

古代印度與儒家的神聖秩序觀： 以彌勒思想的救世觀之轉變為例

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中文摘要

這篇文章以彌勒在中國的思想意義為例，探討了早期印度跟中國儒家思想在有關神聖秩序安排之展現風貌。透過比較參照，考察彌勒下生思想在印度和中國所表現出的一些細微差別之處及其意涵。

作者從早期印度思想談起。先以彌多羅婆樓那(*Mitrāvaruṅau*)這個相違複合辭(*dvaṅdva*)在梨俱吠陀和梵書時代的不同意涵為例，探究了神聖秩序在吠陀時期的演變情形。接著討論了在阿含中佛教思想對於宗教秩序與政治秩序之安排，而歸結出不同印度思想傳統在這上面之一些共同表徵。

轉到中國方面，作者以孟子為例，探究儒家革命思想裡面有關神聖秩序之相關論點，指出對政治秩序優先性之深信不疑乃為儒家思想重要特色之一。

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作者最後以元末「彌勒出世」之社會思潮為本，論述了未來佛思想如何在中國變為積極介入之救世觀，因而使得彌勒成了君臨天下者之儒家關聯。文中指出彌勒跟儒家革命思想相結合一事，乃是印度思想來到中國與其既有文化長期互動、而最後在其所突顯之關懷脈絡中轉化之具體表現。

關鍵詞：彌多羅婆樓那，彌勒，王權，轉輪王，革命

Maitreya: From World-Renouncer to World-Conqueror. An Investigation on the Conception of Sacred Order in Ancient India and Confucian China.*

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abstract

This essay explores the conception of sacred order in ancient India and Confucian China. Using early Indian religious history and Confucianism as points of reference, it scrutinizes the difference between ancient India and China in terms of the primacy of human order. Maitreya in China is provided as a case study to illustrate how Chinese culture transformed original Indian religious message into a political persuasion.

* I am deeply grateful to two reviewers for their constructive comments and valuable suggestions. In revising this essay, I have taken their thoughtful observations into consideration. It has to be noted that this paper is not a comprehensive study, but laying particular stress on the ideological configuration that constitutes basic cultural phenomena of ancient India and China. It also has to be clarified that Maitreya is not the focal point in this essay. Rather, it is used to provide a point of reference within the overall context of sacred order in China and India. What I mean by ‘sacred order’ refers to a sanctified institution that is considered to be central pursuit in a given culture. In this essay I argue it could be either religious or political. In terms of the transformation on the concept of Maitreya, the metaphors used in this paper should be clear enough. Within early Buddhist context, the future Buddha is a world-renouncer who, through his *enlightenment* would save ignorant people from *saṃsāra*. While in China, Maitreya becomes a world-conqueror and only by means of *kingship*, he would relieve the sufferers from political tyranny.

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On the Indian side, the expression *Mitrāvaru* in ṛg Veda and Brāhmaṇas is employed to explicate the evolution on the conception of sacred order in the Vedic period. The relationship between religious order and political order as described in the Nikāya texts is then discussed. It is concluded that religious order is regarded as sacred within early Indian intellectual context.

On the Chinese side, Confucian ideal of sage-king and revolution depicted in the *Mencius* is taken up to elucidate the Confucian idea of sacred order. In contrast with India, the primacy of the political order is clearly a Confucian concern.

In the last part of this essay, the cult of the “descent of Maitreya Buddha” in later Yüan period is used to expound how the idea of future Buddha was connected with revolutionary aspirations in China. In the end, Maitreya was dramatically altered from a world-renouncer in India to a world-conqueror in China.

Keywords: *Mitrāvaru*, Maitreya, kingship, Cakkavattin, revolution

I. Introduction

The cult of Maitreya (Pāli: *Metteyya*, Tibetan: *byams.pa*, Chinese: *mi-le* 彌勒) in different cultural traditions influenced by Buddhism represents a

fascinating phenomenon for us to make a cross-cultural study in how Buddhism interacts with indigenous cultures. In this paper, the transformation of Maitreya in China to reevaluate the meaning of political symbols as well as religious life is explored.

The Chinese transformation of Maitreya is arresting in the sense that before the introduction of Buddhism to China, Chinese cultural traditions had already taken root deeply and firmly. Both Confucianism and Taoism were very sophisticated persuasions with their own classics, rituals, *politics* and adherents. Thus, in terms of Maitreya in China, it is not a question of either total acceptance or outright rejection. Rather, as will be elucidated, the cult of Maitreya gave Chinese society a new impetus which not only transformed original religious symbols but also developed a novel Messianic ideology in China. However, this issue relates to a more fundamental question pertaining to what is the realm of politics and what is the realm of religion, and what is the relationship between them in the cultural traditions concerned. Thus, an overall investigation of perception of world order in these two traditions is necessary if we want to make sense of how the cult of Maitreya manifests itself in China.

II. Conception of sacred order as depicted from the relationship between Mitra and Varuṇa in RV

In his discussion of the idea of kingship in ancient India, Dumont argued that kingship in most ancient societies includes both “magico-religious as well as a political function.” (Dumont, 1962: 54). He pointed out that this is not only true in China but also in ancient Egypt or Summer (loc. cit.). Kingship in this sense is endowed with both religious and political power, namely, the king is also the priest par excellence, and the so-called priests function only as ritual specialists subservient to the kings: the paramount religious power is placed in the control of one supreme authority (loc. cit.).

From a comparative perspective, Dumont suggested that the secularization of kingship in early India is unusual among ancient civilizations (ibid: 53-6). Indeed, We find that in the mid-Vedic period, i.e., in the Brāhmaṇas, a clear differentiation between ritual authority (*brāhman* or Sacerdotium) and temporal power (*kṣātrá* or Regnum) is ideologically endorsed (to be discussed; cf. Coomaraswamy, 1942, Dumézil: 1988). However, this separation of temporal and ritual realms takes time to complete in ancient India as we observe from the history of Vedic religion. Here, the point is illustrated with a conspicuous example of Mitra-Varuṇa:¹

¹ It has to be reminded here that Maitreya, etymologically related to Mitra, is originally an Avestan god Mithra. From Mithra to ṛgvedic Mitra and then to Buddhistic Maitreya is, of course, a grand intellectual journey that cannot be mapped out in this paper. In passing, the controversy over the relationship between Mitra and Varuṇa in the Vedic period between Thieme and Dumézil as it relates to the thesis of this paper is mentioned. Dumézil’s sociological exploration into the ideological

In the Ṛgvedic hymns, as the divine personalities actively maintain the cosmic order, in which social order is part of it, the cosmology created by the deities bears important ethical implications. Since universal order or the truth (*ṛta*) is the all-important concern of the Ṛgvedic religion and sacrifice is also under the general tutelage of the *ṛta*,² a clear-cut distinction between priestly order and other human realms was yet to be made. In other words, sacrificial order is not separate itself from broad cosmic regulation. As cosmic order is organically connected with social order by the general concern of the *ṛta*, this belief finds its fullest expression in some deities as truth personified. Among others, the deification of social ethics is probably the most remarkable feature of the Ṛgvedic religion. The Ādityas (deities of the solar line), especially Mitra and Varuṇa, two deified personification of ethical principles, are considered to be the guardians of the *ṛta*. Thieme said:

It is an outstanding feature of the Rigvedic Āditya religion that *Contract [Mitra]* and all the other deified personifications of moral

antithesis between the kingship and the priesthood in the Brāhmaṇas and later texts is undisputable. However, he mistakes the Brāhmaṇas for the whole Vedic period. On the other hand, Thieme displays marvelous sophistication to come to grips with complicated Ṛgvedic Weltanschauung with his philological investigation. Nonetheless, he deliberately ignores the possible development of priestly ideology in the Brāhmaṇas.

