

Politics and Buddhism
during
the Yüan Dynasty

Tateki FUJISHIMA

The upsurge of the activities of the northern tribes in Eastern Asia which had begun in the 10th century, swelled by their nationalism and state-consciousness, gave rise to the states of Liao and Chin. These rose only to fall. The Yüan dynasty of the Mongols was established in the mid-12th century, and it was not long before it had established its sovereignty over the whole area of China. It was the first foreign tribe to accomplish this. These three groups, which were called "the conquering empires," performed their armed conquest while at the same time endeavoring to assure their own stability and continuance amidst the time-honored Chinese tradition and culture and the overwhelming majority of the Chinese population. This is reflected in the various policies employed by each of their administrations in political, economic and cultural aspects. The Yüan dynasty, succeeding to the accumulated knowledge of the Liao and Chin dynasties, appears to have added to it its own wisdom and labor.

In this thesis, I have tried from such a viewpoint, in the first chapter, to give attention to the policy toward Buddhism of the first emperor Shih-tsu, especially those in the areas south of the Yang-tse river which had been under the reign of the previous Southern Sung dynasty; to follow the process from the establishment of the administrative office for Buddhism, to which the central government dispatched Lamas as constables, to the opening of lecture halls, mainly depending on the Buddhist sources, thus clarifying Shih-tsu's rigorous ruling policy which even made use of Buddhism. In the second

chapter, on the basis of my previous study of the Yüan government's motive for establishing the Hsüan-chêng-yüan, I have focussed attention on the office of the Hsüan-chêng-yüan, and its constables, selecting 30 characters mainly from the *Yüan History* who served as the head of the Hsüan-chêng-yüan during the Yüan dynasty, and giving the outlines of their lives. In the third and fourth chapters, I have shown the position and general evaluation of the Hsüan-chêng-yüan under the rule of the Yüan government by way of categorizing all these characters, and have tried to clarify the circumstances in which the Hsüan-chêng-yüan formed a special institution which was not evaluated as an ordinary government office in spite of its origin as an administrative office for controlling Buddhism. The Hsüan-chêng-yüan might be called one of the special products of the wisdom of the Yüan government as a conquering empire.

The main objective of this thesis lies in the analysis of the Yüan government's endeavors as a conquering empire particularly in the aspect of its stance towards Buddhism. The Yüan dynasty has variously been characterized as supporting Buddhism or as noncommittal to it. If the latter is true, then it was due to its shortcomings as a conquering power, for example, to its immaturity in handling administrative affairs, which went against its original intention. The original intention itself, however, may have to be evaluated as an expression of the Yüan empire's wisdom and labor, although how it worked throughout the entire history of China is another question.