

Koguryo's Buddhist Relations with Silla in the Sixth Century

– Focusing on Koguryo's Role in Transmitting the State Buddhism of Northern Wei to Silla

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《 Abstract 》

고구려는 지리적인 조건으로 말미암아 삼국 가운데 가장 먼저 불교를 수용할 수 있었으며 5세기부터 7세기 사이에 고구려의 불교문화가 백제, 신라와 고대 일본에 전해져 동아시아 전체에 보급되었다. 불교 전래 당시부터 고구려 왕실이 열성적으로 불교를 신봉한 일은 충분히 주목할 가치가 있는데, 왜냐하면 중앙 집권적 국가로 전환을 시도하던 때 마침 불교의 사회적 정치적 가치를 인식하게 되었기 때문이다. 불교와 왕권이 상호 관계를 강화하는 쪽으로 힘을 결집시켰는데, 왕실은 불교에 대해서 후한 지원을 아끼지 않았으며, 불교는 전문성왕, 혹은 우주를 지배하는 자, 미륵 그리고 보살 등 모티브의 상징적 중요성을 통치자에게까지 확대시킴으로써 통치자의 지위를 신성시하는 이념적 기틀을 제공하였던 것이다. 이런 맥락에서 볼 때 불교를 받아들인 후에 세워진 비문들이 왕명 앞에 璽 자를 붙여 왕의 지위를 신성화하는 의미를 나타내고 있다는 점은 우연의 일치가 아니다. 4세기말 국가 차원에서 불교를 수용한 고구려와 6세기초 법흥왕 당시의 신라는 시대적인 차이가 있으나, 국가 발전의 같은 단계에 서있었기 때문에 이 두 나라의 초기 불교 정책에 많은 유사점을 찾을 수 있다

고구려에서 거칠부와 더불어 신라로 넘어 온 해량법사가 진흥왕 12년에 처음 개최된 백고좌강회는 《인왕경》에 입각한 것이며, 이 법회가 신라인의 사상적 통합과 진흥왕의 위업을 향상하는 데 기여하였다고 여겨진다. 그리고 진흥왕이 말년에 승복을 입고 법운이라는 법호를 택했는데 여기서 주목할만한 것은 法雲이 《십지경》에서 말하는 보살의 수행 최종 단계 그것에서 따온 것이며, 《십지경》은 이미 고구려에 익히 알려졌을 것이었다.

신라 화랑이 미륵의 현현으로 여겨졌다 함은 일찍부터 지적되어 온 것입니다만 이 논문에서, 그것은 북중국에서 5-6세기경 유행한 그리고 소미륵으로 간주된 월광동자(月光童子)신앙이 고구려를 통해 남하여 화랑의 사상적인 바탕이 됐다는 것으로 이해하였다. 그 증거로 《수라비구월광동자경》에 나타난 용어와 고대 한반도의 지명을 들 수 있는데 이 경은 고구려의 仙人 사상 및 신라의 화랑을 간접적으로 직결시킨다는 점도 염두 할 필요가 있다.

※Key Words: Koguryo, Silla, Buddhism, Inwang Kyong (Benevolent King Sutra), Maitreya, Wolgwang tongja (Candraprabha Kumara), Hwarang.
신라, 화랑, 미륵, 전륜성왕, 보살, 진흥왕.

influenced Silla, Koguryo Buddhism, an adaptation of Northern Wei Buddhism was instrumental in restructuring the existing clan based political structure into an effective centralized state. Chen Yinke, a noted Chinese historian, correctly pointed out that the tradition and institutions of Northern Wei shaped the entire course of further political developments in medieval China, and beyond in East Asia¹⁾ While the scope of this paper does not include entire East Asia, it will demonstrate the points of commonality between the Buddhist traditions of Northern Wei, Koguryo and Silla. A cross cultural and comparative study of the significance of Buddhism in its specific historical context and its role in restructuring social and political formations across Northeast Asia is necessary for forming an incisive perspective of the specific nuances and contours of Buddhist ideas and institutions in the three early states. Such an attempt is also crucial to a broader comparative understanding of the role of Buddhism in shaping the pattern of early state and in authenticating the political agenda of rulers.²⁾

The papers aims at demonstrate the transmission of Northern Wei Buddhism to Silla through the mediation of Koguryo by emphasizing the common origin of Buddhist rhetoric and rituals in the three states. The paper will particularly elaborate two points the Inwanghoe (Benevolent King Sutra Assembly) and Maitreya cult in the context of the eschatological belief in

1) Chen Yinke, Chen, 《Yinke,Sui Tang zhi du yuan yuan lue ka》 (《A preliminary Survey of the origin and Development of the Institutions of the Sui and Tang Dynasties》), Shanghai: Shanghai shang wu yin shu guan, 1946 (reprint Beijing: Xinhua Shudian), 2001.