² ‘Roth hatte im Ṛta den Begriff der Ordnung zu finden geglaubt, und seither sieht man meist als Grundbedeutung des Wortes “Ordnung” an. In der Natur soll das die Ordnung sein, die in dem steten Sichgleichbleiben oder in der regelmässigen Wiederkehr physischer Vorgänge zutage tritt, im menschlichen Leben das sittliche Gesetz, in der Religion der rechte Glaube, im Ritual die fest eingehaltene Opferordnung-kurz, die Ordnung soll das höchste, die ganz Welt beherrschende Prinzip des indischen Denkens sein.’ (Lüders, 1951:13-14)

concepts: Hospitality (Aryaman), Portion (Bhaga), Share (Aśa), and, especially, *True Speech (Varuṇa)* are credited with the creation and the keeping in order not only of human society but of the whole universe. They exercise this function by pronouncing and keeping their own vows and watching over the vows of all others. (Thieme, 1995: 236; italics mine)

Indeed, in RV, we find that Mixta Persona of *Mitrāvaruṇau* as the guardians of the *ṛta*, are basically complementary to each other because of their divine mission: to watch people with unremitting vigilance together so that they will live up to their words. (cf. Thieme, 1995) Mitra, in related to ethical persuasion it embodies, is the God of contract and Varuṇa the god of oath (Lüders, 1951:28-37) or true speech (Thieme, loc. cit). Together, they uphold the *ṛta*, guard the world, rule the earth and heaven and render sacrifice effective. Mitra is worshipped at the time of making contract and Varuṇa is also named in the closing of a contract. (Thieme, op, cit.: 233-235)³ Owing chiefly to their basic similarity and partial identity in terms of their vocations, they are praised together most of the time in RV.⁴

³ RV 3, 59, 1a: *mitró jánān yātayati bruvā́ṇa*. ‘Mitra, when invoked, causes people to make mutual agreement.’ See also RV 7, 36:2d; for interpretation see, Thieme, 1995: 233-234.

⁴ For example, in RV 5, 72, 2ab: *vratēna stho dhruvákṣemā dhármaṇā yātayájjnā*: You two (Mitra and Varuṇa) are of firm peace through vow, you cause people to make agreements through firmness. Translated by Thieme.). Or RV 5, 65, 6ab: *yuváṁ mitremáṁ jánaṁ yátathaṁ sáṁ ca nayathaṁ*: ‘You two Mitra [and Varuṇa] ally people and bring them together.’ For the details, see Thieme, 1995.

From the lines above, it is noticed a common denominator of these two deities in relating to the *ta* : *yātayājjana*, aligning people together, or as Thieme argued forcefully, causing people to make mutual agreements (Thiems,1995:235) Their interchangeability is explicitly stated in the following verse: *mitrás táyor varuṁo 'ryam yātayājjana*: ‘Among these two (Mitra and Varuṁa), Mitra is Varuṁa in so far as Varuṁa causes people to make mutual agreements, and Mitra is Aryaman in so far as Aryaman causes people to make mutual agreements. ‘(RV 1, 136, 3f, translated by Thieme)

In fact, both Mitra and Varuṁa assume highest sovereignty (*várṁiṁthaṁ kṁatrám* RV 5, 67, 1) in terms of their divine mandate. They have the *ta* rigorously and impartially enforced in human society. Because of their observant upholding of the *ta*, human society as well as the universe is in perfect order. Thus, they do not guard their prerogative of sacred mission against each other jealously but rather are sharers of divine sovereignty. In RV, Mitra and Varuṁa are by no means embodiment of two rivals antagonistic to each other for the acquisition of *bráhmaṇ* (mystical power), but work together harmoniously to make the entire cosmos in order as it is expressed in the following verse:

tr rocan varuṁa tr r utá dy n

tr ṁi mitra dhārayatho rájāṁsi

*vāv□dhān v amāti□ k□atriyasya-
anu vratá□ rák□amā□āv ajuryám (RV 5, 69,1)*

True-Speech and Contract! You two keep (preserve in order) the three [heavenly] luminous spheres (the worlds of light above the vault of sky), the three heavens, and the three spaces; [you have] grown strong, the mighty (? , splendor?) of [your] sovereignty, observing (protecting) fittingly the unaging vows. (Translated by Thieme)

Here, it is found that a properly guarded society is concordant with a well-ordered cosmos. Indeed, a harmonious universe will duly respond to what humans need and bring affluence to this world. For this, Mitra and Varu□a are to be rightly credited with being the righteous guardians of the universe. Their jobs have nothing to do with ideological competition between *brahmán* and *k□atriya*. It is said:

*ádhārayata□ p□thiv m utá dy m
míttra rājānā varu□ā máhobhi□
vardháyatam ó□adhī□ pínvata□ g
áva v□□□í□ s□jata□ jīradānū (RV. 5, 62:3)*

'You two, king Contract and king True-Speech, made firm earth and heaven by your greatness, cause the plants to grow, cause the cows to swell [with milk], send down the rain, you of live wetness!' (Translated by Thieme)

We can see that the dual sovereigns rule the universe jointly. Together with other Ādityas, they cause sacrifice and other cosmic events in order when the universal *ta* is properly followed. The idea of sovereignty here is an undifferentiated one which includes both religious and political power, or we should say that sacred kingship is behind the *ta*. In RV, one finds that Sacerdotium and Regnum are not two divided realms, but together make an integrated whole under the general concern of *ta*. Universal sovereignty is a divine kingship under which the realm of sacrifice is subsumed. Here, Indra, the divine sovereign in RV can serve as an instructive example.

Indra's epithet as *valavātraniūdāna* (destroyer of Vala and Vātra) or *valavātrahan* (slayer of Vala and Vātra) shows that he is endowed with two corresponding powers. Firstly, with *vajra* (thunderbolt) he destroyed Vātra, bestowed the renewal of a new universe and became the universal sovereign. Secondly, using the weapon of poetry, he defeated Vala, recovered the cows and released the dawn, because poetry is laden with magic power of the truth (*ta*). Thus, in RV, Indra as the lord of the gods of sky is also the supreme divine priest. Schmidt argued:

Indra ist der König aber nicht nur der Beschenker der Priester, sondern auch ihr Führer, der die Gesänge leitet, selbst Kultlieder singt. In dieser Funktion trägt er Epitheta wie *vāi, kaví, vípra, brahmán*, die gewöhnlich nur von priesterlichen Sängern und Dichtern gebraucht

werden. ...Aus den Zeugnissen, wo Indra als Priester fungiert, lässt sich schliessen, dass man in ihm einen Priesterkönig sah. (Schmidt, 1968:238)

Indra, at this juncture, stands for both priestly and royal functions; or rather, that royal function is all-inclusive in its nature. In this sense, one can argue that political order is not yet made “desacralized” and the realm of sacrifice is not a separate territory submitted to the dominion of the priests only in the period of the RV. Indra as the universal sovereign shall also preside over all cosmic concerns. He is a sacred sovereign rather than priest-king in the sense that priestly and royal functions are undifferentiated and the so-called priestly affairs are still under king’s command. In like manner, Mitra, Varuṅa and other Ādityas are responsible for all beneficent effects that sacrifice is supposed to work. Thieme neatly sums up the cosmic mission of Ādityas:

Contract and other Ādityas...rule the universe...because they are ‘the guardians of the ethics of the sacrifice’ in particular...According to Vedic religion, it is the sacrifice that causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall. In so far as the Ādityas guarantee and watch over the truth [ta] (Varuṅa...) of the poet’s word (the c), the contractual integrity (Mitra) and hospitable sincerity (Aryaman) of the worship (yajña), they

have created not only *c* and *yájñā*, but also day and night, month and season. (Thieme, 1995: 250-251; italics mine) ⁵

Indeed, as sacrificial order is subject to cosmic regulation, it is still under close surveillance of the *ta* in RV. Thus, the proper function that Mitra or Varuṅa exercises is not independent of this general concern and the division of labor between them is not for two fundamentally opposing missions. Rather, they are an inseparable pair complementing each other. Thieme argues for the mutually complementary character of *Mitrāvaruṅau* for what they represent:

The affinity of the concepts ‘contract’ and ‘true speech’ fully account for the affinity of the Gods Mitra and Varuṅa. No contract can be concluded without the use of ‘true speech’. Archaic contracts always contain, beside the terms of the agreement, solemn vows to keep them, and blessings for the party which does and curses for the party which does not. ‘True speech’ is, thus a necessary supplement of the contract proper (the contractual terms), just as Varuṅa is the suppleme

⁵ Oldenberg also said: “The character of Varuṅa and, in fact, of the Ādityas in general is summed in the idea of a celestial kingdom which rules over all the world-order and whose physical appearance possesses the attributes of the highest light, particularly of sunlight, ‘Luminous mgnificance’, it is said once succinctly and significantly ([RV] 1, 136,3). The title ‘king’ (*rājan*) or ‘prince’ (*kṅatriya*), though not exclusively attributed to these gods, is conferred on them more often than other gods; there is mostly talk of princeliness, beautiful princeliness and most sublime princeliness in their case.... their special relationship to the *ta*, the physical and the moral world-order...” (Oldenberg, 1988: 95)

nt of Mitra in the common dvandva *Mitrāvaru*□*au*. (Thieme, 1995, 260-261)

