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FILIAL PIETY AND BUDDHISM:  
THE INDIAN ANTECEDENTS TO A "CHINESE" PROBLEM

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One of the classic topics in the study of religious change and interaction in Asia is that of Buddhism's transformation after its introduction into China. The story is a familiar one: as Buddhism - an essentially Indian faith - sought to establish itself in its new Chinese context, it came face to face with Confucian and Taoist ethics and culture and so was forced to adapt in a variety of significant ways.

The question, of course, is much more complex than this. Religious traditions, in a given area, are almost constantly in a process of interaction with each other. They are hardly static entities that are modified only when they come into contact with a radically different ideology. Thus the way in which a religious tradition does change, as it moves into and adapts to a brand new situation, is itself not always new. In fact, "change," in such cases often moves along lines or patterns of change that have already been opened up by earlier contacts with other traditions.

If this is true, the transformations of Buddhism as it moves into China should be examined not only in terms of its contact with the "new" traditions of Confucianism and Taoism, but also in light of the "avenues of change" already opened up for Buddhism by its contacts with religious traditions in India and Central Asia.

In an effort to do this, I propose to focus in this paper on one particular aspect of Buddhism's encounter with its "new" Chinese context: its reaction to and espousal of the Confucian virtue of filial piety.

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conduct on the part of the monks who abandoned their families, shaved their heads and wandered forth in the homeless life. What lifestyle vis-à-vis one's parents did the Buddha advocate for monks?

The answer to this question inevitably involves us in a consideration of the *Sāma* (Skt. *Syāma*, Ch. Shan-tzu) *jātaka*, an important "non-canonical" text which was used to promote the Buddhist doctrine of filiality in both India and China. Like most *jātakas* it consists of two main parts: (1) an introductory tale which sets the occasion for the telling of part (2) the *jātaka* per se, i.e., the tale of the Buddha's past life. Both parts of the *Sāma jātaka* are of particular interest to our theme, and we shall consider them in turn. The introductory tale may be summarized as follows:

The son of a wealthy couple from the town of *Sāvātthi* happens to go to the Jetavana monastery where he hears the Buddha preaching a sermon and decides he wants to become ordained a monk. The Buddha, quite properly, tells him that in order to do so he must first obtain his parents permission.<sup>9</sup> Since he is their only child, they are reluctant to grant him leave, but he is determined, and when he fasts for seven days to show his commitment, they finally agree to let him go. He is duly ordained, and promptly decides to become a forest monk devoted to meditation; he goes off to a small hermitage, leads an ascetic life and strives for arhatship.

In the meantime, his parents get older and are robbed of all their wealth by their unfaithful serfs who realize that they can safely rebel as there is now no son in the family to demand payments from them. Destitute, the parents become beggars.

The son learns of their plight, and resolves to quit his ascetic striving in the forest and to return to the lay householder's life in order to support them. On the way home, however, he comes to a fork in the road; one path leads to his parents in *Sāvātthi*, the other to the Buddha at the Jetavana. "Shall I see my parents first or the Buddha"? he wonders, and decides that since this may well

be his last opportunity to see the Buddha as a monk, he will go to him first, take his leave, and then return home to take care of his parents.<sup>10</sup>

Up to this point, then, the story appears to assume that the two lifestyles - that of eremetical striving as a monk and that of supporting one's parents as a filial son - are mutually exclusive and fundamentally opposed to one another. The fork in the road symbolizes the young man's dilemma: he cannot go both ways at once.

The Buddha, however, shows him that he can. In his omniscience, he is aware of the young man's quandary, and as soon as the latter arrives at the Jetavana, he preaches to him the "Mother-maintainer sutta" (*Mātuposaka sutta*).

This convinces the young man that he does not have to choose between his life as a monk and his life as a good son. "I will now support my parents," he resolves, "while still remaining an ascetic without becoming a householder."<sup>11</sup> He accomplishes this simply by sharing with them the food he receives on his alms rounds, going out begging, as a monk, first for them and then separately for himself. Likewise he shares with his parents other gifts (such as robes) which he receives from lay people.<sup>12</sup>

Soon, however, certain members of the Sangha find out what he is doing and accuse him of violating the monastic rules. "Sir," they admonish him, "the Master does not allow us to waste the offerings of the faithful; you do an unlawful act in giving to laymen the offerings of the faithful."<sup>13</sup> They report his actions to the Buddha. He, however, praises the monk instead of reprimanding him, and encouraging him to continue in this apparently legitimate practice, he proceeds to tell him of the time when, long ago, he himself supported his parents, "while going the round for alms."<sup>14</sup>

There follows, then, the second part of the *jātaka*, the story of the Buddha's previous life as the ascetic *Sāma*. It may briefly be summarized as follows: *Sāma* (the bodhisattva) lives in a forest hermitage with his blind parents and is very devoted to caring for them. Every morning he sweeps their room, fetches water, prepares food

