### **Refugee Review Tribunal**

# AUSTRALIA

### **RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

<b>Research Response Number:</b>	CHN30730
Country:	China
Date:	13 October 2006

Keywords: CHN30730 - Tibetan Buddhism - Government Treatment - Inner Mongolia

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

#### Questions

**<u>1.</u>** Please provide some background information on this Huang Jiao group.

**<u>2.</u>** Please provide information on the Chinese government's treatment of this group, especially in Mongolia.

### RESPONSE

### 1. Please provide some background information on this Huang Jiao group.

The file indicates that the applicant is from Tongliao, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The applicant claims to practice a religion from Tibet similar to Buddhism. According to the US Department of State, most ethnic Mongolians practice Tibetan Buddhism (US Department of State 2006, *International Religious Freedom Report 2006 – China*, 15 September, Section 1 – Attachment 1).

*Huang Jiao* means yellow religion in Chinese. One reference to *huang jiao* was found amongst the sources consulted. The article published in *The Drama Review* in 1989 reports that *huang jiao* is the yellow sect of Tibetan Buddhism (Liuyi, Qu et al 1989, 'The Yi: Human Evolution Theatre', *The Drama Review*, Vol 33, No 3, Autumn, p.105 – Attachment 2). The yellow sect of Tibetan Buddhism is more commonly known as *Gelug* but is also known as *Geluk, Gelugpa, Gelukpa, Gelug pa, Geluk pa* and the Yellow Hat sect. Given the applicant's claims and the available country information, this response assumes that the *Huang Jiao* group is *Gelug*, a school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Wikipedia provides the following information on *Gelug*:

Gelug...was a school of Buddhism founded by Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), a philosopher and Tibetan religious leader. The first monastery he established was at Ganden, and to this day the Ganden Tripa (Dga'-ldan Khri-pa) is the nominal head of the school, though its most influential figure is the Dalai Lama.

...Tsongkhapa said that these two aspects of the spiritual path, compassion and insight into wisdom, must be rooted in a wholehearted wish for liberation, all impelled by a genuine sense of renunciation. He called these the "Three Principal Aspects of the Path", and suggested that it is on the basis of these three that one must embark on the profound path of Vajrayana Buddhism.

The central teachings of the Gelug School are Lamrim, or the "Stages of the Path", based on the teachings of the Indian master Atisha (circa 11th century) and the systematic cultivation of the view of emptiness. This is combined with the deity yogas of Highest Yoga Tantra deities such as Guhyasamaja, Cakrasamvara, Yamantaka and Kalacakra, where the key focus is the realization of the indivisible union of bliss and emptiness.

Although each Gelug monastery has an own set of texts for studying written by different authors the six scriptures of Je Tsongkhapa, the Gelugs' founder

- The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path (Lam-rim chen-mo),
- The Great Exposition of Tantras (sNgag-rim chenmo),
- *The Essence of Eloquence on the Interpretive and Definitive Teachings* (Drnng-nges legs-bshad snying-po),
- The Praise of Relativity (rTen-'brel bstodpa),
- The Clear Exposition of the Five Stages of Guhyasamaja (gSang-'dus rim-lnga gsalsgron) and
- The Golden Rosary (gSer-phreng).

...are the prime source for the studies of the Gelugpa (Dge-lugs-pa) tradition...It is said that his followers take Tsongkhapas text *The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path* (Lam-rim chen-mo) as their heart teaching (Wikipedia 2006, 'Gelug', 14 September <u>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gelugpa</u> – Accessed 9 October 2006 – Attachment 3: Users should be aware that Wikipedia is a Web-based free-content encylopaedia which is written collaboratively by volunteers).

The following attachments provide information on Buddhism:

- Humphreys, Robert & Ward, Rowland 1995, 'Buddhism', *Religious Bodies in Australia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, New Melbourne Press, Wantirna, pp.406-409 Attachment 4; and
- Wikipedia 2006, 'Buddhism', 9 October <u>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism</u> Accessed 9 October 2006 Attachment 5: Users should be aware that Wikipedia is a Web-based free-content encylopaedia which is written collaboratively by volunteers.

The following attachments provide information on Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama:

- BBC Religion & Ethics 2002, 'Tibetan Buddhism', 2 October <u>http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/subdivisions/tibetan\_print.html</u> – Accessed 9 October 2006 – Attachment 6;
- BBC Religion & Ethics 2006, 'Dalai Lama', 21 September <u>http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/people/dalailama\_print.html</u> – Accessed 9 October 2006 – Attachment 7;
- Wikipedia 2006, 'Tibetan Buddhism', 4 October
  <u>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibetan\_Buddhism</u> Accessed 9 October 2006 Attachment
  8: Users should be aware that Wikipedia is a Web-based free-content encylopaedia which is written collaboratively by volunteers.