2) Charles Holcomb stands out as an exception to the general pattern of scholarship by covering in his recent work 《The Genesis of East Asia: 221 B.C. A.D. 90》,Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, 2000; theentirecultural horizon of East Asi. His book, howeverdo not address the issues raised by this project. In his book, he discusses the ‘language of universalism’ (P. 5) that bound East Asia in the wake of the transmission of Buddhist and notthe new vocabulary of sovereigntyhich this project seeks to explore.

'mofa' or the 'end of the dharma' that embedded itself in the popular consciousness during the period under study.³⁾ But before discussing the theme of the transmission of these two aspects, it is essential to look at two points. First, we need to understand the defining features of Northern Wei Buddhism, the source of Koguryŏ Buddhism and second, it is important to provide a brief sketch of the political relations amongst the three states which served as a background within which close Buddhist interaction unfolded.

I . BUDDHISM IN NORTHERN WEI

: PARADIGMATIC FORMULATIONS OF SANGHA STATE RELATIONS

The material and political milieu in which Buddhism had to establish its identity under the non Han rulers of the north was radically different from that of the south. The non Han rulers of the north emphasized the supranormal powers of Buddhist monks which conformed to their shamanistic religious lineage and answered their immediate needs. According to *Liang gaoseng zhuan*, the monk Shegong could use esoteric spells to summon spirit dragons in his alms bowl. Fu Jian, the ruler of the Former Qin, sought the assistance of his dragons in times of drought⁴⁾. According to the Weishu, when a general of the south surrendered and ceded a vast territory to the Northern Wei, Emperor Xianwen attributed the success to a Buddhist portent that had occurred in the newly annexed area seven years earlier⁵⁾. There are

3) Some of the notable works on this theme are: Yuki Reimon, <Shina bukkyo ni okeru mappo shisho no koki>Toho gakuh, 6, 1936; David Chappell, <Early Forebodings of the Death of Buddhism>, 《Numen, 27》 1, 1979; Yu Min Lee, <The Maitreya Cult and Its Art in Early China>, 《Unpublished PhD dissertation》, Ohio State University, 1983; Tang Zhangru, <Mile Xinyangji qi xuailuo> in his *Weijin nanbeichaoshi lun shiyi* Beijing: Zhonghua shuzu, 1983, p. 190; Anna Seidel, Taoist Messianism, Numen 31, 1984; Yang Bai yi, <Mile xinyang zai Zhongguo de liuchuan (shang)>, Zhongguo fojia 5, 1984, p.15; and Jan Nattier, 《Once Upon a Future Tim: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline》 Asian Humanities Press, 1991, pp.110-111.

4) Gaoseng zhuan, 《Taisho》 10:5, 389b.

5) Weishu, 114, p.3037.

various other stories of the supranormal powers of monks and of miraculous events happening in Buddhist monasteries in contemporary writings such as Luoyang qielanji by Yang Xuanzhi or in Hong mingji. To give only one example of the so called Buddhist art of divination, when the military commandant Qian Renfeng fell sick, and sought the monk Deshao's blessings, the monk wrote "bashi yi", meaning eight ten one (either "eighty one", or "eleventh day of the eighth month"). The commandant took the message to mean that he would live to eighty one, but he had misinterpreted the written numerals. He died on the eleventh day of the eighth month.⁶⁾ Buddhist monks in north China were patronized by various non Han rulers for their much publicized ability to penetrate the future and unravel the tangled knots of present mysteries and uncertainties. It is to be recalled that the functions of diviners and shamanic soothsayers of the times were not entirely different.

Besides, the tradition of kingship held by proto Turkic Xianbei race was based on the concept of unity of three entities, shaman, kings and god(s), and was different from the Confucian political philosophy which emphasized the moral cultivation of the "Son of Heaven" as the basis of his retaining "tianming" (the Mandate of Heaven). In the Turkic religious tradition, words for shamans were interchangeably used for gods, and the prerogative of communicating with heaven was often monopolized by kings or their relatives. In fact, rulers of Turkic Mongolian stock on the steppes followed the concept of "Ordained by Heaven" (tengerees Jiasasan), which implied supranormal birth and sacralised genealogy, evident in the Xianbei oral tradition of Tan Shihuai's birth⁷⁾ or the foundation myth of the Manchu

6) Quoted in John Kieschnick, *《The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese》*, Hagiograph, op. cit. pp. 74-75.