Fifty years ago, Jean Przyluski pointed out that there was no solid basis for thinking that the "concessions" Buddhism made to the practices of filial piety and ancestor worship were exclusively an East-Asian development. Indeed, he insisted, without, however, presenting much evidence in support of his view, that the need to reconcile the tradition of Buddhist monasticism with a more general family-oriented ethic "was felt in India as well as in China."<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, Buddhism nowhere existed in a religious or ethical vacuum. In its homeland as much as in China it developed in contact with and in the context of other faiths. One of these faiths in India was, of course, the Hindu Brahmanical tradition in which, according to some, service to and reverence for one's parents (living and dead) were as crucial a duty as they were in China.<sup>2</sup>

This does not mean that filial piety and ancestor worship in the two countries were identical. Nonetheless, it is a fact that for the Indian householder, "the parents were the highest idol," and the father was "one hundred times more venerable than the teacher."<sup>3</sup> Duties of the Hindu son included devotional offerings to the ancestors as well as having a son in turn to perpetuate these practices. Indeed the Indian family was defined as the group which made offerings together to common departed *manes*.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, Indian Buddhists, with their nominal rejection of the householder's life and advocacy of celibacy, understandably were open to criticism from certain Brahmanical circles on this very issue of unfiliality and neglect of the family and ancestors. The situation, of course, was by no means identical to that which developed in China, and one should not expect to find in Indian sources counterparts to the apologetics of Mou-tzu, or the pointed accusations made against the Buddhists by Fu-I, Han Yü and Chu-hsi, or the articulate defences of the faith by Tsung-mi, Ming-chi Ch'i-sung.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, as we shall see, Indian Buddhists did have to face - if not overt charges of unfiliality and neglect of the ancestors - at least suspicions of such on the part of some of their

Brahmanical contemporaries. The Chinese Buddhist need to deal with this issue therefore was nothing new; the Indian Buddhists had already had to address it, and, most interestingly, they did so in ways that often foreshadowed those of their later Chinese brethren. As we shall see, at least some of the Chinese Buddhist reactions to Confucian accusations of unfiliality had their models in Indian Buddhist responses to Brahmanical charges of the same thing.

I propose to discuss this issue by examining a number of popular Buddhist stories taken from canonical and non-canonical Pali and Sanskrit sources and then tracing their fortunes in the Chinese setting. Because of considerations of space, I will limit myself here to stories focussing on three distinct themes: (1) the Buddha's praise of monks who materially support and honour their parents in this life; (2) the claim that the greatest filial act is to convert one's parents to Buddhism; and (3) the continuation of support for one's parents after their death.

#### 1. Supporting One's Parents in This Life

From the beginning, Buddhism clearly maintained the principle of filial piety insofar as the laity was concerned. In the well-known *Sigālovāda-sutta*, which is often called "the Vinaya of the layman," the Buddha himself preaches that a good son should serve and respect his parents in five ways: he should support them, perform duties incumbent on them, keep up the lineage by having children, maintain the family traditions, and in every way make himself worthy of his heritage.<sup>6</sup>

This sutra, which was clearly written as a response or alternative proposal to specific Brahmanical practices,<sup>7</sup> was translated no less than four times into Chinese between the second and the fifth century, and commonly used by Buddhists in China to show their religion's support for Confucian filiality.<sup>8</sup> In a sense, however, it begs the issue: the *Sigālovāda* ethic is presented as one for *lay* householders while the Indian and Chinese detractors of Buddhism were concerned more with the lack of filial

for them, gives them the best dishes, and eats only after they have finished. So they live until, one day, a king, passing through the forest on a hunting expedition mistakes Sāma for a deer and mortally wounds him with a poisoned arrow. Filial to the end, Sāma, as he lies dying, is chiefly concerned not for himself but for the welfare of his parents. He asks the king (who is aggrieved at having shot an ascetic) to go to the hermitage and take care of them. The king agrees to do so, finds the parents, gently tells them of their son's death and assures them he will care for them.<sup>15</sup>

The ending, however, is to be even happier than this. The parents are led to their son's body, where the mother performs an Act of Truth, declaring, among other things, that "if it be true that in old days he [Sāma] nursed his parents night and day, then may this poison in his veins be overpowered and ebb away." The magical power of truth proves effective and Sāma revives. His parents, moreover, recover their sight, and the *jātaka* ends with Sāma preaching a sermon to the king on the advantages of filiality.<sup>16</sup>

The *Sāma jāataka* is the prototype for several other *jātakas* in which the filiality of the bodhisattva is praised.<sup>17</sup> In all of these, although the story of the Buddha's former life may vary, the introductory tale which sets the occasion for the story is the same: a monk wants to take care of his parents while remaining a monk. His desire to do so is criticized by other monks but praised by the Buddha who then recounts a *jātaka* to further legitimate the practice.

Clearly the issue is one which was controversial within the ancient Sangha. It is interesting, however, that the story, although it appears in the *Jātaka*, bears all the earmarks of the formulation of a *Vinaya* rule. It would seem, then, that despite the fact that a monk had nominally cut all ties with his family and despite the quite strict Buddhist rules about mendicancy and what could be done with the alms received, the community did allow for monks to share their alms food with their parents, and praised the filial sentiments which led them to do this.

