstrates the importance of the worldly subjects in the traditional fields of knowledge. Again, practically, to be a strong temporal ruler one needed to master worldly expressions and arts. This was as true in early modern Tibet as in any other time and place.

By contrast, in hereditary lineages where lamas were aristocrats and householders as well as tantric masters – Mindroling is a good example – and in other families of high social status such as the king Polhané's and Dokharwa's, laymen bound for political careers as well as lamas

whose primary role was to disseminate the dharma were trained in *all the fields of knowledge* In the case of lay rulers, dharma provided the overarching worldview and ethical framework for the formal worldly fields of literature, logic, medicine, and the arts (as well as the secondary five field and eighteen subsidiary fields outlined above). For lamas such as the Terdak Lingpa, training in the worldly fields of knowledge enabled them to best express their knowledge of Buddhism to students with varying capacities who were engaged in different careers. For instance, Terdak Lingpa's poetic letters to his renunciant students in solitary retreat were different in both form and content from letters to students holding high government posts. Mastery of the worldly fields provided lamas of Terdak Lingpa's ilk the means for a nimble, fluid, pragmatic, and cosmopolitan expression of the dharma. At the same time, mastery of *rikné* allowed him to become a model for the ideal of enlightened leadership and the perfect union of religion and secular life to rulers such as the Dalai Lama.

This was generally taken for granted in hereditary lineages and traditions less strictly focused on full ordination for lamas. But in the Dalai Lama's Geluk tradition, and in exceptional cases such as Mingyur Paldren's, ambivalence about the proper balance of the religious and the worldly complicated the expression of the ideals that called for a union of inner and outer fields, or dharma and society. The Dalai Lama's writing shows that as powerful as the ideal was, fear of worldly knowledge as a corrupting or distracting force caused anxiety. Of course in secularist societies, this fear is inverted as an anxiety that religion will confuse the mechanics of rational society and politics.

Looking at the treatment of *rikné* in diverse sources reveals the powerful and defining role of worldly subjects in Tibe - an society and culture. The widespread ambivalence about the balance of these spheres signals competing sources of power and prestige in Tibetan society. On the one hand, knowledge of dharma has been a kind of cultural capital throughout the history of Buddhism in Tibet. This was especially true since the 'second dissemination' of Buddhism in Tibet beginning in the eleventh century, when aristocratic families first sent their sons to India to bring back tantric teachings. Worldly fields of knowledge have quietly worked alongside religion to ground and nuance Buddhism's engagement in lived Tibetan society and culture for centuries. Tibetan scholars have testified to the significance of all the fields of knowledge since at least th thirteenth century. They have also meticulously traced the assertion of the importance of the worldly fields of know - edge back to Indian masters as proof.

In conclusion, the major organizing principles of the union of religion and secular life, *rikné*, and the two traditions all reflect the struggle to balance and marry the religious and the temporal in Tibetan culture. The ideal of these spheres being united was most prominent among ruling class Tibetans who were motivated to employ worldly knowledge as a means to garner authority through eloquence, diplomacy, cosmopolitanism, and being cultured. Sakya Paṇḍita, the Fifth Dalai Lama, and Polhané benefitted from the marriage of political and religious power. As a counterpoint to the other examples, Mingyur Paldren was educated at Mindroling, the seat of her family lineage, known for esoteric philosophical, meditative and ritual techniques as well as for *rikné*. However, as a child, Mingyur Paldren was recognized as especially gifted in Buddhism, and notably was not trained in worldly subjects. Combined with her stated wish to end her family's involvement in violent rituals on behalf of the Tibetan state, the strictly religious aspect of her biography points to the climate in which she lived, studied, and taught.

It is difficult to balance the worldly and the religious, especially without relegating one to an ornament or an afterthought. That is where the experience of many previous generations of hereditary lamas worked in the favor of Mindroling founders, but again they had to meet the expectations of the times. Valuing worldly knowledge does not diminish the place of religion though, and the presence of the dharma is continually reiterated in the sources this article analyzes. It is easy to view religious concerns and worldly learning as incompatible and therefore overvalue one and de-value the other, despite the assertions of the many scholars quoted by the Fifth Dalai Lama's regent Sangyé Gyatso to the contrary. This is of course not unique to the Tibetan situation but reflects a more common discomfort and contestation about the proper relationship between the religious and secular.