# **2.** Please provide information on the Chinese government's treatment of this group, especially in Mongolia.

No information on the Chinese government's treatment of *Gelug* was found amongst the sources consulted, however limited information was found on religious freedom and the treatment of Tibetan Buddhism in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. While the included reports refer to Tibetan Buddhism in general, please note that this may include *Gelug* as the Dalai Lama follows the *Gelug* school of Tibetan Buddhism.

*Gelug* groups must register with the Chinese government and submit to the leadership of the Buddhist patriotic religious association. Unregistered groups and groups the Chinese government refuse to register risk harassment, imprisonment and other abuses. Even registered groups risk abuse if they engage in religious activity that the Chinese government deems to be a threat to their power. Sources indicate that freedom of religion, including Tibetan Buddhism, is restricted in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Religious expression by ethnic minorities including Mongolians may be linked with separatism which could be perceived as a threat to the power of the Chinese government. This may explain why religious freedom is restricted in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

The information provided in response to this question has been organised under the following two headings:

- Freedom of Religion in China; and
- Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

## Freedom of Religion in China

The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China provides the following information on religious freedom in China:

Freedom of religious belief is protected by the Chinese Constitution and laws, but government implementation of Party policy on religion, and restrictions elsewhere in domestic law, violate these guarantees. The Chinese government tolerates some aspects of religious belief and practice, but only under a strict regulatory framework that represses religious and spiritual activities falling outside the scope of Party-sanctioned practice. Religious organizations are required to register with the government and submit to the leadership of "patriotic religious associations" created by the Party to lead each of China's five recognized religions: Buddhism, Catholicism, Daoism, Islam, and Protestantism. Those who choose not to register with the government, or groups that the government refuses to register, operate outside the zone of protected religious activity and risk harassment, detention, imprisonment, and other abuses. Registered communities also risk such abuse if they engage in religious activities that authorities deem a threat to Party authority or legitimacy.

The 2004 Regulation on Religious Affairs (RRA) has not afforded greater religious freedom to Chinese citizens, despite government claims that it represented a "paradigm shift" by limiting state control over religion. Like earlier local and national regulations on religion, the RRA emphasizes government control and restrictions on religion. The RRA articulates general protection only for freedom of "religious belief," but not for expressions of religious belief. Like earlier regulations, it also protects only those religious activities deemed "normal," without defining this term. Although the RRA includes provisions that permit registered religious organizations to select leaders, publish materials, and engage in other affairs, many provisions are conditioned on government approval and oversight of religious

activities (US Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2006, *Annual Report 2006*, 20 September, p.7 <u>http://www.cecc.gov/pages/annualRpt/annualRpt06/CECCannRpt2006.pdf</u> – Accessed 9 October 2006 – Attachment 9).

The Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Centre provides the following information on religious freedom for ethnic minorities in China:

The "Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the People's Republic of China," issued by the Second Session of the Sixth National People's Congress in 1984 and amended in 2001, extends both protection and preservation. It states that minority nationalities living in compact communities are entitled to enjoy cultural and religious freedom without any interference by state organs or individuals. According to the Article 10, "autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas guarantee the freedom of the nationalities in these areas to use and develop the own spoken and written languages and their freedom to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs." Article 11 guarantees "freedom of religious belief to citizens of the various nationalities."

China's February 2005 white paper on ethnic minority issues, entitled "Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities in China," reiterated the rights of minorities including their right to define their cultural and religious beliefs and practices (Togochog, Enhebatu 2006, *Cultural and Religious State of the Mongols in China*, Statement of the SMHRIC at Human Rights In China – Minority Rights Group Workshop, New York 27-28 July 2006, 27-28 July <a href="http://www.smhric.org/news\_131.htm">http://www.smhric.org/news\_131.htm</a> – Accessed 9 October 2006 – Attachment 10).

### **Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region**

The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China's *Annual Report 2006* reports that "Chinese government enforcement of Party policy on religion creates a repressive environment for the practice of Tibetan Buddhism":

The Party tolerates religious activity only within the strict requirements of the Chinese Constitution, laws, regulations, and policies. The government interprets and enforces these requirements in a manner that interferes with the Tibetan Buddhist monastic education system and discourages devotion to the Dalai Lama and the other important Tibetan Buddhist teachers who live in exile.