7) K. H. J. Gardiner and R. R. C. de Crespigny, <*Tan Shih Huai and the Hsien pi Tribes of the Second Century A.D.*>Papers on Far *《Eastern History》*15, 1977, pp.16-17. The same motif occurs in the legend of the golden family of the Mongols. According to the legend, Altan Goa gave birth to three sons after her husband had passed away. Her other two sons thought this was very strange. She then explained that every night yellow light would come into her room and touch her. As a result, she became pregnant. This miraculous event is a divine portent given by Heaven that her sons would conquer the world. It needs to be noted that I am referring to the materials from the Turkic era (6th-7th centuries) not as a definitive evidence but as a probable explanation for the earlier Xianbei situation.

race.⁸⁾

The emperors of the Northern Dynasties belonging to the Turkic race turned to Buddhism for legitimation with greater ingenuity and imaginative appeal than their Han counterparts in the South because the political philosophy of Buddhism conformed to their own tradition of "ordained by Heaven". It is to be recalled that the cakravartin, the universal ruler, possesses distinctive physical marks of greatness and a divine wheel which appears mysteriously before him. The statement of a non Han ruler of the Northern Wei that "since Buddha is a barbarian god and we are barbarians, Buddha is naturally our god" has to be contextualized against this political background. Though the "barbarian" rulers were sinicized in the course of time and their political institutions were sustained by Confucian norms, their preference for Buddha over Laozi or Confucius as a rhetorical strategy was, perhaps, motivated by the belief that Buddhist political tradition legitimated their rule more authentically. And it was apparent to them that Buddhist metaphors could be made further resilient to suit their political interests.

A significant adaptation made in this context in the north in the fifth century was to equate rulers with the Buddha and the Maitreya. This adjustment in the institutional premise of Buddhism was meant to domesticate Buddhism and subjugate it completely to the traditions of Xianbei tribes as well as to the needs of their state. The Wei shu records that the influential monk Faguo used to say, "Emperor Taizu is enlightened and likes the Buddha dharma. He is the Tathagata of today. Monks must and should pay him obeisance." Since the monk Faguo equated the ruler of his times with the Buddha, he argued that "he was not paying homage to the Emperor, he was merely worshipping the Buddha".⁹⁾ The same historical text also records that in A.D. 454 the Wei emperor Gaozu issued an imperial edict to cast Buddhist statues in the likeness of the five present and past emperors

8) Matsumura Jun, <*The Founding Legend of the Qing Dynasty Reconsidered*>, *Memoirs of the Research Department of Toyo Bunko 55*, 1997, Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, pp. 41-60.

9) Tsukamoto Zenryu, *Wei Shou on Buddhism and Taoism* translated by Leon Hurvitz in Yunkang, the Buddhist Cave Temples of the 5th Century A.. edited by Mizuno Seiichi and Nagahiro Toshio, Kyoto, 1956, vol. 16, supp. p.53.

commencing from Taizhu Dao Wudi.¹⁰⁾ Later, when the Northern Wei annexed the Liangzhou area which was famous for its flourishing Maitreya cult, and knowledge of Buddhism deepened in the north, the equation of reigning emperor with Tathagata was deemed unrealistic and was revised. From late fifth century onwards, figurative symbolism of the Maitreya statue was assigned to the reigning emperor, perhaps in the belief that both Maitreya and the living emperor hold promise for an ideal future.¹¹⁾

The portrayal of former and present rulers in the image of Past and Future Buddha respectively can be seen not as a complete innovation but as an extension of the original meaning of the political symbolism of Buddhism. The cakravartin, the cosmic sovereign of Buddhist scriptures, is apparently a secular counterpart for the Buddha, who is a spiritual cosmocrat. The image and ideal of cakravartin and Maitreya bear such close correspondence in Mahayanic scriptures that the separating border line between the two is often blurred.¹²⁾

In short the Northern rulers kept the sangha under strict secular control, and they patronized Buddhism primarily because of its perceived efficacy as an ideology of their envisioned centralized state. They invoked the ideals of cakravartin, subordinated Buddhism to the interests of the state and gave authority to the belief in the Maitreya's descent on the earth for assuring the people of a reign of peace and prosperity. They also integrated Buddhism into

10) Tsukamoto Zenryu, *Wei Shou on Buddhism and Taoism*, op. cit., p.71.

11) James O. Caswell, *Written and Unwritten: A New History of the Buddhist Caves of Yunkan*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988, p.90.