My suggestion is that this exception, which our story presents as being granted by the Buddha himself, represents a Buddhist compromise with the Brahmanical ethic of filiality operating at the popular level towards which the *jātakas* were geared.<sup>18</sup>

Of crucial import in making this argument is the short sutta called the "Mother-maintainer sutta"<sup>19</sup> which, as we have seen, is referred to in the introductory text of the *Jātaka*. In this sutta, a brahmin mendicant, *who is in the habit of supporting his parents with the alms which he gathers*, becomes interested in the Buddha and his teachings. He is worried, however, that he may have to give up this feature of his lifestyle if he converts to Buddhism, and so asks the Buddha: "Of a Truth, Master Gotama, I seek my alms after the normal manner [i.e., according to Dharma] and so seeking them I maintain my parents. Am I not, sir, in so doing, doing what ought to be done?"<sup>20</sup>

The Buddha's answer, in light of what we have seen in the *jātaka*, comes as no surprise. He praises the brahmin's action, fully agrees that he is doing the right thing, and further adds that in supporting his parents he is thereby engendering much merit. The brahmin is impressed; he had come to the Buddha expecting a dispute over this issue, instead he finds only agreement. The way is now open for him and he does not hesitate: he converts to Buddhism.<sup>21</sup>

The "Mother-maintainer sutta," and, to an even greater extent, the *Sāma jāataka* were popular texts in ancient Indian Buddhism. The story of Sāma, for example, was among those depicted on the great stupa at Sanchi;<sup>22</sup> images of him were fashioned for certain great festivals in ancient Sri Lanka;<sup>23</sup> and a stupa in Gandhara which marked the reputed spot of his death became a Buddhist site of pilgrimage.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, later Sanskrit texts, discussing the karmic effectiveness of filial deeds, refer repeatedly to the story of Sāma for their paradigmatic example of such action.<sup>25</sup>

It comes as no surprise, then, that in China, the *Sāma jāataka* should also have been used as one of the prime texts for convincing persons that the Buddha himself supported

filial action.<sup>26</sup> The introductory tale seems to have been less used to this effect than the jātaka itself, (perhaps because of the Chinese Sangha's deemphasis on the practice of begging) but the whole tale of Sāma was very well-known and, in fact, was given "canonical" status in China as the "*Sutra of the bodhisattva Shan-tzu [Sāma]*" (*P'u-sa Shan-tzu ching*).<sup>27</sup>

What is fascinating is that this tale, which we have seen responding in India to a Brahmanical setting, was so readily interpreted, in China, in the context of Confucian standards. In fact, as Kenneth Ch'en has pointed out, the tale of Sāma's filiality so well illustrated the classical Confucian virtue of *hsiao* that "by the Sung dynasty it was accepted in the popular literature as one of the twenty-four standard models of piety."<sup>28</sup> Ironically, however, Sāma (Shan-tzu) himself ceased to be a Buddhist in the process; he was metamorphosized into the Confucian Yen-tzu, assigned to the Chou Dynasty, and only as such was he invoked as one of the twenty-four paradigms of *hsiao*.<sup>29</sup> Bluntly, put, then, the story of Sāma, told to convince the Chinese of Buddhism's support for filiality, instead ended up convincing them that Sāma was no Buddhist but a Confucian.

## 2. Converting one's Parents to Buddhism

In this irony which, to be sure, I have much oversimplified, we have an illustration of one of the complex difficulties which Buddhist missionaries in China faced. Proof-texting to show their religion's "canonical" support for the principles of filial piety was clearly not sufficient. A distinctly Buddhist doctrine of filiality needed to be propounded. As Professor Ch'en put it:

The Buddhists were quick to realize that mere refutation of the Confucian charges was negative in spirit and not sufficient to gain a favourable hearing for Buddhism among the Chinese. In a society where filial piety was emphasized, the Buddhists recognized clearly that their religion must develop and stress its own ideas concerning piety if it were to flourish in China.<sup>30</sup>

One of the strongest positive arguments developed by Chinese Buddhists, according to Ch'en, was the claim that by joining the monastic order, an individual would then better be able to convert his parents to Buddhism, and they would thereby be saved from "repeated misery in the endless cycle of transmigration."<sup>31</sup>

For example, the Hua-yen patriarch Tsung-mi (780-841) argued that the Buddha himself had left his family and sought enlightenment so as to be able to repay the kindness of his parents by preaching to them the true doctrine.<sup>32</sup> It was a view which obviously could be reinforced by the well known legends of the Buddha returning home to Kapilavastu to convert his father<sup>33</sup> and of his ascending to the Trayāstrimsat Heaven to preach to his mother. The same point may be found even more explicitly stated (by the Buddha himself) in the much earlier *Fo-shuo hsiao-tzu-ching* (the Sutra on a filial son). In this text, the Buddha praises the virtues of both father and mother, the care they take for the safety of their child, and the worry they have over nurturing and raising him. The monks listening to the Buddha then opine that, in order to repay this kindness of his parents, a good son should "satisfy their tastes with delicious foods, please their ears with heavenly music, adorn them with the choicest raiments, and carry them on his shoulders over the four seas to the end of his life."<sup>34</sup> The Buddha, however, states that none of these actions, although perhaps commendable, is nearly as filial as the act of converting one's parents to the faith and causing them to take refuge in the Buddha.<sup>35</sup>