III. The alteration of meaning of *Mitrāvaru*□*au* in the Brāhma□as and its implications.

As witnessed from the Brāhma□as, in the mid-Vedic period, the intricacies of the □gvedic cosmology or pantheon was replaced by the ideological manipulation of divinities. The variegated Vedic hymns were superseded by the priestly jargon. Prajāpati, lord of creatures, as “le dieu sacrifice”⁶ (Levi, 1898) loudly proclaimed the advent of the age of sacrifice.⁷ Ideology of sacrifice gradually gained the upper hand and brāhma□as justified their supremacy in term of ritual status. Accordingly, the Weltanschauung of the Brāhma□as is vastly different from early Vedic intellectual climate as seen in RV. The all-powerful world of *ta*, under which different gods meaningfully interrelate to

⁶ *sa vai yajña eva prajāpati*□ (ŚB 1, 7,4,4); *yajño vai prajāpti*□ (AB 7, 7,2), etc.

⁷ “Prajapati est le sacrifice; les deux termes sont identiques, et les Brhmas□as unanimes ne se lassent pas de le répéter. Le sacrifice, comme Prajapati, est antérieur à tous les êtres, puisqu’ils ne sauraient subsister sans lui; il naît aussi des souffles ou de le l’esprit, car il est spirituel en son essence, et la filiation se représente aussi bien comme une simple équivalence: «Prajāpati est l’esprit» ou «Prajāpati est comme l’esprit». Il est encore le fils des Eaux, car les Eaux sont le principe de la pureté rituelle; ou du Brahman, la formule sacrée, car le rite ne se sépare point de la liturgie. Prajāpati est l’un comme l’autre: «Prajāpati a pour membres les hymnes; Prajāpati est celui qui sacrifie»: «Prajāpati, c’est tous les formules sacrées».” (Lévi, 1898: 15-16)

one another, becomes obsolete. Oertel's observations provide much elucidation on this transition:

[I]n the transition period from the early Vedic hymns to the Brāhmaṇas there is, in the priestly literature, a noticeable weakening in the individualization of the gods and an increasing vagueness in their characterization. The reason for this fact... must ultimately be sought in an increasing lack of interest on the part of these priestly authors in the concrete figures of the old pantheon which, in turn, is due to a change in the priestly conception of sacrifice. More and more the sacrifice ceases to be a devotional act through which the favour of an independent divinity is to be obtained, and it becomes a magical process which achieves its results *ex opere operato*. The gods are no longer independent sovereigns who act according to their own will and pleasure, but they become more and more the agents whose actions are no longer free but determined by the magic of the sacrifice. From being a suppliant the priest turns into magician who through the special powers vested in him and through his special knowledge directly, by means of the sacrifice, influences the courses of events... the gods themselves must resort to the sacrifice in order to accomplish their desires." (Oertel, 1994: 278)

Indeed, the personalities of the Gods become blurred, subject to the exploitation of priestly vision of world order. In the Brāhmaṇas, magic conception of sacrifice prevailed and sacrificial order finally became something of itself, independent of cosmic regulation. Accordingly, priestly order also became self-regulating. In fact, priest became a ritual magician and assumed the prerogative of the realm of sacrifice. Being vested with the authority of sacrificial expertise, the brāhmaṇa claimed a distinct status. A differentiation between what is to be assigned to the brāhmaṇa and the kṣatriya in terms of “division of labor” emerged. This can be seen from the alteration of meaning of *Mitrāvarnuṇau* in the Brāhmaṇas:

Now intelligence indeed is Mitra, and will is Varuṇa; and Mitra is the priesthood and Varuṇa is the nobility; and that priesthood is the conceiver, and noble is the doer.

Now in the beginning these two, the priesthood and the nobility, were separate; then Mitra, the priesthood, could stand without Varuṇa, the nobility.

Not Varuṇa, the nobility, without Mitra, the priesthood; whatever deed Varuṇa did unsped by Mitra, the priesthood, therein, forsooth, he succeeded not.

Varuṇa, the nobility, then called upon Mitra, the priesthood, saying, “Turn thou unto me that we may unite; I will place thee foremost, sped by thee, I will do deeds!” “So be it!” So the two united...

Such then is the office of Purohita (placed foremost, domestic priest)...Hence, it is quite proper that a Brāhman should be without a king...It is, however, quite improper that a king should be without a Brāhman ...Wherefore a Kṣatriya who intends to do a deed ought by all means resort to a Brāhman, for he verily succeeds only in the deed sped by the Brāhman. (ŚB 4, 1, 4: 1-6, translated by Eggeling, 1882-1900, 4: 269-270) ⁸

The priestly ideological jargon concerning the attraction of opposites is clear. *Mitrāvarnuṇau* is *krátūdákṇau*, a blend of the intelligence and will (or “counsel and power” according to Coomaraswamy, 1942: 6). They need each other to make a mutually beneficial relationship.

⁸ *mitrá eva kráturvāruṇo dákṇao / brāhmaivá mitráṇ kṇatrāṇ vāruṇo 'bhigántaiva brāhma kart kṇatríyaṇ//té haite ágre n nevāsatúṇ/brāhma ca kṇtrāṇ ca tátaṇ sás kaiva brāhma mitráṇ té kṇatrādvāruṇātsth tám //*

ná kṇtraṇ vāruṇaṇ /ṇte brāhmaṇo mitrádyáddha kíṇ ca vāruṇaṇ karma cakré áprasūtaṇ brāhmaṇā mítreṇa ná háivāsmāi tatsámānṇdhe//

sá kṇtraṇ vāruṇaṇ / brāhma mitrámupamantray ṇcakra úpam vartasva sáṇsṇjāvahai purástvā karavai tvát prasūtaṇ karma karavā iti tathéti tau sámasṇjetāṇ ...//so evá purodhā...so evá purodhā.... tattadávakaṇptameva yádbrahmāno rājanyaṇ syād... tuev navakṇptaṇ yádkṇatríyo brāhmaṇo bhávati yáddha kíṇ ca karma kuruté prasūtaṇ brāhmanā ...tásmādu kṇatríyeṇa karma karisyámāṇenopasártavya evá brāhmaṇaṇ sáṇháivāsmāi tadbrāhmaprasūtaṇ karma 'rdhyate//

Likewise, there are two realms of human orders: *bráhman* and *kṣátrá*, respectively submit to the dominion of Mitra and Varuṇa. Mitra is the representation of priesthood and Varuṇa kingship. Here, *Mitrāvarnuṇau* becomes the amalgamation of two dissimilar yet possibly complementary orders which are different from what was seen above in the RV as two reciprocally compatible functions. Since Brāhmanical ideology prevails, emphasizing that in the beginning *bráhman* and *kṣátrá* belong to two distinct realms, some hidden nuance behind these words is sensed: while the priest could be independent, a king could not be. However, they will make a perfect pair if they work together. Nonetheless, A king has to give priest precedence because without being brought forth (*prásūta*) by a priest he cannot accomplish anything.

Here, we find the term *prásūta* worth noting as it relates to the rite of *rājas ya* (royal consecration). A king is *aprasūta* until *rājas ya* has taken place. Thus *rājas ya* is also called *varuṇasavá* ("Varuṇa's quickening" as translated by Eggeling) (ŚB 5, 3, 4:12; 5, 4, 3:2). It is *bráhman* which brings forth *kṣátrá* (Cf. Coomaraswamy, 1942:9-10). The king is dependent on priest in terms of his ritual status. The consecrated "king" is Indra for two reasons, namely, he is a *kṣátríya*, and he is a *yájamāna*." (*eṇa índro yácca kṣátríyo yádu ca yájamāna*. ŚB, 5, 4, 3, 4). The king, as a *kṣátríya* is also a *yájamāna*- the institutor of a

sacrifice who has to employ a priest or priests to perform sacrifice for him.