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Endnotes

1. As an illustrative example common across Buddhist cultures, take the concept of the universal enlightened ruler (Sanskrit: *cakravartin*; Tibetan: *'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal po*). This idealized ruler embodies the union of religious and worldly mastery, which sometimes flow in support of each other and sometimes are in competition, but which do not operate in isolation and ideally should be integrated (Tambiah 1976).

2. The use of the term 'secular' here should not suggest a complete denial of the importance of religious values and learning. It is clear that Tibetan culture and society have long been shaped by a strongly Buddhist (therefore religious) worldview. That said, 'secular' is used in this article to indicate a focus on life in the world, society, culture, the arts and aesthetics. These forces do not operate independently of religion, and yet I argue that there is a great deal to be gained from looking closely at worldly topics of learning as being in dialogue with religious learning, without being subsumed into the sphere of religion. With that in mind, I tend to use the term 'worldly' more often than 'secular' but ultimately I think both are appropriate in a discussion of Tibetan fields of knowledge or *rikné* (*rig gnas*).

3. The founding and cultural significance of Mindroling is the subject of my dissertation, entitled "Materials of Buddhist Culture: Aesthetics and Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Tibet."

4. In *Rulers on the Celestial Plains*, Sorensen suggests the Nyo clan was instrumental in shaping what would become the dominant model of Tibetan rulership, known as chö si zung drel (*chos srid zung 'brel*), epitomized in the joint religious and temporal institution of the Dalai Lama. In particular, Sorensen identifies the joint political and religious power of the Nyo clan in the eleventh century (the clan would later found Mindroling) as the immediate precursor to the role of Lama Zhang (bla ma zhang, 1123-1193). He is widely perceived as the formative example for the relationship between religious authority (*chos*) and worldly, temporal, or secular power, usually glossed as 'politics' (*srid*) in the Central Tibetan region.

5. On Sakya Paṇḍita's success adopting and popularizing the classical Indian model of the five fields of knowledg see Jonathan Gold, *The Dharma's Gatekeepers*.

6. These lists are taken from the Dungkhar dictionary.

7. According to Sakya Paṇḍita's *Gateway to Knowledge*, the eighteen fields delineated above can all be condensed into the core five field

8. For a partial translation of two such letters and an analysis of the concept of *cho si zung drel* in the relationship between the Fifth Dalai Lama and Terdak Lingpa, see my article entitled 'Letters From the Fifth Dalai Lama,' In *Highland Passages: Himalayan and Tibetan Studies in Honor of Hubert Decleer*, edited by B. Bogin and A. Quintman. Boston: Wisdom Publications. 2013.

9. It is important to note that this article looks at thinkers who were educated in and around Central and southern Tibet. Further research is required to make assessments about the role of *rikné* in other Tibetan centers of learning.

10. These quotes are all extracted from Gavin Kilty's translation, *Mirror of Beryl*. Desi Sangyé Gyatso's effort to prove the significance of the five fields of knowled might demonstrate that his view was not widely held, or he might have been showing off his familiarity with a wide range of Indian and Tibetan sources concerned with the validity of the fields of knowledge on the path to enlightenment.

11. For more on the history of Mindroling and the formative relationship between the Fifth Dalai Lama and Terdak Lingpa, see my dissertation, *Materials of Buddhist Culture: Aesthetics and Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Tibet*.

12. The regent wrote an account of the period between the Fifth Dalai Lama's death and the moment when the death was announced, thirteen years later. There he describes Terdak Lingpa's role as his confidant and advisor. See Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Sku lnga pa drug par 'phos pa'i gtam rna ba'i bcun len 'bring bsdud sgrogs sbyangs kyis gsang rgya khrom bsgrags gnang skor* (Lhasa: bod ljongs mis dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1989).

13. Heather Stoddard, 'The Style and Artistic Context,' in *Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama: The Gold Manuscript in the Fournier Collection Musee Guimet, Paris*, ed. Samten Karmay (London: Serindia Publications, 1991), p. 11.

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