12) it is worthy of note in this context that examples of the fusion of royal and Buddhist symbolism can be found in the Theravaada tradition as well. For instance, in Angkor the images of Khmer rulers styled as "devaraaja" or god kings were installed in the garbhagriha of Buddhist temples, and in Burma statues of Buddha were furnished with all the royal paraphernalia, including a crown. For the cult of devaraja see Kamaleswar Bhattacharya, *The Religions of Ancient Combodia*, pp.41-42; and Helen Ibbitson Jessup, *Temple Mountains and the Devaraja Cult*, in *Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Combodia: Millenium of Glor*, edited by Helen Ibbitson Jessup and Thierry Zephir, New York & London: Thames and Hudson, 1997.

their indigenous pattern of belief by employing Buddhist rituals for sacralizing their ancestors. In the fifth century the rulers of Northern Wei made further adaptation in the Buddhist institution and ideology by pairing rulers with the Buddha, with the implication that the monastic community was now made to believe that in paying homage to the emperor, it was merely worshipping the Buddha. It is apparent that such a system of belief, an adaptation of the original Indian doctrine, could be woven without much hindrance into the existing political traditions of shamanic kingship in Korea and Japan. A shaman king presided over both sacred and profane domains of human existence.

II. INTER-STATE RELATIONS AMONGST NORTHERN WEI, KOGURYŎ AND SILLA

The rise of Northern Wei dynasty in China coincided with the relocation of Koguryŏ capital to Pyongyang and its rapid absorption of advanced Chinese ideas and institutions and the attendant process of centralization of power. Koguryŏ established its diplomatic relationship with Northern Wei in 425, when King Changsu, called Lian in Chinese records, dispatched a mission under envoy An Dong, and in return Emperor Taiwu of Northern Wei dispatched his envoy Li Ao to Koguryŏ in 435.¹³⁾ Koguryŏ's sheltering of Feng Hong, the ruler of Northern Yan (409–436, also known as Huang Long or Yellow Dragon) after its conquest by the Northern Wei Dynasty was definitely an irritant in the relationship. But his death paved path for smooth diplomatic relationship between the two neighbors. An uninterrupted flow of 79 tributary missions to Northern Wei exemplifies the soundness of relationship. Northern Wei's respect for Koguryŏ is also evident in the former's observance of formal mourning at the death of King Changsu in 491.

13) So Yong su, <Samhan sidae han zhong waegyo ui chongae wa songgyok>, In Kodae hanzhung kwangye sa ui yongu, edited by hanguk sa yongguhoe, Seoul: Samjiwon, 1987, pp. 120–127; Han Seng, 《Wei ba bai qi' yu nan bei chao shi qi dong ya guo ji guan x i》:Lishi yanjiu, 1995 (3), Jiang Fei Fei and Wang Xiaofu, Zhong han guan xi shi, shehui kexue wen xian chu ban she, 1998, pp. 52–61; 李 Li Ping, 《魏爭前后北魏与高的交》 (《Contact Between Northern Wei Dynasty and Koguryŏ Before and After the War》) Shanghai shi fan da xue xue kan, 2002.

It is also worthy of note that the Tuoba rulers settled 360,000 Koguryo people in their new capital Pingcheng,

As for Koguryo's relationship with Silla, the early 5th century Kwanggaet'o inscription of Koguryo refers to Silla in a quite condescending tone as a "subject" of long standing.¹⁴⁾ King Kwanggaet'o's influence in Silla is also evident in the discovery of a tile with the inscription bearing King Kwanggaet'o's name within Silla territory. Another Koguryo monument, the Chungwon stele which is believed to have been erected in the latter half of the 5th century, mentions that Koguryo took three hundred people from the territory of Silla. It described Koguryo Silla relations as one between an elder and younger brother.¹⁵⁾ This epigraphic evidence together with the Samguk sagi's account of the hostage system that Koguryo imposed on Silla suggest that at least till the early fifth century, Koguryo exercised hegemonic control over Silla.¹⁶⁾ In the mid fifth century Silla's demonstrated its will to move out of the umbrella of Koguryo influence and asserting its independent identity by concluding an alliance with Paekche, but as is testified by the dynastic annals of Northern Wei, Koguryo regarded Silla as its vassal state as late as early sixth century.¹⁷⁾ This long duration of political alliance between Koguryo and Silla provided a strong foundation for Koguryo's cultural influence in Koguryo, leading to the official acceptance of Buddhism by Silla during the reign of King Pophung.

The King as a religious symbol in Koguryo and Silla

The influence of Northern Wei tradition in Koguryo is evident in the way it was adapted to reinforce the sacred character of Koguryo kingship. The

14) For its translation see Takashi Hatada, 《An Interpretation of the King Kwanggaet'o Inscription》, Korean Studie, 3, 1979, p.1-17; Ken Gardiner, 《Unromancing the Stone: Interpretation of Kwanggaet'o Inscription》, Unpublished Seminar Paper. n.d.