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Indeed, the ideological configuration concerning the relationship between the king and the priest is clearly affirmed in the Brāhmaṇas, namely, the king has to rely on priest to officiate sacrifice and he cannot be a sacrificer himself (cf. AB, 7:19, 22).¹⁰ He needs a *purohita* to preside *yajña* for him and he can only be a *yajamāna*, the patron of sacrifice (cf. AB, 8:24; ŚB, 5, 4, 3, 4). The king is deprived of sacrificial prerogative in this context. He has temporal power, but not the preeminence regarding ritual status (*varṇa*). Thus, “the separation with the religious universe of a sphere or realm which is opposed to the religious, and roughly corresponds to what we call political” (Dumont, *ibid*: 55) emerged. As distinct from the sacred domain of religious matters, politics is the realm of force.

Gradually, the king became the embodiment of *daṇḍa* (Rod)- symbol of authority and punishment. This can be seen most clearly in the *Arthaśāstra*, which reminds us of Machiavelli’s *The Prince*:

⁹ The *yajamāna* has become a technical term in the Brāhmaṇas, defined by Herbert and Mauss as “the subject to whom the benefits of sacrifice, or who undergoes its effects.” (Herbert and Mauss, 1964:10)

¹⁰ The Brāhmaṇas are mainly dealing with the “science” of the sacrifice, enumerating the different rules for individual rites and ceremonies. They never fail to mention the reward for the priests in every sacrifice. In the same way, the sacrificer is told very clearly what advantage one can get through different sacrifices in this life or after death. For the discussion of sacrifice as intellectual climate of the age, see Oldenberg, 1919.

The means of safeguarding the accomplishment of philosophy, the three Vedas and economics, is the Rod: its proper conduct is the science of politics, which aims at acquiring what is not acquired, guards what is acquired, increases what is guarded, and promotes what is increased to the worthy. The business of worldly life is dependent on it. “Therefore, the king, seeking the maintenance of worldly life, should always hold the Rod; for there is no sort of subjugation for living beings other than the Rod,” say the (ancient) teachers. “No,” says Kauṣalya. For the king, severe with the Rod, is despised. The king, just with the Rod, is honored. For the Rod, inflicted intelligently, endows the subjects with sense of obligation, material wealth and sensual pleasure. (1, 4:3-11) ¹¹

IV. Early Buddhist ideal of sacred order: *dhamma* and *cakkavattin*

¹¹ *ānvīkṣikītrayīvārttā* ā *yogakṣemasādhano daṁṁa tasya nīrdaṁṁanīt* *alabdhalābhārthā labdhaparirakṁṁī rakṁṁitavivadhanī vṁṁddhasya tīrthe pratipādanī ca/ tasyāmāyattā lokayātrā/ tasmāllokayātrārthī nityamudyatada* *ṁṁa syāt/ na hyevaṁvidhaṁ vaśopanayanamasti bhūtānāṁ yathā daṁṁa/ ityācāryā/ neti kauṁṁiyaṁ tīkṁṁadaṁṁo hi bhūtānāmuddhejanīyo bhavati/ mṁṁdudaṁṁaṁ paribhūyate/ yathārhadāṁṁaṁ pūryate/ suvijñātapra* *ṁṁito hi daṁṁaṁ prajā dharmārthkāmairyojayati//* While the elevation of kingship to the status of a divine institution might be argued as the residuary of the ancient tradition (cf. Heesterman, 1978, 1979, 1989), the fact remains that concerning his proper duties, the king is the embodiment of the *daṁṁa*. He as a ruler of the state, enforces the law and executes punishment so that social justice (*dharma*) would prevail. For the development of kingship after the Vedic period, see Yamazaki, 1994.

The original Buddhist idea on kingship should be understood within a pan-Indian intellectual climate since it shares some prominent features of kingship of the age. The Buddha may have had different concerns, yet this did not prevent him from scrutinizing kingship from a secular, evolutionary viewpoint, as it is clearly expressed in the Aggañña-Sutta of DN. For the Buddha, the religious order, as represented by the Saṅgha is the most prominent feature of the order. The realm of politics is secondary or rather secular in origin. Indeed, one of the most striking phenomena concerning this Sutta is the first king of human society is the one being consented or agreed upon by the majority (*mahājanena sammato*):

Then...those beings came together and having come together, they lamented, “Wicked things have appeared among us beings, in that stealing is to be perceived, accusation is to be perceived, lying is to be perceived and punishment is to be perceived. Why don’t we agree upon one being and he has to criticize whoever should be properly criticized, accuse whoever should be properly accused, and banished whoever should be properly banished. We will each hand over to him a portion of rice.” Then...those beings went to the one among them *who was the most handsome and good looking, most pleasing and with greatest capacity* and said thus:” Come, being, criticize whoever should be properly criticized, accuse whoever should be properly accused, and banished whoever should be properly banished; we will each hand over

to you a portion of rice.” He agreed and did what had been asked, and they each gave him a portion of rice. “Agreed by the majority” [*mahājanena sammato*] was the meaning for *mahāsammata* (The Great Appointee) and *mahāsammata* was the first designation given [for the king]....” He who brings joy to others according to Dharma is what *rāja* (king) means. ¹²(DN, 3: 92-93; italics mine)

Only when society degenerated did we need a person with fair-complexion and ability to be in charge of the practical affairs of social justice to prevent the wicked things (*pāpakā dhammā*) from taking place. In this context, kingship was introduced as an unfortunate necessity rather than intrinsically good since it emerges only at the time of human deterioration (cf. Reynolds, 1972: 17-18). Consequently, kingship as an institution of expediency is

¹² *Atha kho ...sattā sannipati*□*su sannipatitvā anutthuni*□*su, “ Pāpakā vata bho dharmmā sattesu pātu bhūtā, yatra hi nāma adinnādāna*□*paññāyissati, garahā paññāyissati, musa-vādo paññāyissati, da*□□*adāna*□*paññāyissati, yan nūna maya*□*eka*□*satta*□*sammanneyyāma. So no sammā-khīyitabba*□*khīyeyya, sammā-garahitabba*□*garaheyya, sammā-pabbājetabba*□*, pabbājeyya. Maya*□*pan’ assa sālīna*□*bhāga*□*anuppadassāmāti.” Atho kho te...sattā yo nesa*□*satto abhirūpataro ca dassanīyataro ca pāsādikaro ca mehesakkhat aro ca , ta*□*satta*□*upasa*□*kamitvā etad avocu*□: “*Ehi bho satta, sammā-khīyitabba*□*khīyi, sammā-garahitabba*□*garahi, sammā-pabbājetabba*□*pabbājehi. Maya*□*pana te sālīna*□*bhāga*□*anuppassāmāti.” “Evam bho ti” kho ...so satto tesa*□*sattāna*□*pa*□*issutvā, sammā-khīyitabba*□*khīyi, sammā-garahitabba*□*garahi, sammā-pabbājetabba*□*, pabbājesi. Te pan’ assa sālīna*□*bhāga*□*anupada*□*su. Mahājana-sammato ti kho ...mahā-sammato tv eva pa*□*hama*□*akkhara*□*upanibbatta*□*...Dhammena pare rañjetīti kho ...rājā.*

the result of a give-and-take compact: the king will receive a portion of crops in return for his endeavor, and both sides agree on this.

With this in view, the controversy concerning the exact meaning of *mahasammta* (see, in particular, Tambiah 1989: 101-122, also Lingat, 1989; 25-26; Gombrich, 1992: 174-75, Collins, 1993: 387-389) can be tackled in a more profitable way. Evidently, the image of ideal king and what he is entrusted with are nothing but secular concerns. This can be seen from the fact that it is stated in the text that the first king is in charge of the affairs of “stealing, accusation, lying and punishment.” (*adinnādāna*□

garahā, musa-vado, da□□adāna□) We find that these assignments are basically confined to what we find in the Dhamaśāstras as the proper domain of *rājadharmā*: the king is the *da□□a* holder, to be responsible for the punishment and other related issues. Not surprisingly, we notice that the power of the first king is not derived from the divine mandate, but from the “general will” of the people, if we can use the contract theory here. After all, he is nothing but a popular leader.