Party policies toward the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, the second-ranking Tibetan spiritual leaders, seek to control the fundamental religious convictions of Tibetan Buddhists. Government actions to implement Party polices caused further deterioration in some aspects of religious freedom for Tibetan Buddhists during the past year (US Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2006, *Annual Report 2006*, 20 September, pp.83 <u>http://www.cecc.gov/pages/annualRpt/annualRpt06/CECCannRpt2006.pdf</u> – Accessed 9 October 2006 – Attachment 9).

According to the US Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report 2006*, followers of Tibetan Buddhism including those in the Inner Mongolia "faced more restrictions on their religious practice and ability to organize than Buddhists in other parts of the country" (US Department of State 2006, *International Religious Freedom Report 2006 – China*, 15 September, Introduction – Attachment 1).

A statement by the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Centre dated 27-28 July 2006 provides extensive information on the ability of Buddhists to practice their religion in Inner Mongolia. The statement concludes by saying that regional autonomy has not

guaranteed the rights of Mongols to practice Buddhism without interference and that the "future looks bleak" for Mongols in China:

Regarding the state of religion in Southern Mongolia, I will focus mainly on Buddhism which is the traditional religion of the Mongolian people. Buddhism has been the predominant religion of Mongols and an integral part of Mongol cultural identity since the late 16th century. Buddhist temples served as centers of Mongolian intellectual life. Until the takeover of Southern Mongolia by the Chinese Communist Party in 1947, Buddhist traditions and practices remained largely intact.

During the Cultural Revolution, almost all Buddhist temples in Mongol areas were destroyed, and lamas were dispersed, otherwise removed, or forced to give up their vows of monkhood. At present, only a handful of temples are operative; and lamas in Southern Mongolia are few and far between. The exact statistics are not known. One estimate suggests that some 40 percent of the Mongol population acknowledge their Buddhist beliefs. Under the pretext of "disturbing public order," "organizing an illegal gathering," or "advocating superstitious beliefs," individuals may be persecuted for religious practice.

Two bureaucracies, the government's Religious Affairs Bureau (zong jiao ju) and the Chinese Communist Party's United Front (tong zhan bu), both with branches at all administrative levels, tightly control all religious activities through the formulation of laws and regulations and through day to day management of Buddhist institutions.

Recruitment of prospective monks previously took place when boys were 8-10 years old. Today, recruiting young people under the age of 18 is strictly prohibited. The regulation has interfered with the traditional teacher-student relationship and with the transmission of teachings and doctrine.

Publication of Buddhism materials is strictly controlled. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), it was a crime to publish Buddhist publications. In the1980s, Buddhist publications were permitted if the authorities were satisfied that a clear connection to a non-religious purpose, such as the promotion of culture or the study of history, existed. Since the 1990s, Buddhist publications are less regulated, but circulation is strictly controlled.

Publications are offered only to temples and monks. Authorities consider all religious activities practiced outside a "designated place" as "illegal and superstitious [activities designed to] dupe the common public." Government officials regularly go to temples to force lamas to participate in so-called "political study" indoctrination.

Because government authorities view large organized religious gatherings as having the potential to undermine the Party control, Mongolian Buddhist institutions are prohibited from communication with their Tibetan counterparts and laws and regulations forbid "interregional religious activities" (kua di qu xing zong jiao huo dong").

Temples are expected to sustain themselves financially. But private fund raising is generally prohibited. If funds are collected, it is expected that they will be shared with the religious bureaucracy. Religious authorities, recognizing the potential revenues to be realized, have converted many temples into tourist attractions rather than sites for religious study and worship. Lamas are particularly disturbed by tourists and government officials who disrupt religious worship at will.

In addition, all temples must regularly report their activities to the relevant religious authorities. All lamas must sign a contract and pledge loyalty to the Party and government.

It is clear that authorities in Southern Mongolia discourage Buddhist belief and practice, that access to places of worship is limited and that individuals risk persecution for religious practice. [Researcher emphasis added]

...In sum, the systematic erosion of cultural and religious rights for Mongols in China, suggests that that the laws and regulations promising autonomy have not been translated into meaningful state policy. Regional autonomy has not guaranteed the rights of Mongols to freely use their own language, to preserve and promote their traditional culture, to practice their religion without interference, in short, to preserve their cultural identity. The future looks bleak (Togochog, Enhebatu 2006, *Cultural and Religious State of the Mongols in China*, Statement of the SMHRIC at Human Rights In China – Minority Rights Group Workshop, New York 27-28 July 2006, 27-28 July <u>http://www.smhric.org/news\_131.htm</u> – Accessed 9 October 2006 – Attachment 10).