15) 《Chungwonbi》 In Hwang Su yong ed .Han'guk kumk yumu. Seoul, Ilchisa, 1981, p.501; Ho Hung sik ed., Han'guk kumsok chonmun Kodae p'yon, p.15.

16) For an insightful analysis of Koguryo Silla relations since the late 4th century see No T'ae don, 《Samguk sagi Sillapongi ui Koguryo kwangye kisa komt'o》, a paper read at the Samguk sagi workshop at Honolulu. February 1996.

17) 《Samguk sagi》 Silla pongi, p.33.

royal declaration to the population "Worship Buddha and seek blessings."¹⁸⁾ reflects the development of Buddhism under the monarchical direction. The construction of nine monasteries in P'yongyang by King Kwanggaet'o is also significant as a symbolic representation of the great king's his resolve to be a universal ruler, victorious in all the nine directions, similar to the determination of Silla reflected in the nine story pagoda of the Hwangnyong or Golden/Imperial Dragon Temple.¹⁹⁾ Furthermore, an archaeological discovery made in 1978 gives a clue that Buddhism in Koguryo was integrated on the base of the native rituals of royalty. According to archaeological finds, King Changsu (413-91) built a Buddhist temple soon after he moved his capital to P'yongyang. It is remarkable that the Buddhist temple was located about one hundred and twenty meters from the King Tongmyong tomb. Inscriptions and frescoes suggest that King Changsu was the principal performer of rites and ceremonies both at the Buddhist monastery and the ancestral tomb of King Tongmyong.²⁰⁾

When Buddhism reached Silla it was further adapted to suit the indigenous tradition of royalty's sway over both secular and religious domains. The act of donning the monastic robes by king(s) of Silla is its ideal illustration. According to the Buddhist records, *Samguk yusa* and *Haedong kosung chon*, kings Pophung and Chinhung took monastic vows in their old age.²¹⁾ This is in the tradition of Buddhist historiography elevating King Asoka to the status of a monk. Yijing, a Chinese pilgrim to India in the eighth century, states that he saw in India a statue of Asoka dressed in monastic robes.²²⁾ Although it is not certain whether King Pophung became a monk, the

18) 《Samguk sagi》 18: 167 Kogugyang 9.

19) 《Samguk sagi》 18: 167 Kwanggaet'o 2.

20) Sonda Koryu, <*Early Buddha Worship*>, in 《*The Cambridge History of Japan*》, Vol.1, edited by Delmer M. Brown, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp362-363.

21) The Confucian historian Kim Pu-sik does not make any mention of King Pophung's becoming a monk. He does, however, say that King Chinhung shaved his head in his old age, wore a monastic robe and took the monastic name of Pob'un (Dharma Cloud). He adds that the queen too followed her husband's example and became a bhikhuni at the Yonghung temple. See 《Samguk sagi》, 4 Silla pong, Chinhungwan, p.37, c.f. *Samguk yus* 3, *Wonjong Hungbo*, p.128.

22) I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago*, translated by J. Takakusu, 《*Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal*》, 1966 (reprint) p.73.

monastic career of King Chinhung seems indisputable. It brings us to a question as to what significance the act of joining the monastic clergy had to the structure of legitimization and authority of the contemporary Silla kingship.

With the introduction of Buddhism to Silla several new elements entered which necessitated either reordering of the indigenous values and their adaptation to new ideas, or alternatively, localization of alien values and concealment of their alien features. And it has also been pointed out that the Silla rulers in the sixth century never showed a strong propensity to push Buddhism far beyond the shamanic perspective. Here the point needs to be reiterated that Buddhist ideas were employed to refine and reinforce the traditional concept of divine kingship that was essential as an ideological underpinning of the envisioned centralized monarchical state. However, the new element of sangha whose power was derived from its self denial of the feast of worldly joys created a parallel paradigm of mediation between mundane and celestial realms.²³⁾ In terms of social role as well the sangha created its own network of indebtedness in the form of blessings and benediction to lay folk for their happiness in present and future lives. According to the Buddhist belief, the lay community, rendering material and physical assistance to the sangha, in turn receives part of the merit that the sangha accumulates through its asceticism, knowledge of scriptures and spells and meditation.²⁴⁾ Because of such a pattern of interaction with which the sangha and the laity are closely bound, monks are at one level renouncers

23) In his fascinating interpretation of the concept of power in the context of Javanese culture, Benedict Anderson makes the same point that the yogic or ascetic practices are basically modalities through which power is acquired, because self denial is intended to “focus or concentrate the primordial essence.” He further argues that “the conception of concentration which underlies the practice of asceticism is also correlated closely with the idea of purity; conversely, the idea of impurity is intimately related to diffusio and disintegratio.” See Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, *The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture*, in Claire Holt ed., *《Culture and Politics in Indonesia》*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. 1972, pp.8-10.