In early Buddhism, while kingship was responsible for what is primary and secular-the realm of *artha*, the *sama□as* bore what is ultimate and sacred- the realm of *mok□a*. In that case, what is the relationship between the king and the *arahant*? Although kingship is demystified from the beginning, it doesn't become independent in itself like in the modern

West, but has to subordinate to the underlying principle of Buddhist universe: Dhamma. In the Aggañña-Sutta, this theme is vividly depicted as the relationship between King Pasenadi and the Buddha. The Buddha said:

Dhamma is the best in this world and in the world to come can be understood by the following illustration. The king of Kosala, Pasenadi knows: "that the samañña Gotama, who has gone forth from the Sakya family, is unsurpassed." The Sakyans now are the vassals of King Pasenadi of Kosala... they render to King Pasenadi of Kosala obeisance and salutation, rise up from their seats and do him homage with hands folded. Now all this obeisance which the Sakyans do before King Pasenadi of Kosala, King Pasenadi of Kosala does before the Tathāgatha, thinking: "Indeed, the samañña Gotama is well-born, while I am ill-born; the samañña Gotama is strong, I am weak; samañña Gotama is pleasant, I am ugly; he has great power, I have little." Now it is honoring the Dhamma, revering the Dhamma, esteeming the Dhamma, respecting the Dhamma that King Pasenadi of Kosala, renders obeisance and salutation too the Tathāgatha, rises up from his seat, and does him homage with hands folded."¹³(DN, 3: 83-84)

¹³ *Tadaminā p'etañ ...periyāyena veditabbañ yathā dhammo seññho jane tasmin diññhe c'eva dhamme abhisamparāyañ ca. Jānāti kho rājā Pasenadi-Kosalā: "Samañño Gotamo anutaro Sakya-kulā pabbajito'ti. Sakyā kho pana...rañño Pasenadi-Kosalassa anuyuttā bhavanti. Karonti kho...Sakyā raññe Pasenadimhi*

Because the Tathāgata is the embodiment (body) of Dhamma (*dhammakāya*), and Dhamma is the unsurpassed universal norm¹⁴, he is hailed as the proprietor of Dhamma (*dhammasāmin*). The mendicants, who “are the own sons of the Bhagavant, born from his mouth, born of the Dhamma, produced by the Dhamma, the heirs of the Dhamma,”¹⁵ are the transmitters of the Dhamma. Dhamma, as the highest value not only for the world renouncer but also for the world conqueror, suggests the sense of transcendence and sovereignty (Reynolds, 1972: 17). From the early Buddhist viewpoint, the unbridgeable distance between the world renouncer and the world conqueror is unmistakable here: while the world renouncer is wellborn, strong, pleasant and with great power, the world conqueror is ill-born, weak, ugly and with little power. The temporal and

Kosale nipaccakāraṃ abhivādanaṃ paccuṃhānaṃ añjali-kammaṃ sāmīcī-kammaṃ. Iti kho...yaṃ karonti Sakyā raññe Pasenadimhi Kosale nipaccakāraṃ abhivādanaṃ pacuṃhānaṃ abhivādanaṃ pacuṃhānaṃ añjali-kammaṃ sāmīcī-kammaṃ-“*Nanu sujāto Samaṃ Gotamo? Dujjāto ‘ham asmi; balavā Samaṃ Gotamo. Dubbalo ‘ham asmi; mahesekkho Samaṃ Gotamo; appesakkho ‘ham asmīti.*” *Atha kho taṃ dhammaṃ yeva sakkaronto dhammaṃ garukaronto dhammaṃ mānento dhammaṃ pūjento dhammaṃ apacāyamāno, evaṃ rājā Pasenadi-Kosalo Tathāgathe nipaccakāraṃ karoti abhivādanaṃ paccuṃhānaṃ añjali-kammaṃ sāmīcī-kammaṃ.*

¹⁴ Here, Reynolds’ suggestion for the meaning of Dhamma is worth noting: “In the earliest Buddhist traditions which are accessible to us Dhamma refers, first and foremost, to the sacred reality which the Buddha had discovered at the point of his Enlightenment. In this context it is recognized both as the Law which regulates and governs the totality of existence and, at the same time, as the Truth which enables men to break free from the limitations which existence imposes. Dhamma, in other words, was taken to be the source both of order in the world and salvation from it.” (Reynolds, 1972: 15)

¹⁵ *Bhagavato ‘mhi putto oraso mukhato jāto dhamma-jo dhamma-dāyādo.*(DN, 3: 84)

sacred realms are antithetical. Although both sides abide in Dhamma, the world conqueror can only be taught and honor the Dhamma, the world renouncer is the instructor and the initiator of Dhamma. Hierarchically speaking, kingship is relativized since the temporal realm is subsumed to the ultimate origin of value provided by the Buddha and the Saṅgha.¹⁶

If temporal power is subservient to the prescription of the Dhamma, how do we make sense of the ideal of universal king (*Cakkavattin*)-the wheel-turning ruler who is a righteous king of the Dhamma (*rājā cakkavattī dhammiko dhammarājā*, DN, 1: 86, 2:16, 3:59, etc.) in Buddhism?

As summarized by Reynolds, the *Cakkavattin* is a great personality (*mahāpurisa*) who acquired his status through the merit that he accumulated in previous lives. Various miracles accompanied his birth. When he grew up, because of his charisma, he elicited the wheel which usually resides deep in the ocean. He then proceeded to conquer the four continents with the help of wheel turning and established the universal monarch. He ruled according to the Dhamma and brought welfare and thereby happiness to his subjects (Reynolds, 1972: 20. For the details, see “Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda Sutta” of DN; *A p'i ta mo chü sho lun*, chap. 12;

¹⁶ Compare Dumont's observations on early Christianity: 'When Christ teaches to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but unto God the things that are God's," the symmetry is only apparent, as it is for the sake of God that we must comply with the legitimate claims of Caesar. In a sense the distance thus stated is greater than if the claims of Caesar were simply denied. The worldly order is relativized, as subordinated to absolute values. There is an ordered dichotomy: outwardly individualism encompasses recognition of and obedience to the powers of this world.' (Dumont, 1986: 31)

also the discussions in Tambiah: 1976: 39-47, 1987; Gokhale: 1967). A succinct portrait of the *Cakkavattin* can be found in the following passage:

Once...there was a wheel-turning king called Daśhaneme, a righteous king of Dhamma, conqueror of the four quarters, who had established the security of his kingdom and was possessed of the seven treasures...Having conquered the earth bounded by the sea, without Rod or sword but by the Dhamma, he dwelt therein.¹⁷ (DN 1:88-9; 2: 16; 3:59; Sn, 106)

Tambiah explored the Buddha-Cakkavattī relationship and pointed out that although the Buddha and Cakkavattī both share the thirty-three auspicious marks in their bodies, i.e., are *mahāpurisas*, the former attains *Nibbāna*, but the latter goes to the heaven called Brahmaloaka after departing from this world. Besides, the Buddha was a Cakkavattī in his previous existence(s) and chose to become a world-renouncer rather than a Cakkavattī in his last life. In addition to these, the Cakkavattī has to rely on the advice of royal seers (*rājisi*) in order to rule righteously, and he instructs his vassals in the ethics of lay people. In contrast, the Buddha possesses the super-knowledge (*abhiñña*). And he teaches all beings the Dhamma and the way of liberation (Tambiah, 1987: 7-8).

¹⁷ *Bhūta-pubbam...rājā Daśhanemi nāma ahosi cakkavatti dhammiko dhamma-rājā cātur-anto vijitāvī janapada-tthāvariya-ppatto satta-ratana-samannāgato ...So imaṃ pathviṃ sāgara-pariyantaṃ adaṃṃena asattena dhammena abhivijīya ajjhāvasi.*

At this point, the original hierarchical order in Buddhism between what it is ultimate and what primary remains undisturbed: the realm of kingship is secondary compared to the domain of renunciation, and is dependent on it for a meaningful calling. In this context, the position of kingship is also disparaged. He, as the world conqueror, can only relate himself to relative ethics; only the world renouncer manifests absolute value. Therefore, it is not surprising for us to find that when the future Buddha Maitreya (Pāli: *Metteyya*) rises in the world, the reigning *Cakkavattī*, king *Saṅka* will renounce his kingship and don the ascetic's robe to become the disciple of the Buddha (DN 3: 75-7). The world renouncer is the initiator of the value, and the world conqueror is the follower. It says:

At the time when people live eighty thousand-years, there will arise in the world, a Blessed One, a perfectly-enlightened Arahant, named *Metteyya*, accomplished in knowledge and right behavior, a well-farer, knower of the worlds, supreme guide of men who have to be restrained, teacher of gods and human beings, the Buddha, the Blessed one... Then king *Saṅka*... shaving off hair and beard, he will dress in yellow robes and leave the home for the houseless state in the presence of this perfectly-enlightened Arahant-*Metteyya* the Blessed One.”¹⁸ (DN 3: 75-6)

¹⁸ *Asīti-vassa-sahassāyukesu ...manussesu Metteyyo nāma Bhagavā loke uppajjissati arahaṃ Sammāsambuddho vijjā-caraṃa-sampanno sugato loka-vidū*

V. Confucian idea of sacred order as seen from the *Mencius*

We have seen above that the future Buddha Metteyya as an Arahant will lead reigning universal king-the apex of mundane power, to renounce his worldly realm in order to attain *mokṣa* by joining the Saṅgha. The message is unambiguous: liberation, which is denied to this world, can only take place in the realm of ultimate value. Assuming this, we have to ask: why did this otherworldly message of emancipation become a worldly reference for revolution in China? In other words, how on earth could the world renouncer be transformed into the world conqueror?