Some have claimed that the contents of the *Fo-shuo-hsiao-tzu-ching* are such that "one is inclined to think it was composed by a Chinese and not a translation of a foreign text."<sup>36</sup> It is true that the name of the translator of the text has been lost and that no extant Sanskrit or Central Asian original has been found. Nonetheless its message and some of the specific imagery it uses have clear roots in Indian sources. Let us consider for example a story in the Sanskrit text of the *Pūrṇavādāna* which is particularly relevant in this regard because it concerns

one of the subsequently great heroes of Chinese Buddhist filiality, Mahā-Maudgalyāyana (Mu-lien). The relevant portion of the tale can be translated as follows:

The Venerable Mahā Maudgalyāyana reflected: "The Blessed One once said, 'Monks, truly, a mother and a father do what is difficult for their son: giving him milk and showing him the many things of this world, they feed, nourish and rear him. If a man were to carry his mother on one shoulder and his father on the other for a full hundred years, or if he were to establish them in supremacy and lordship over this great earth, and give them all of its various riches, he would not be doing as much for them... as the son who introduces, instructs, establishes and confirms his doubting parents in the fullness of faith, his sinning parents in the fullness of morality, his greedy parents in the fullness of renunciation or his weak-minded parents in the fullness of wisdom.' Now I [thought Maudgalyāyana] have failed to attend to my mother; I must consider where she has been reborn."

Fixing his attention, he saw that she had been reborn in the Marīcika World System (lokadhātu). He then pondered the matter of who it was who was going to convert her and he saw that it was to be the Blessed One....[Maudgalyāyana, therefore, goes to the Buddha] and says: "Bhadnata, the Blessed One once said, 'Truly, a mother and a father do what is difficult for their son....' Now my mother has been reborn in the Marīcika World System and is to be converted by the Blessed One. The Blessed One is able to convert her: let him therefore have compassion on her."

Then the Blessed One said: "Maudgalyāyana, by whose magical power shall we go there?" "By mine, Blessed One." Then the Blessed One and the Venerable Mahā Maudgalyāyana placed their feet on the summit of Mount Meru and set forth, and in seven days they reached the Marīcika World System.

From afar, [Maudgalyāyana's mother] Bhadrakanyā saw her son, and, as soon as she saw him, she rushed up to him exclaiming, "Ah! At long last I see my little boy!" Thereupon the crowd of people who had assembled said: "He is an aged wandering monk, and she is a young girl - how can she be his mother?" But the Venerable Mahā Maudgalyāyana replied, "Sirs, these skandhas of mine were fostered by her; therefore she is my mother."

Then the Blessed One, knowing the disposition, propensity, nature and circumstances of Bhadrakanyā, preached a sermon fully penetrating the meaning of the Four Noble Truths. And when Bhadrakanyā had heard it, she was brought to the realization of the fruit of entering the stream.

I would like to put off until later the question of the relationship between this seemingly rather primitive version of the Maudgalyāyana story and the full development of his legend in China in the *Yü-lan-p'en-ching* (Avalambana

sūtra) and the various *pien-wen* dealing with Mu-lien and his mother.

For the present, it is important to focus on the theme that the best way for a monk to repay the kindness of his parents is to preach (or have someone else preach) the Dharma to them. In our *avadāna* text, there is in fact no question of Maudgalyāyana helping his mother in any other way. She is not presented as physically in need of support and Maudgalyāyana is not about to try to feed her or help her in any material way. The Buddha, he recalls, thought this not nearly so filial as introducing her to and confirming her in the faith.<sup>39</sup>

What is remarkable here, of course, is that this filial obligation extends over the boundaries of rebirth. The story is quite explicit about this: the inhabitants of Marīcika are surprised that Maudgalyāyana, an old man, should call Bhadrakanyā, a young girl, his mother. Maudgalyāyana, as we have seen, sets them straight, insisting that the relationship in one life continues on in the next.

From this it was just one step to the conclusion that all sentient beings in all the realms of rebirth may, at one point in the cycle of *samsāra*, have been one's mother or father and so should be treated accordingly.

This was a view which was picked up by the Chinese Buddhists as well and developed into the notion of *ta-hsiao* (great filial piety), superior to the Confucian virtue precisely in that it embraces all living beings rather than just one's present parents.<sup>40</sup>

Mahayanists, as is well known, were motivated to seek enlightenment precisely out of compassion for all sentient beings, and the recollection of their suffering formed an important first step of the *bodhisattva's* meditative path.<sup>41</sup> In some cases, the identification (and in tantric meditations the visualization) of all sentient beings as one's mother and father seems to have been used to stress the intensity of the compassion one should feel for them. At times this compassion could be expressed by physically aiding suffering sentient beings, but the major thrust of

the bodhisattva ideal, at least in its early forms, was upon leading all sentient beings to *enlightenment*, just as the thrust of the stories we have been considering is on leading one's parents to the same goal.

### 3. Filial Support for the Departed

So far we have seen two elements in the Buddhist apologetic whether in the Indian or Chinese context. On the one hand, there is a focus on material support and service to one's parents (or at least alleviation of their physical suffering) in this life - a practice commended by the Buddha for monks and laymen alike and practiced by him in his countless previous lives. On the other hand, there is an emphasis on converting one's parents to Buddhism by preaching the Dharma to them, either in this life or, if they have passed on, wherever they have been reborn.