24) See Romila Thapar’s essay, *《Renunciation: A Counter culture? in Ancient Indian Social History》* op. cit., and Stephen Teiser, *《The Ghost Festival in Medieval China》*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988 for their interesting formulations of ideas on the related theme.

and the other level integrated within the orbit of social relations. The binary opposition of feast and fast, society and laity, detachment and engagement is misleading. In other words, the notion of an independent organic structure of sangha is correct only at the superficial level. These realities must have become obvious to the Silla monarchs once they had gained an insight into the practical aspect of Buddhism, and it was now necessary to make an effort to resolve this dichotomy.

We should remember that in the traditional shamanic system either the king himself or a female member of the royal house performed sacrificial ceremonies, and only the king was a mediator between humans and gods. By donning monastic robes, and learning Buddhist scriptures and spells King Chinhung was able to reformulate the traditional concept of divine kingship in the vocabulary of Buddhism. It renewed and reinforced his spiritual authority and thereby authenticated his claim of cakravartinship articulated through aggressive campaigns of peninsular war. King Chinhung's asceticism was also meant to project a new image that he was no longer subject to worldly avarice and ambition, which in turn provided a new perspective to the ongoing war. It seems apparent that the ascetic and spiritual ideals of righteousness and peace were marshalled to authenticate the monarch's political agenda of the state. The reported monkhood of King Chinhung is reminiscent of the *Insei* (retirement system) in late Heian Japan whereby emperors voluntarily renounced the throne to embrace monastic life. The *Insei* of incumbent emperors, however, was not inspired by their disenchantment with power, because young heirs who were installed on the throne ruled under the influence and guidance of the retired emperor. It is also pertinent to note that the early Buddhist canons exhorted the cakravartin ruler to embrace monkhood in old age, and even *Renwangjing* has the same message for the assembly of great kings. Asoka may have been posthumously and retroactively given a monastic robe, but Liang Wudi set a relevant precedent in the Mahayanic tradition by offering himself as a slave of the monastery. Several rulers in the Theravada tradition also, such as Lithai of Ayudhya, are known to have lived in monasteries at some point of time in their royal career. Adoption of monastic life was doubtless significant as a means to enhance the prestige of the throne.

It is also important in this context to understand the significance of the name *Pob'un* (Chinese: *Fayun*; Sanskrit: *Dharmamegha*), meaning "Dharma Cloud" that

King Chinhung adopted as a monk. Buddhist philosophy defines Dharmamegha as the tenth and final stage on the path to Buddhahood attained by the Bodhisattva and its clear exposition is found in the *dasabhumi sutra* (*shidi jing*). It should be noted that this sutra was known in Koguryo in the 6th Century, and it might have been introduced to Silla by Koguryo monks who crossed over to Silla during the reign of King Chinhung.²⁵⁾ The sutra states that the Bodhisattva embarks on the difficult journey through ten stages after he experiences the arising of the *bodhicitta*. First stage is called *pramudita* or “joyous”. At this stage the Bodhisattva is awakened to the thought of his perfection of the virtue of generosity (*dana paramita*). The stage also marks his consciousness of the “voidness of self (*pudgala nairatmya*) and voidness of material beings and objects (*dharma nairatmya*). The other stages lead to perfection in moral precepts, forbearance and energy, realisation of truth, meditation, balanced concentration and correct cognition of the nature of things. Having crossed all these stages and perfected oneself in all these precepts and principles, the Bodhisattva reaches the seventh stage of “Far Advanced”, eighth stage of “The Immovable”, the ninth stage of “Good Thought” and the final stage of Dharma Cloud”. In the Dharma Cloud stage Bodhisattva receives consecration or investiture (abhiseka) from all Buddhas for buddhahood.²⁶⁾ Asanga explains in his *Mahayanasutralankara* that tenth Bodhisattva stage is comparable to a cloud,

25) According to the *《Haedong kosung chen》* (quoted in Peter H. Lee, *《Sourcebook of Korean Civilisation I》*, op. cit., pp. 65-66), Wang Ko dok, the prime minister of Koguryo, dispatched the monk Uiyon to study under Fashang of the Dingguo Monastery of the Northern Qi (pp.550-557). He wanted Uiyon to return with proper answers to his numerous queries, including: “Who wrote the treatises on the Dasabhumi, Prajaramia, Bodhisattvabhumi and Vajrachhedika Prajaramia, and were there any biographies of those who composed them?”