In order to respond this question properly, first, we have to scrutinize the most relevant issues pertaining to the understanding of the unique situation of universal kingship in traditional China. Surprisingly, oracle bone inscriptions, so far the earliest Chinese records, already evinced the distinctive symbol of universal kingship. The king of the Shang (ca. 1750-1100 BC) titled himself as, “the One Person” (一人) or “I, the One Person” (余一人) and this usage was continued by the kings of Chou (1100?-256BC). (Hu, 1982) To be sure, as Schwartz argued that

anuttaro purisa-damma-sārathi sathā deva-manussānaṃ Buddhō Bhagavā...Atha kho Saṅgho nāma rājā...Metteyyassa Bhagavato arahato Sammā-Sambuddhassa santike kesa-massauṃ ohāretvā kāsāyāni vattāni acchādetvā agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajissati.

the notion of universal kingship is widely shared by the higher civilizations of the ancient world, e.g., Mesopotamia, Egypt, India and others. He pointed out:

In these cultures...there had occurred a degree of military-political consolidation over large areas which made it possible for the leading contenders for power to claim some kind of universal authority in what as plausibly regarded as the whole of civilized. Such universal authority had its religio-cosmic basis. In none of this is ancient China unique. (Schwartz, 1968:277)

What is unique about the history of universal kingship in China is the persistence of its dominion in traditional China which lasted for more than two millennia. (Schwartz, 1968; cf. also Abe, 1956) Even during the period of Spring and Autumn and Warring States (c. 800-200 BC), when the Middle Kingdom was divided into hundreds of small states and principalities, the writings of the “hundred schools” at the time still clung tenaciously to the ideal of universal kingship. (Schwartz, *ibid*: 278-9) Indeed, it also survived the cultural dominance of Buddhism in China.¹⁹ The complete breakdown of universal kingship in China happened in

¹⁹ “Whereas the Buddhists were by no means anxious to spell the possible subversive implication of their doctrines, their opponents were most anxious to make them explicit. In the end, the decisive fact is that Chinese Buddhism never carried out the substantial and aggressive assault on the claims of the Chinese world order on its own ground that papal Christianity carried on the claims of the Holy Roman Emperor.” (Schwartz, *ibid*: 280)

1911 with the demise of the last Dynasty. Symbolically speaking, it was defeated by Christianity rather than Buddhism.

Concomitant with the ascendancy of universal kingship has been the predominance of political culture since ancient China. (Keightly, 1978 ; Chang, 1983). Confucianism which had become the imperial ideology since Han (206 BC-220 AD) reinterpreted this legacy from a new perspective. The adoption of Confucianism as orthodoxy in imperial China leaves an indelible mark on traditional Chinese statecraft.

Among the issues of Confucianism related to our discussion here is the ideal of sage-king (聖王) of Hsün-Tzu (born ca. 312 BC) and more explicitly, of Mencius (372?-289 BC). In the *Mencius*, the following striking passage is pertinent here:

In the time of Yao, the Empire (天下) was not settled. The Flood still raged unchecked, inundating the Empire; plants grew thickly; birds and beasts multiplied; the five grains did not ripen; birds and beasts encroached upon men, and their trail crisscrossed even the Central Kingdoms. The lot fell to Yao to worry about this situation. He raised Shun to a position of authority to deal with it. Sun put Yi in charge of fire. Yi set mountains and valleys alight and burnt them, and the birds and beasts went into hiding. Yü dredged the Nine Rivers, cleared the course of Chi and T'a to channel the water into the sea, deepened the beds of Ju and the Han, and raised the dykes of the Huai and the Ssu to

empty them into the River. Only then were the people of the Central Kingdoms able to find food for themselves...Hou Chi taught the people how to cultivate land and the five kinds of grain. When these ripened, the people multiplied. This is the way of common people: once they have a full belly and warm clothes on their back they degenerate to the level of animals if they are allowed to lead idle lives, without education and discipline. This gave the sage King further cause for concern, and he appointed Hsieh as the minister of Education whose duty was to teach the people human relationships: love between father and son, duty between ruler and subject, distinction between husband and wife, precedence of the old over the young, and faith between friends.

²⁰(*Mencius*, Book III, Part A, Chap. 4. Lau's translation, 1970:102)

²⁰ 「當堯之時，天下猶未平，洪水橫流，泛濫於天下。草木暢茂，禽獸繁殖，五穀不登，禽獸偏人。獸蹄鳥迹之道，交於中國。堯獨憂之，舉舜而敷治焉。舜使益掌火，益烈山澤而焚之，禽獸逃匿。禹疏九河，濬濟漯，而注諸海；決汝漢，排淮泗，而注之江，然後中國可得而食也、、后稷教民稼穡。樹藝五穀，五穀熟而民人育。人之有道也，飽食、暖衣、逸居而無教，則近於禽獸。聖人有憂之，使契為司徒，教以人倫：父子有親，君臣有義，夫婦有別，長幼有序，朋友有信。」《孟子》滕文公上。

Hsün Tzu has the same idea on the sage king, but with a different perspective:

In ancient time, the sage kings realized that vicious human nature inclines toward violence and malevolence and is not upright or orderly. Accordingly, they initiated ritual principles and laid down certain regulations in order to erect and embellish human tendencies and make it upright, in order to train and transform it, and guide it in a proper channels. In this way they caused all human beings to become orderly and to conform to the Tao. (*Hsün Tzu*, Chap. 23. I follow Watson's translation 1968:158, with alteration of some critical vocabulary.) 「古者聖王以人性惡，以為偏險而不正，悖亂而不治，是以為之起禮義，制法度，以矯飾人之情性而正之，以擾化人之情性而導之也。」《荀子》性惡篇。

The question of the sage king is not even a rejected possibility. It is simply taken for granted. Furthermore, kingship actually precedes the existence of a natural state of human society, as it is considered to be a *sine qua non* for a fully human existence. This stands in sharp contrast with the Aggañña Sutta where kingship is a late unintended consequence of humanity. Human society portrayed above is also vastly different from the Aggañña Sutta, as it is in the process of progress rather than decline. The rise of the sage kings makes the difference. Kingship therefore is an institution of fortunate and necessary good. Moreover, the depiction of the first stage of human society though situated in a flood background, is devoid of any mythical overtones. It is very human, worldly-orientated and nothing “transcendental”, like the Dhamma in the Aggañña Sutta is presupposed. The differentiation between the realms of sacred and secular, as they present themselves clearly in other traditions like Christianity or Buddhism is absent in the above passage.²¹

The apprehension that human society might drift into the stage of beast doesn't persuade the sage kings in ancient China of the necessity for the people to have a separate realm for the “religion” in their life. The

²¹ In discussing the transformation of Maitreya myth into the revolution ideology in China, Nattier attributes one of the factors to be the “close link between church and state in pre-Buddhist Chinese thought.” (Nattier, 1988:32). Here, we find a presupposition, which might be true in Christianity, is inappropriate within Chinese context. Since the assumption that there should be two distinctive categories of “church” and “state” and they should be either differentiated or undifferentiated are not thought of in Chinese tradition, there is little point in arguing the “close link” of two separated categories.

agenda that the sage kings espouse remains “secular” or “worldly”: that is, social ethics or rather moral cultivation. This message is unambiguous: the cultivation of human relationship is the primary as well as the ultimate good. There is no need to break with human world to be genuinely transformed. Here we also see the crux of the matter: the realm of politics is indispensable for a society to become a distinctively human one. To conclude: there is no true humanity without kingship.