It was inevitable, perhaps, that when these two strains came together attention should be given to the problem of how to provide material support or alleviate the suffering of one's parents, not in this life but after their death and rebirth elsewhere.

This is one of the major questions addressed by the fully developed Mu-lien story in which Mu-lien's mother is reborn as a hungry ghost. Mu-lien's primary aim, in this case, is not to convert her to Buddhism but to relieve her intense hunger and thirst. As is well known, in the *Yu-lan-p'en-ching*, he is presented as trying first to do this on his own, but finding he cannot as the food he brings her turns to charcoal as soon as she tries to eat it. In despair he turns to the Buddha who then instructs him to prepare a great feast for the community of monks whose collective merit alone is enough to relieve the suffering of his mother.<sup>42</sup> This, then, is the origin of the Yu-lan-p'en or Avalambana feast commonly prepared by devout Chinese Buddhists for the Sangha to ensure the well-being of their ancestors.<sup>43</sup>

The Avalambana festival (and the whole practice of making food offerings to or for the sake of one's deceased parents) has been seen in the context of ancestor worship

in China, but it must also be seen in that context in India.

Since at least Vedic times, it was customary for Indians to make regular offerings (*śrāddha*) of lumps of rice (*pinda*<sup>44</sup>) to the spirits of their deceased ancestors (*pitrs*). These offerings, ideally to be made by the eldest son, start upon the death of the parent and then are made with declining frequency as grief (and the danger of a malevolent ghost) fade. In post-Vedic Hindu practice, a differentiation is made between the *pitrs* and the *pretas*. The latter are thought of as the ghosts of newly deceased parents who need to be given special attention and food offerings until the performance of the *Sapindi Karana*, a ceremony which takes place about one year after death and ensures the transition of the suffering *preta* to the happier state of *pitṛ*.<sup>45</sup>

As several scholars have pointed out, the word *preta*, although it could theoretically refer to any departed ghost, actually meant, in the context of religious practice, the spirits of one's own departed ancestors.<sup>46</sup> This was true in the Buddhist context as well.<sup>47</sup> There are, in the Pali Canon and commentaries, several examples of offerings made to hungry ghosts in this sense of the word,<sup>48</sup> and both G. P. Malalasekera and Richard Gombrich have pointed out that the whole Buddhist practice of feeding the *pretas* is an adaptation of the age-old Hindu filial ritual of making *śrāddha* offering to one's dead ancestors so that they may rest peacefully.<sup>49</sup>

That the Buddhist practice of making offerings to the *pretas* was also perhaps a *concession* to this Hindu custom of ancestor worship is indicated in a noteworthy sutta preserved in the *Anguttara Nikāya*: A brahmin named Jānussoṇi comes to see the Buddha and confronts him on this very issue of ancestor worship:

Master Gotama, let me tell you we brahmins so-called give charitable gifts: we make the (*shrāddhā*) offerings to the dead, saying: "May this gift to our kinsmen and blood-relations who are dead and gone be of profit. May our kinsmen and blood-relations who are dead and gone enjoy this offering." Pray, Master Gotama, does that gift profit

our kinsmen and blood-relations dead and gone? Do they really enjoy that gift?<sup>50</sup>

The Buddha's answer is significant. He says that the gifts will indeed be enjoyed by the departed ancestors, but only if they have been reborn among the *pretas*. If they have been reborn in hell, or as animals, or humans, or deities, the offerings will not profit them at all. The Brahmin presses him on this point: "But Master Gotama, suppose that the blood relation who is dead and gone has not reached that place, who then enjoys that offering?" "In that case, brahmin, other blood-relations dead and gone, who have reached that place, enjoy it." "But suppose, Master Gotama, that both that blood-relation and the others who are dead and gone have not reached that place, who then enjoys that offering?" "That, brahmin, is impossible, it cannot come to pass that that place should be empty for so long a time of blood-relations dead and gone."<sup>51</sup>

This formulation should not necessarily be taken as the definitive one. What we can see in it, however, is a struggle by Buddhists to find some sort of compromise between their rather rigid doctrine of karma and rebirth, on the one hand, and the ancient and popular practice of making offerings to the dead, on the other. The Buddha admits to the efficacy of these offerings to the ancestors but only if they have become *pretas* and so, in this way, are both traditional recipients of *śrāddha* and have a place in the scheme of rebirth.

It comes as no surprise then, that Mu-lien's mother should be a hungry ghost;<sup>52</sup> the *preta* realm was, already in India, the place in the Buddhist cosmological scheme where some room had been made for the spirits of one's dead parents and for the traditional practices of ancestor worship.<sup>53</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

By focussing on the question of filial piety, I have tried, in this paper, to examine the transformation of Buddhism in the context of both its Indian and Chinese settings. In so doing, I have looked at several relevant popular stories

and found similar examples of interaction taking place in both of these countries.

In our first example - the *Sāma jāataka* and the related "Mother-Maintainer Sutta" - we saw the emphasis placed on the *physical* support which a son owes his parents. This was advocated not only for laymen but for monks as well. It is true that, in the case of monks, the parents seem to have been in exceptional need of such support for it to become an issue. However, the overall thrust of the stories in both the Indian and Chinese contexts was that monastic and filial lives are not necessarily incompatible.<sup>54</sup>

In our second example, we saw the emphasis put on the *spiritual* or dharmalogical support which a son owes to his parents. Filiality comes to center on the conversion of one's parents to Buddhism, and leading them to the True Dharma. There is correspondingly a certain maligning of the final values of mere physical support. This is evident in the *Fo-shuo-hsiao-tzu-ching*, in China, and in India in the *Purnāvadāna's* story of Mahā Maudgalyāyana which, as we saw, anticipated many of its themes.