26) Nalinaksha Dutt, *《Mahayana Buddhism》*, Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1973, p.83-85. Originally the Bodhisattva path had only ten bhumis, but in Tantric literature we find two additional bhumis, abhimukticarya and Samantaprabha. See M. T. de Mallmann, Introduction a l'Iconographie du Tantrisme Boudhique. Paris: Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, 1975, pp.120-121. The concept figures in the Buddhist vision of a famous Chinese poet Wang Rong (pp.468-493) who wrote: What my heart hopes for is the other shore Why I am drifting in this world, long having put off my escape Illumined by the Sun of Insight, I will ride the Dharma Cloud Richard B. Mather, Wang Jung's *《Hymns on the Devotee's Entrance into the Pure Life》*, Journal of the American Oriental Society, 116, 1986, p.97.

because like a cloud which benefits the world, all the sentient beings depend on the Bodhisattva of the dharmamegha (stage of perfection). The dharmamegha bodhisattva benefits all sentient beings through manifestation of an abode in the Tusita Heaven.²⁷⁾ The *Madhyamakavatara* of Candrakirti notes that "like the shower falling from the thundercloud, the rain of the Dharma falls spontaneously from the son of the conquerors to ripen the crop of virtue in all living beings".²⁸⁾ Sgam po pa explains that this stage of spiritual progress is so named because a Bodhisattva at this *bhumi* lets the Dharma fall like rain and extinguishes the very subtle glow of conflicting emotion still held by sentient beings. Another reason is that it is covered by meditative and mantras like the sky with clouds."²⁹⁾ *Pobun* as the Buddhist title of King Chinhung is an important evidence of the apotheosis of Silla kingship as a supreme symbol of the Bodhisattva ideal characterized by perfection of wisdom and skilful means (denoting full concentration on the welfare of other). King Chinhung sought to project himself as a blend of the cakravartin and the Bodhisattva, a harmonious whole of the world conquering and world renouncing impulses. Under such a notion conquest of the world does not necessarily involve violation of the Bodhisattva spirit, because without bringing the world under one's righteous rule it is not possible to shower on it the rain of bliss and virtue. Duttagamini of Sri Lanka is an ideal illustration of the point. He sought to sacralise his war against the non Buddhist

27) Asanga, *《Mahayanasutralankara》*, Editor: Swami Dwarika Das Shastri., Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1985, p.65.

28) C.W. Huntington, Jr. with Geshe Namgyal Wangchen, *《The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Madhyamika》*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989, p.188. References to dharmamegha sadh are also found in the Yoga sutra of Patanjali (4/29 4/32). Continuity of the tradition is evident in medieval times, in the devotional poetry of Kabir who sings about "the overcast sky, the shower of 'amrit', of dark, rumbling clouds, the flash of lightning all around and kabir being drenched to the pores". The Indian yogic concept of Anahatnada or soundless (literally un struck) sound also forms one of the associations of the dharmamegh stage.'Also see Santideva, Bodhicaryavata, English translation: The Way of the Bodhisattva: a Translation of the Bodhicaryavata, translated from the Tibetan by the Padmakara Translation Group; foreword by the Dalai Lama. Boston: Shambhala 1997. *《Dhirendra Varma, ed., Hindi Sahitya kos Vol. 1》*, Varanasi: Gyanamandala Ltd., 1985, p.300.

29) Paul Williams, *《Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundation》*, London and New York: Routledge. 1989, p.213.

Tamils by placing a relic of Buddha on his spear and mobilizing Buddhist monks in his war effort. And more interestingly, he refused to count the slaughter of non Buddhists and declared that his army took only one and half lives a monk and a lay believer .³⁰⁾

III. THE USES OF INWANG KYONG (BENEVOLENT KING SUTRA) FOR THE LEGITIMATION OF POWER

The role of ritual in legitimizing political agenda has been recognized both by ancient philosophers and modern scholars. Xunzi wrote: “Man without li (ritual) will not live; an undertaking without li will not be completed; and a nation without li will not be tranquil.”³¹⁾ The anthropologist F.C. Wallace has defined ritual and belief concerned with supernatural beings, powers and forces as two fundamental constituents of religion.³²⁾ It has been argued that as culturally defined responses of the emotional need of a society, ritual actions serve the dual purpose of integrating the participants into the web of collective consciousness or group solidarity and restoring order to a society faced with convulsion and crisis.³³⁾ Rituals are also significant as a mode of communication, for it is through ritual actions that central concerns of an ideology or an

30) A. Greenwald, *《The Relic on the Spear: Historiography and the Saga of Duttagamini》*, in B.L. Smith (ed.) *《Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka》*, Chambersburg, Pa: Anima, 1978 pp.13-35.