Since kingship is endowed with the moral obligation of educating the subjects, the ideal kingdom is to become the embodiment of benevolence and rightness. Indeed, the kingdom as a moral entity, gains its determinative purport from Mencius, as it is said in the opening chapter of the *Mencius*:

Mencius went to see king Hui of Liang. ‘Sir,’ said the King, ‘you have come this distance, thinking nothing of thousand *li*. You must surely have some way of profiting my state?’

‘Your Majesty,’ answered Mencius. ‘What is the point of mentioning the word “profit”? All that matters is that there should be benevolence and rightness. If Your Majesty says, “How can I profit my state?” and the Counselors say, “How can I profit my family?” and the Gentlemen and Commoners say, “How can profit my person?” then those above and those below will be trying to profit at the expense of one another and the state will be imperiled...’ All that matters is that there should be

benevolence and rightness. What is the point of mentioning of word "profit"?' ²²(Trans. by Lau, 1970:49)

To the contrary of the *Arthaśāstra*, it says above that a king should not pursue profit (利). In other words, *artha*- the wealth and power is not the right category for defining proper political concerns. Here, while contrasting what is benevolence and rightness, and what is profit, Mencius makes a clear distinction between moral and immoral kingdom. In a moral kingdom, the sense of benevolence and rightness is deeply implanted in its subjects' heart and mind. On the other hand, an immoral kingdom, according to Mencius, by dragging its subjects into wicked practices, will inevitably jeopardize itself. A kingdom is not an assembly of individuals who can do what they desire so long as it doesn't interfere with the freedom of others, but a holistic one in which the king plays a crucial part in its functioning. After all, a kingdom is not founded on social contract, but an extension of the self, family and society, in which the maintaining of a moral order is virtually essential to its existence. As an ideal king is also deemed to be a sage, he is a moral exemplar.

A proper kingdom not only is responsible for the moral cultivation of its subjects but also should ultimately take care for the emancipation of

²² 「孟子見梁惠王。王曰：“叟不遠千里而來，亦將有以利吾國乎？”孟子對曰：“王何必曰利？亦有仁義而已矣。王曰何以利吾國，大夫曰何以利吾家，士庶人曰何以利吾身，上下交征利而國危矣、、王亦曰仁義而已矣，何必曰利？”」《孟子》梁惠王上。

the oppressed. Since deliverance through renunciation or salvation by joining the Church or Saṅgha, is not thought of in Confucianism, the liberation by political means is the final resort for humanity to be rejuvenated. Mencius argues forcefully for the responsibility of a righteous king as follows:

‘I have heard,’ answered Mencius, ‘of one who gained ascendancy under the heaven from the modest beginning of seventy *li* square. Such the one was T’ang...The *Book of History* says,

In his punitive expeditions, T’ang began with Ke.

‘With this, he gained the trust of the Empire, and when he marched on the east, the western barbarians complained. They all said, “Why does he not come to us first?”’ The people longed for his coming as they longed for a rainbow in the time of severe drought. Those who were going to market did not stop; those who were ploughing went on ploughing. He punished the rulers and comforted the people, like a fall of timely rain, and the people greatly rejoice.’ The *Book of History* says,

We wait our Lord. When he comes we will be revived.

‘Now you went to punish Yen which practiced tyranny over its people, the people thought you were going to rescue them from water and fire, and they came to meet your army, bringing baskets of rice and bottles

of drink.’²³ (*Mencius*, Book 1, Part B, Chap, 11, trans. by Lau, 1970: 69-70)

People who are in a situation of deep water and scorching fire wait for the delivery. Nevertheless, what they yearn for is not paradise in the future world. They are looking forward to a benevolent world conqueror to come quickly to their aid, like the fall of timely rain, to release them from suffering here and now. This aspiration is not messianic hope with apocalyptic imagination like we find in Judaism or Christianity. It is highly political and extremely worldly-orientated: only if the tyrant is wiped out and the true revolution fulfills it. A true revolution, as it is universally acclaimed by the people under heaven, be they barbarians or not, in the east or west, will revitalize the whole humanity.

A revolution²⁴ derives its legitimacy from the Mandate of Heaven (*t'ien -ming* 天命) T'ang, the founder of Shang, as it is asserted by Mencius, started with a small kingdom and eventually became a universal king because the world under heaven was on his side (天下信之). Although the Mandate of Heaven is highly elusive, yet, when it is

²³ 孟子對曰：“臣聞七十里為政於天下者，湯是也、、書曰：‘湯一征，自葛始。’天下信之。‘東面而征，西夷怨；南面而征，北狄怨。曰，奚為後我？’民望之，若大旱之望雲霓也。歸市者不止，耕者不變。誅其君而吊其民，若時雨降，民大悅。書曰：‘徯我后，后來其蘇。’今燕虐其民，王往而征之。民以為將拯己於水火之中也，簞食壺漿，以迎王師。《孟子》梁惠王下。

²⁴ Revolution in Chinese: 革命, literally means ‘change of the mandate’. For the idea of Mandate of Heaven, cf. Hsu and Linduff, 1988: 101-5.

manifested, its destiny is irrevocable. Once Mandate of Heaven is intended, a dictator deserves removal from his position when he is forsaken by it. The shift of Mandate of Heaven- a revolution which sets people free from a tyranny, is a remarkable achievement and justifies itself:

King Hsüan of Ch'i asked , 'Is it true that T'ang banished Chieh and King Wu marched against Tchou?' 'It is so recorded,' answered Mencius, ' is regicide permissible?' ' A man who mutilates benevolence is mutilator, while one who cripples rightness is a crippler. He who is both a mutilator and a crippler is an "outcast". I have heard of the punishment of the "outcast Tchou", but have not heard of any regicide.' ²⁵(*Mencius*, book 1, Part B. Chap. 8, trans. by Lau, 1970: 68)

VI. Maitreya in China

Because the political realm is all-encompassing in traditional China, and Buddhism had to reconcile itself to this challenge, the transformation of Maitreya to the Messiah who will bring heaven to this world through revolution is suggestive. In this process of cultural assimilation, eventually Maitreya had been changed from a world renouncer to a world

²⁵ 齊宣王問曰：“湯放桀，武王伐紂，有諸？”孟子對曰：“於傳有之。”曰：“臣弑其君可乎？”曰：“賊仁者謂之賊，賊義者謂之殘，殘賊之人謂之一夫。聞誅一夫紂矣，未聞弑君也。”《孟子》梁惠王下。

conqueror in China. This process is understandable in terms of the ultimate concerns of its followers, as Maitreya is believed to descend to this world to relieve the oppressed from their sufferings. One might argue that the cult of Maitreya had been politicized in China. However, this is justifiable, since the true liberation can only come from the revolution within a Chinese context. Revolution in the foreseeable future will bring the true Heaven to this human world. This is why so many revolutionaries in the history of China use the cult of Maitreya as well as that of other Messianic cults, notably Manichaeism, to propagate an apocalyptic message (see, esp. Wu, 1986:382-418; Shigematsu: 1931, 1936, 1940-44; Mou, 1990; Ch'en 1964:434-5; Overmyer:1976). In China, the Maitreya yet-to-come will be the real *Cakkavattin* in this world²⁶.

The Empire of Ming (明) (1386-1644), as argued convincingly by Wu (loc. cit.), is reminiscent of the Manichaeistic cult (in Chinese: Ming-chiao 明教, “the cult of light”). Among the revolutionaries in late Yüan (1260-1368), who were busy in competing with one another for the future Messiah, the Pai-lien (白蓮 White Lotus)

²⁶ It is interesting to point out that though usually the rendering on the word *Cakkavattin* (or in Sanskrit *Cakravartin*) is 轉輪王 in Chinese, the king of wheel-turner, In *Chiu chin i cheng pao hsin lu*: (Taishō ,31:837) and again in *Fo shuo Mile ta ch'eng fo ching*: (Taishō ,14:429), it is translated as the sage-king of wheel-turner 轉輪聖王. The rendering of *cakravarti-rājya* in *Wu lian sho ching*: 278 is also 轉輪聖王.

cult worshipped both Maitreya and Mani.²⁷ The Ming founder, Chu Yüan-chang had a close relationship with this cult (Wu: loc. cit.). His final ascent as the Emperor of the Middle Kingdom could not be achieved without the backup of the whole Messianic movement of his time.²⁸(Wu: loc. cit.)