In our third example, the emphasis was put on the *ritual* support which a son owes his deceased parents. This is most clearly found in the paradigmatic story of Mu-lien and his *preta*-mother, in which physical and spiritual interests are combined in the solution of making food offerings to the Sangha for the sake of the dead parent (*preta*). The roots of this solution, however, were also traced to Indian Buddhism and the context of Hindu ancestor worship.

The Buddhist doctrine of filial piety thus was formulated, in both India and China, on three different but related levels - the physical, spiritual and ritual planes.<sup>55</sup> This fact, however, should not make us blind to some real differences between the two situations.

In India, for example, Buddhism was far from unique in being a religion which advocated abandoning the household-er's life for a celibate and monastic existence. In so doing, in fact, it was merely following a legitimate, if



"heterodox," pattern shared by many other sramana movements of its time, and which was to some extent incorporated into the mainline Hindu tradition as well. The question of filiality and ancestor worship was thus applicable not only to Buddhism but to a large number of religious movements, and in this company Buddhists perhaps felt less pressure to be explicit about their stance on these issues than they did in China.

Indeed, in China, the Buddhist response to the question of filiality seems to have been more systematically and self-consciously developed. Only there did Buddhist scholars sit down to spell out in detail their position on this matter. Only there, also, did certain patterns of change become fully realized. For instance, the whole Avalambana ritual really took wings in China, becoming by T'ang times "a most flourishing festival."<sup>56</sup> The same can hardly be said to have been the case in India where we have no good evidence for the existence of a fully developed and popular Avalambana festival, although, as we have seen, we can clearly find its antecedents in legend and in Brahmanical ritual.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that the similarities in the patterns of change in Buddhism in the two countries are great enough to warrant seeing genuine parallels between them.

Buddhism has often been called a missionary religion. What we usually forget, however, when this statement is made, is that it was so in India as well as in China. This fact is especially evident when one looks at the popular literature of Buddhism - the stories, avadānas and jātakas - which provided much of the material for the sermons of Buddhist preachers and proselytizers in both countries.

In my view, then, the question of the establishment of Buddhism in China (which for so long centered on the much debated issue of whether Buddhism influenced China more than China influenced Buddhism) must be considered as an extension to the question of the establishment of Buddhism in India.

ONCE-BORN, TWICE-BORN ZEN:  
WILLIAM JAMES AND THE RINZAI AND SŌTŌ SCHOOLS  
OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM

*Conrad Hyers*

In his Gifford Lectures of 1901-2 William James developed a typology of once-born and twice-born forms of religious experience and expression.<sup>1</sup> It was a distinction which he had adopted from Francis Newman's work of a half-century earlier on *The Soul, its Sorrows and Aspirations*. In his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James considerably elaborated upon this distinction through categories such as "healthy-minded" and "sick-minded," the "harmonious self" and the "divided self." But while James expanded the purview of the discussion considerably, and cited a wide variety of cases in doing so, he limited himself to the Western, largely Christian tradition. James' typology may, however, be useful in an Oriental, Buddhist context, especially in elucidating the contrasts between Rinzai and Sōtō Zen.

Western books on Zen have tended to present Zen as a relatively homogeneous experience and teaching, a kind of seamless garment of truth. But this is not the case, either in its Chinese or later Japanese forms. Part of the monolithic image of Zen in the West is the result of the fact that, prior to 1970, most of the literature in English on Zen was derived from the Rinzai school - and most of that written either by the Rinzai scholar, D.T. Suzuki, who dominated the field for half a century with many books and articles, or those who based their work on his. Only in the last decade has a literature developed in English out of Sōtō Zen, with the work of emigrated Sōtō masters such as Shunryu Suzuki and Taizan Maezumi,<sup>2</sup> and various efforts

fertilization, so to speak, from the different strands that made up the Mahayana.

29. L. Lancaster, "An Analysis of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* from the Chinese Translation," Ph.D thesis (Wisconsin: 1968), 36-57. The main tenets of the thesis are summarized in L. Lancaster, "The Oldest Mahayana Sutra: Its Significance for the Study of Buddhist Development," *The Eastern Buddhist*, 8/1 (May 1975) 30-41.

30. See my thesis, paras. 425-53; summarized in my Conze Festschrift article p.8. The crucial passage is ch. 2, vv. 1-17, of which vv. 1-7 (in Śloka) expressly contradict vv. 8-17 (in Tristubh).

31. Bareau, *Les Sectes Bouddhistes*, 49-50; Rawlinson, "Position," 18.

32. This very useful term, which I have not found in any Sanskrit text, was suggested to me by A. Hirakawa, "The Rise of Mahayana and its Relation to the Worship of Stupas." *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 22:57-106. The term occurs on p.85, and Hirakawa gives references to the second-century Chinese translation of the *Ugradattapariprocchāsūtra* (Taisho 12, no.322, p.20a; no.323, p.28a; Taisho 11 no.310, p.477c).