An article dated 22 February 2006 in *The Manila Times* reports that while Mongolians "are allowed to quietly trace their cultural roots", Chinese authorities "remain watchful for any signs that spiritual emotions could challenge the existing social order":

It was the weekend in Hohhot, the frozen capital of north China's Inner Mongolia region, and hundreds had turned up at the Dazhao temple, a center of Tibetan Buddhism for the past more than four centuries.

...As China becomes a freer society, Mongolians and other ethnic minorities are allowed to quietly trace their cultural roots, and usually those with memories of life before Communist times are the first to seize the opportunity.

...But even the dense smoke could not disguise the constant and, it seemed, deliberately visible presence of uniformed police.

While post-reform China boasts of its religious tolerance, the authorities remain watchful for any signs that spiritual emotions could challenge the existing social order.

This is especially the case in areas such as Inner Mongolia, where different ethnic groups mix to an unusual extent, bringing together Mongolians, Han Chinese and Muslim Huis, the descendants of Arab and Persian traders.

Further complicating the situation, the Mongolians have adhered to the unique Tibetan style of Buddhism since the late 16th century.

Recognizing the power of religion, the Chinese government is unlikely to ever allow the monks to regain the sway they had in society before the Communist revolution of 1949 (Harmsen, Peter 2006, 'Revival of Tibetan Buddhism in China', *Manila Times*, 22 February <u>http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2006/feb/22/yehey/opinion/20060222opi7.html</u> – Accessed 9 October 2006 – Attachment 11).

A report dated 14 October 2004 by NGO Tibetan Youth Congress reports that religious controls "remain particularly tight" in Inner Mongolia:

However, there is a little respect in China for religious freedom, though it is recognized in the constitution. All religious groups and spiritual movements must register with the government, which judges the legitimacy of religious activity. The government also monitors the activities of the official religions (Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism). It targets leaders and the adherents of various religious groups for harassment, interrogation, detention, abuse, and prosecution and destroys or seizes unregistered places of worship. The extent to

which such actions are taken or rules are enforced, though, varies widely by region. Religious controls remain particularly tight in Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and other areas (Tibetan Youth Congress 2005, "In Paper, In Practice" – A response to the China's 'White Paper' on Human Rights, 14 October

<u>http://www.tibetanyouthcongress.org/news/newsupdate/whitepaper.html</u> – Accessed 9 October 2006 – Attachment 12).

The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China's *Annual Report 2005* reports that the Chinese government "tightly restricts religious practices and expressions of cultural identity" Inner Mongolia:

The religious environment for Tibetan Buddhism has not improved in the past year. The Party demands that Tibetan Buddhists promote patriotism toward China and repudiate the Dalai Lama, the religion's spiritual leader. The intensity of religious repression against Tibetans varied across regions, with officials in Sichuan province and the Tibet Autonomous Region currently implementing Party policy in a more aggressive manner than officials elsewhere.

...The environment for the practice of Tibetan Buddhism has not improved in the past year. The Party does not allow Tibetan Buddhists the freedom to practice their religion in a meaningful way, and instead tolerates religious activity only within the strict limitation imposed under the Chinese government's interpretation of the Constitution, laws, regulations, and policies. The Chinese leadership refuses to acknowledge the Dalai Lama's role as spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists (US Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2005, *Annual Report 2005*, 11 October, pp.14-15, 43 & 46-47 – Attachment 13).

Testimony by Human Rights Watch before the US House Committee on International Relations on 21 July 2005 reports that the Chinese government imposes "the same strict limits on religious observance in Inner Mongolia" as it does in Tibet and Xinjiang (Human Rights Watch 2005, *Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion, and* Belief, Testimony before the House Committee on International Relations, 21 July <a href="http://ht

According to Nicolas Becquelin of Human Rights in China, reported in *The Standard* on 18 February 2005, religious affairs in Inner Mongolia "are perceived as matters concerning national security, the fight against separatism and anti-state activity":

In fact, the vagueness of much of this document is such that anybody could find oneself on the wrong side of the law. Even though China's legal reform efforts are rightly being applauded, its laws and regulations are still riddled with clauses that guarantee that the Communist Party has ample scope for arbitrary interpretation. In this case, the new regulations broad definitions make it easy to ban, close down, or hinder any religious group that has arisen the suspicion of the authorities. In the case of China's ethnic minorities, for example, little or no protection is guaranteed.