Why did people join the rebellion to become the followers of Maitreya? What will happen with the advent of the Future Buddha? In one of the Buddhist texts concerning *Maitreyavyākaraṇa* (the prophecy of Maitreya), there is a scene, which is typical among the Maitreya texts, depicting the ideal society as the following:

Later, when Maitreya Tathāgata, an *Arahant* who has attained *samyaksoḍḍhi*, rises in this world, Jambudvīpa is spatial, ornamented and pure. There are no thorns, valleys and hills. It is flat and moist and the ground is covered by golden sand. There are clean ponds, thriving forests, well-known flowers, and auspicious grasses

²⁷ As pointed out by Lin (1997:53-55), the cult of Maitreya here is tinged by Manichaeism. The future Buddha is often portrayed as a Mani-like figure full of light and power. The land of bliss becomes a place illuminated by the light from different luminaries.

²⁸ “Chu Yüan-chang...had formerly been a novice monk and in the chaotic years which marked the end of Mongol rule in China, had joined a rebel group led by Han Shan-tung, whose grandfather was a member of the White Lotus Society. Han Shan-tung himself prophesied that in the midst of the present turmoil an enlightened ruler would appear to prepare for the return of the Maitreya from Tushita Heaven. He proclaimed himself the Major Enlightened Ruler (*Ta ming wang*) but was later killed in battle. His son Han Lin-erh assumed the title of the Minor Enlightened Ruler (*Shiao ming wang*). He in turn was killed by Chu who took over command of the group and eventually gained the throne.” (Lieu, 1985:260)

everywhere and the multitudes of treasure reflect each other to make [the land] very lovely and pleasant. Everyone has compassionate heart and practices ten good deeds. Owing to the cultivation of good deeds, they live in blissful content to a great age. The men and women are crowded. Towns and villages are neighboring one another and are within the flying distance of domestic fowls. The cultivated crops have seven harvests and they fructify spontaneously without being plowed.²⁹

Although at the present time, Maitreya dwells in the *Tuṅgītabhavana* in heaven, he will descend to this world to save all sentient being from suffering. Once he is born into this world, he will bring about a miraculous change in our lives. Through his infinite compassion, the misery that afflicts the world will surely be totally wiped out. “Awaiting

²⁹ 「次後，彌勒如來應正等覺出現世間時，瞻部洲廣博嚴淨，無諸荊棘、谿谷、堆埤；平正潤澤金沙覆地。處處皆有清池茂林，名花瑞草，及眾寶聚更相輝映，甚可愛樂。人皆慈心修行十善。以修善故壽命長遠，豐樂安隱。士女殷稠，城邑鄰次，雞飛相及。所營農稼，一種七獲。自然成實，不須耘耨。」
《大阿羅漢難提蜜多羅所說法住記》 in *Taishō*, 49: 13c. It has to be remarked that the text cited here is a Mahāyāna Sūtra which is different from the Nikāya passage that we explored earlier in terms of depiction of the whole scene. The ideal of Arahant is highly explicit in the previous discussion since the individual enlightenment is considered to be the final goal. The emphasis here is more on universal peace and prosperity rather than detachment. Again, the ideal of Bodhisattva might play a role in it as the future Buddha is regarded to be a merciful Maitreya which is different from that of a passionless Arahant. For the more elaborate idyllic scenes in the world to come, cf. *Fo shuo Mi-le ta ch'eng fo ching*. It seems that Mahāyāna transformation of the future Buddha has become the catalysis inextricably linked with Confucian concept of future mandatory of heaven. We cannot elaborate on this matter here because of different concern. However, this is a grave issue which merits careful scrutiny.

the future Buddha” carries strong Messianic overtones. The paradise depicted above, as a land of lasting peace and enormous affluence must be deeply attractive to the people who are in anguish over tyranny. The idyllic scene must catch the attention of the people under constant turmoil. The message brought here surely will console people immensely in their misery. After all, the gospel that Maitreya will spread in this world is to relieve people of the burden of life. The prospect of a land of dreams surely will give comfort to the suffering souls. It is little wonder that the revolutionaries can draw besieged hearts together for the sacred cause of justice by using the name of Maitreya here. They are all waiting for the advent of the Maitreya. Commenting on above passage, Wu said:

This is the imagined Buddhist paradise, and it is also the ideal world for which the peasants are longing...The followers of the Pai-lien cult had the political ambition, yet they were lacking the ultimate goal which could be attractive to the peasants. The prophecy of the descent of Maitreya Buddha had been spread nearly one thousand years[in China] and was well known by the peasants. [For them] the meaning of Maitreya is equivalent to the Savior. The followers of the Pai-lien cult use this legend...propagating that Maitreya already descended as sovereign of the mundane world. His mission was to set all the suffering peasants now free. The peasants who had been besieged by the tyranny and heavy levy of an alien race [the Mongol], on hearing the advent of the Savior who would make not only their “cultivated

crops have seven harvests” but also that their “crops fructify spontaneously without being plowed”, of course believed [it] wholeheartedly and altogether joined to pursue this ideal paradise.³⁰(Wu, op. cit.: 113)

VII. Conclusion

Buddhism in China has a long history and there are many fascinating subjects that could be brought up concerning the cultural interaction between it and Chinese tradition. Confucianism has contributed to the transformation of the otherworldly message of the descent of Maitreya into a worldly revolutionary ideology. The early “desacralization” (to borrow an expression from Eliade) of political order in Brahmanism and Buddhism is in contrast to the supremacy of “political culture “ in China. Mencius helped to make this political culture into a moral persuasion which sanctified revolution.³¹ Ming is an example to show how this transformation takes place.

³⁰ 「這是佛教徒所幻想的極樂國，也是農民所渴望的理想世界、、、白蓮教徒有政治的目的，可是缺少一個為農民們所注意的最後目標。彌勒佛的下生預言已經流傳了快一千年了，為農民所熟知，其意義即等於救世主。白蓮教徒就利用這傳說，強合為一，宣傳彌勒已降生為塵世主宰，其使命即為解除現在農民身受一切之疾苦。農民久困於異族統治下之苛政重斂，一聽有能使他們”所營農稼，一種七穫”，並且是”自然成實，不須耘耨”的救世主來，自然死心塌地的信仰，一致加入去追求這理想的樂園了。」

³¹ Nattier (1988:31-1), cited Seidel (1969) arguing that Taoist messianism has made possible for Buddhist myth to be assimilated into a here and now version of Maitreya cult in China. The crux is: Does popular Taoism offer any “revolution” ideology anticipating the imminence of liberation? Seidel contended that the concept of

Often the categories which we might take for granted in one cultural tradition, has to be used very cautiously within the context of another tradition. In China, the realm of religion, as defined in the Christian sense, might not be the ultimate concern; politics is. If political order is considered to be all-important, how should we define this type of “political culture” from an indigenous perspective? If “religion” is not taken as the encompassing value, how do we make sense of “the realm of religion” and how does it relate to political culture in China? These are momentous issues related to the transformation of Maitreya in China that one has to ponder upon.

Leaving political order aside, Chinese tradition has been deeply enriched by Indian culture through Buddhism (Wright, 1990). In the end, Buddhism became one of the three teachings in China. To be sure, the Chinese have transformed Buddhism to a certain extent, but it is equally important to bear in mind that Buddhism has also transformed Chinese culture into a new sense of identity which is difficult to image without the contribution of Buddhism.³² Above all, Chinese rendering of Tripiṭaka

Mandate of Heaven might be the common thought of “pre-Confucian politico-religious tradition.” (ibid: 246). However, it is only in Confucianism that one finds the revolution ideology connected with Mandate of Heaven.

³² Kitagawa’s comments: “Admittedly, Buddhism exerted tremendous influence on various aspects of art and culture in China, and it made strong imprints on the philosophical dimensions of Confucianism and Taoism as well... Yet, the ethos of the socio-political fabric of China was consistently dominated by what might be loosely termed the Confucian tradition and not by Buddhism.” (Kitagawa, 1980:97-98)

affords adequate testimony of the Chinese quest for a new religious understanding and experience.

Abbreviations

AB = *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*

DN = *Dīgha Nikāya*.

RV = *Ṛg Veda*

ŚB = *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*

SBE = *Sacred Books of the East*.

Sn = *Suttanipāta*

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