33. I have discussed these three dimensions in a slightly different context in "The Ambiguity of the Buddha-nature Concept in India and China," in L. Lancaster and W. Lai (eds.), *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet* (Berkeley: 1979).

34. E.g., "Homage to you, the infinite" (p.62 of Wayman's translation of the *Śrīmālādevīsīmaṇādasūtra*, cited above n.4).

35. E.g., "Le *Śūramgamasamādhi* est tellement immense (*apramāṇa*) qu'il révèle la toute puissance miraculeuse du Buddha et que d'innombrables êtres en retirent avantage" (E. Lamotte, *La Concentration de La Marche Hermitique* [*Śūramgamasamādhisūtra*] [Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1965], 140).

36. E.g., "This perfection of wisdom, Subhūti, is a great perfection, unlimited (*apramāṇa*), measureless (*aparimāṇa*), infinite (*ananta*)" (E. Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and Its Verse Summary* [Bolinas, CA: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973], 100, =p.45 of Mitra's ed.).

37. E.g., 132.11 of the Kern-Nanjio ed., where the Buddha says that there is only the *ekayāna*, the *buddhayāna*. But the reading *buddhayāna* is supported by only three Nepalese mss; another three have *mahāyāna*, which is also supported by the Gilgit ms. (Ga folio 50b = 61.29 of S. Watanabe, *Saddharmapūṇḍarīka Manuscripts Found in Gilgit* [Tokyo: The Reiyukai, 1975], pt.2). But *buddhayāna* is supported by the Kashgar ms. (folio 132a). (There is a gap in the Gilgit ms. Gb. here; and this second half of ch. 5 is omitted in Kumarajiva, so we have no reading from him either.) Similarly, Kern-Nanjio 82.10 has *mahāyāna* (supported by both Gilgit fragments: Ga 33b [=34.11 of Watanabe] and Gb 27b [=210.25 of Watanabe]), where the Kashgar ms. has *buddhayāna* (90a), which is supported by Kumarajiva (13c17 of the Taisho ed.).

38. Mitra's ed., p.319

39. Mitra's ed., p.23

40. See the clichés collected at the end of Lamotte's translations of the *Śūramgamasamādhisūtra* (cited in n.35 above) and the *Vimalakīrtinirdesa* (Louvain: Bibliothèque du Muséon 51, 1962); the passages noted by Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien* (cited in n.2 above), 650-52; the concepts and

passages noted by Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India* (cited in n.3 above), 196-221.

#### NOTES TO J. STRONG "FILIAL PIETY AND BUDDHISM"

1. Jean Przyłuski, "Les rites d'Avalambana," *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* 1 (1931-32), 221.

2. See e.g., D.R. Shastri, *Origin and Development of the Ritual of Ancestor Worship in India* (Calcutta: 1963), 1.

3. E.W. Hopkins, *Religions of India* (reprinted, New Delhi: 1977), 57; G. Bühler, (trans.), *The Law of Manu, in Sacred Books of the East*, 25 (reprinted, New Delhi: 1975): 57.

4. A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (New York: 1954), 156; J. Gonda, *Les religions de l'Inde* (Paris: 1962), 1:164-68.

5. On all of these, see Kenneth Ch'en *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton: 1973), ch. 2. See also P. Pelliot, "Meou-tseu ou les doutes levés," *T'oung-pao* 19 (1920), 255-433; Arthur Wright, "Fu I and the rejection of Buddhism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951), 31-47; Galen Sargent, "Tchou-hi contre le Bouddhisme," *Mélanges publiés par l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises* (Paris: 1957) 1:1-158.

6. T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part 3, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, 4 (London: 1921): 180.

7. The introduction to the sermon itself makes this clear: the Buddha comes across Sigāla early in the morning as he is engaging in Brahmanical devotions enjoined on him by his father and tells him he is not carrying them out properly. There then follows the sermon preaching the Buddhist way of doing devotions which includes the injunction to worship one's parents in the manner described.

8. Ch'en, *Transformation*, 19.

9. This Vinaya rule was often pointed at to show that the monastic life was not against the parents' wills. See Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden: 1972), 283.

10. E.B. Cowell and W.H.D. Rouse (Trans.), *The Jātaka Stories* (reprinted, London: 1957), 6:39. The *Sāma* (Skt. *Śyāma*) *jātaka* may be found in its Sanskrit version in J.J. Jones, (trans.), *The Mahāvastu* (London: 1952), 2:199ff. For one of the several Chinese versions, see Edouard Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes et apologues extraits du Tripitaka Chinois* (Paris: 1910), 1:156ff.

11. Cowell, 39.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 40-50.

16. Ibid., 51.

17. Ibid., 2:34; 4:257; 5:164ff; 4:58-61. The last of these is the *Mātuṣaka-jātaka*, not to be confused with the *Mātuṣaka-sutta*, nor with the popular story of the bodhisattva swimming with his mother on his back which is often depicted in Sinhalese temples and called the *Mātuṣaka Jātaka*. See

Richard Gombrich, "Feminine Elements in Sinhalese Buddhism," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 16 (1972), 82, n.8.