Even under the new provisions, religious affairs in Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia or Tibet are perceived as matters concerning national security, the fight against separatism and anti-state activity, thus confirming that religious policies in these areas go hand in hand with the states overall goals of assimilation of all minorities.

Here, the least expression of dissent, whether spurred by religious devotion or by the attempt of asserting ones identity, is met with the full spectrum of the repressive apparatus of a police state (Becquelin, Nicolas 2005, 'Reins tight on religious affairs', *The Standard*, 18 February

<u>http://www.thestandard.com.hk/stdn/std/Focus/GB18Dh01.html</u> – Accessed 9 October 2006 – Attachment 15).

According to the International Coalition for Religious Freedom's *Religious Freedom in China* report dated 10 May 2004, religious freedom of Buddhists in Mongolia "is restricted to prevent the promotion of a distinct cultural and ethnic identity which could foster separatism" (International Coalition for Religious Freedom 2004, *Religious Freedom in China*, 10 May <u>http://www.religiousfreedom.com/wrpt/Chinarpt.htm</u> – Accessed 9 October 2006 – Attachment 16).

On 11 August 2004, the Chinese authorities detained 54 year old Hanmi Buddhist spiritual leader Yu Tianjian in connection with his plans to reopen the Xingyuan temple complex in Kulun, Inner Mongolia. Yu is being held at an unknown location on the charges of inciting superstition. Yu is Chinese citizen who holds a US green card and has been the abbot of the Dari Rulai Temple in Los Angeles for nearly five years. Yu, also known as Living Buddha Dechan Jueren is one of the 33 living Buddha recognised by the Chinese government. Yu's organisation, the Buddhist Foundation of America, spent the past year and \$US3 million renovating the 800 year old temple. News articles report that electricity and water service to the temple was cut, between 50 and 70 monks were detained, dozens of Americans were forced to leave the region, two truckloads of statues, religious artefacts and personal property were removed from the temple and a local Internet café was closed to prevent communication with the outside world. According to the US Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report 2006, the whereabouts of Yu Tianjian remained unknown during 2006 (Pan, Philip P 2004, 'China Detains Buddhist Leader', Washington Post, 19 August http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A11214-2004Aug18.html - Accessed 9 October 2006 - Attachment 17; Magnier, Mark 2004, 'China Cracks Down on Inner Mongolia Temple; Authorities arrest a Buddhist leader after allowing his US based followers to arrange a \$3-million renovation of the 800-year-old shrine', Los Angeles Times, 20 August - Attachment 18; and US Department of State 2006, International Religious Freedom Report 2006 - China, 15 September, Section 2 Abuses of Religious Freedom - Attachment 1).

# List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources: **Government Information & Reports** Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada http://www.irb.gc.ca/cgibin/foliocgi.exe/refinfo e UK Home Office http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ US Congressional Executive Commission on China http://www.cecc.gov/ US Department of State http://www.state.gov/ **United Nations (UN)** UNHCR http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home **Non-Government Organisations** Amnesty International http://www.amnesty.org/ European Country of Origin Information Network http://www.ecoi.net/ Freedom House http://www.freedomhouse.org/ Human Rights in China http://www.hrichina.org/public/index Human Rights Watch http://www.hrw.org/ International Coalition for Religious Freedom http://www.religiousfreedom.com/ Minorities at Risk http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/data.asp Minority Rights Group International http://www.minorityrights.org/ Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Centre http://www.smhric.org/ Tibetan Youth Congress http://www.tibetanyouthcongress.org/ **International News & Politics** BBC News http://news.bbc.co.uk/ Manila Times http://www.manilatimes.net/ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty http://www.rferl.org/ Washington Post http://www.washingtonpost.com/ **Topic Specific Links** Adherents.com http://www.adherents.com/ BuddhaNet http://www.buddhanet.net/ Buddhist Council of NSW http://www.buddhistcouncil.org/ Digital International Buddhism Organization http://www.buddhism.org/ Inner Mongolian People's Party http://www.innermongolia.org/english/index.html Tibetan Government in Exile http://www.tibet.com/ **Search Engines** Google http://www.google.com.au/http://www.falundafa.org Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\_Page Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

## List of Attachments

- 1. US Department of State 2006, *International Religious Freedom Report 2006 China*, 15 September.
- 2. Liuyi, Qu et al 1989, 'The Yi: Human Evolution Theatre', *The Drama Review*, Vol 33, No 3, Autumn. (Sydney Library)
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