18. Begging to maintain one's father and mother was an acceptable practice for Brahmanical ascetics and questers. See Bühler, *Manu*, 430.

19. The Mātuposaka sutta of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. See C.A.F. Rhys Davids (trans.), *The Book of Kindred Sayings*, 1. (Pali Text Translation Series, 7; reprinted, London: 1971). 230ff. For a discussion of the sutta, see Léon Feer, "Maitrakanyaka-Mittavindaka - La Piété filiale," *Journal Asiatique* 11 (1878), 388.

20. Rhys Davids, *Kindred Sayings*, 230.

21. Ibid.

22. John Marshall, *A Guide to Sāṅchī* (reprinted, New Delhi: 1955), 81.

23. James Legge (trans.), *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms* (New York: 1965), 106.

24. Visited by Hsüan-tsang. See Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India* (reprinted, Delhi: 1961), 1:217.

25. Sylvain Lévi (ed.), *Mahākarmavibhanga (La grande classification des actes)* (Paris: 1932), 127-28.

26. Ch'en, *Transformation*, 20.

27. Chavannes, 4:113.

28. Ch'en, *Transformation*, 23.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 18.

31. Ibid., 45.

32. Ibid., 29.

33. See e.g., S. Beal (trans.), *The Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King, Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, 19 (reprinted, Delhi: 1975); 218ff.

34. Ch'en, *Transformation*, 44. For a similar sutra, the *Fo-shuo fu-en-chung ching* (Sutra on the importance of parental love), see *ibid.*, 36ff., and Harold J. Isaacson, *The Throat of the Peacock* (New York: 1974), 11-24.

35. Ch'en *Transformation*, 44.

36. Ibid., 43.

37. The text specifies jewels, pearls, cat's eye, conch, crystal, coral, silver, gold, emeralds, sapphires, ruby, and right-turning shells.

38. P.L. Vaidya (ed.), *Divyāvāṇam* (Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, 20; Darbhanga: 1959), 31-32.

39. Quite to the contrary, as the story progresses, it is *she* who offers a meal to both her son and the Buddha, and once she is converted, Mahā Maudgalyāyana, having fulfilled his filial duty, quickly returns to Jambudvīpa.

40. Ch'en, *Transformation*, 45.

41. Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (reprinted, New Delhi: 1975), 54.

42. In this case, it should be noted, relief for the mother comes not in the form of food but in rebirth elsewhere in a better mode of life. However, in other practices in Chinese Buddhism, it was clearly thought possible to make direct offerings of food to the ghosts to alleviate their suffering.

43. See, for references, J.J.L. Duyvendak, "The Buddhistic Festival of the All-Souls in China and Japan," *Acta Orientalia* 5 (1935), 82-107; Arthur Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tunhuang* (London: 1960), 216-35.

44. The same word, it should be noted, is used for the rice offerings given to Buddhist monks.

45. Shastri, *Origin and Development*, 94ff. See also Lawrence A. Babb, *The Divine Hierarchy* (New York: 1975), 92.

46. Shastri, *Origin and Development*, 307; Gonda, *Les Religions*, 164.

47. On the parallelism between Buddhist peta and Hindu pitṛ, see Richard Gombrich, "Merit Transference in Sinhalese Buddhism," *History of Religions* II (1971), 208.

48. See, e.g., the Tirokudda Sutta of the *Khuddakapāṭha*, translated in S.P. Malalasekera, "Transference of Merit in Ceylonese Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West* 17 (1967), 87. See also E.W. Burlingame, (trans.), *Buddhist Sūtra: Sāmaṃyama Sūtra* (Harvard Oriental Series, 28; reprinted, London: 1969), 103-104.

49. Malalasekera, "Transference..." 87; Gombrich, "Merit Transference," 211.

50. F.L. Woodward (trans.) *The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, 5. (Pali Text Society Translation Series, 27; reprinted, London, 1961) 180-81.

51. Ibid., 182.

52. In some versions of the story, she is reborn in the Avīci Hell, but this is often but one of her rebirths, which usually include the preta realm as well. See Ch'en *Transformation*, 28.

53. A more thoroughgoing resolution to this dilemma was to come with the notion of the transfer of merit; the offerings were to be made to the monks for the sake of the departed ancestors *wherever they might be*. It is in this light, perhaps, that we should consider the fully developed stories of Mu-lien in which his mother is portrayed as a hungry ghost, a denizen of hell, or even as a dog.

54. There does seem to be a different emphasis in the two countries, however, concerning the specific methods of support. In India, the stories focus on supporting one's parents by begging, i.e., essentially burning their lives towards the monastic mode. In China, the feature of begging is less stressed.

55. The same conclusion was reached by Glen Dudbridge in his interpretation of the figure of Miao-shan, who continues many of the filial themes we have seen in this paper. See Glen Dudbridge, *The Legend of Miao-shan* (London: 1978), 97.

56. Edwin O. Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary* (New York: 1955), 344.

#### NOTES TO C. HYERS "ONCE-BORN, TWICE-BORN ZEN"

1. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1902), 79.

2. Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (New York: Weatherhill, 1970); Hakayu Taizan Maezumi and Bernard Tetsugen Glassman, *The Hazy Moon of Enlightenment and The Way of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: Center Publications, 1978).