31) John Knoblock, *《Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Work》*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, p.153.

32) A. F. C. Wallace, *《Religion: An Anthropological View》*, New York: Random House 1966, p.6.

33) Frederick J. Streng, *《Understanding Religious Life》*, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing company, 1985, pp.276-279; David I Kertzer has discussed how rituals are used for various political purposes, including the creation of political legitimacy and shaping of the people's understanding of the political universe. He has persuasively argued that the even modern politics are enveloped with symbolism and rituals. See David Kertzer, *《Ritual, Politics, and Power》*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

institution are publicized.³⁴⁾

It is remarkable indeed that Silla was the first country in the history of Buddhism to recognise the political significance of *Renwang jing* (Korean: *Inwang kyong*) or the "Benevolent king sutra." When monk Hyeryang escaped from Koguryo in the 11th year of King Chinhung's reign, he was appointed national patriarch and asked to recite the sutra.³⁵⁾ As one of the three great sutras (together with the Lotus sutra and the *Suvarnaprabha sutra*), *Renwang jing* was perceived to be efficacious in protecting the nation against calamities. Rituals based on the authority of these three canons were employed throughout history for the sacralization of power and to give an aura of legitimacy to the political objectives of ambitious rulers.³⁶⁾

It appears that a skeleton Sanskrit text of Renwang Jing was composed in Central Asia or North China by a central Asian or Indian monk who was conversant with the autocratic character of Chinese politics in the northern dynasties, as also with the challenges which Buddhism faced there. The

34) Maurice Bloch, *Ritual, History, and Power: Selected Papers in Anthropology*, London: Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone Press, 1989, p122.

35) Samguk sag, Ch.44, Biography of Koch'ilpu. Charles Orzech has raised a spirited voice of objection to the rendering of *ren* as benevolence. He insists that "Renwan jing" is best translated as Humane King Sutra. See Charles Orzech, <*Puns on the Humane King: Analogy and Application in the East Asian Apocryphon*> *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, 1, 1989, p.20; *Ren* can surely be translated as "humane" which is closer to its original meaning of "human" found in the oracle bone inscriptions. Needham has translated the word as *humanitas*. But if we contextualize the concept within the framework of Chinese politics defined by the primordial significance of the *tianz* (Son of heaven), *ren* is much more than humane. It denotes a particular virtue of kindness, more specifically, the kindness of a ruler to his subjects. Therefore, the English word 'benevolence' captures the meaning and political ambience of the term with greater accuracy than 'humane-ness'.

36) Jong Myung Kim has discussed the significance of Renwan assembly in Koryo and argued that they were not intended as instruments of political legitimation. His painstaking research attests to the fluid nature of ideology and the need for ideologies to redefine their character and reformulate their goals in response to the changing political and social circumstances. See his *Buddhist Rituals in Medieval Korea (918-1392): Their Ideological Background and Historical meaning* unpublished PhD dissertation, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, University of California, Los Angeles. 1994. p11.

translator could well have undertaken the necessary embellishment and improvisation.

If we look at the so called 'Kumarajiva' translation of the text that was recited in Silla, we find that it exerted an immense influence on the political philosophy and religious policies of King Chinhung. The Sutra outlines the theory of Malpop (end of the dharma) and refers to Chandraprabha (yueguang Dongzi :月光童子)a deity that emerged on the confluence of messianic expectation of Daoism and eschatological apprehensions of the Buddhist world and captured popular imagination in North China in 5th century . It is remarkable that all references to Yueguang were eliminated by Amoghavajra who 're translated' the text in the eighth century. The text also provides an effusive reference to the virtues and valour of a cakravartin, (a wheel turning sacred monarch), and enunciates the four kinds of Cakravartin ruler (Gold wheel, Silver wheel, Bronze wheel and Iron wheel), a classification that is contained in the Abhidharma kosa of Vasubandhu. It portrays a grim picture of the monastic community, under increasingly tight control of the monastic officialdom, set in place by the state.

Now when we examine the political career of King Chinhung, we realize that he named his two sons Gold wheel and Bronze wheel, invoking thereby the concept of cakravartin, created an organ to control the sangha and reorganized the Hwarang order whose early inspiration was not the Maitreya of the orthodox Buddhist circle, but Yueguang, the messiah, the saviour and an intermediary of the distant Maitreya in the Tusita Heaven. I will take up this point for elaboration in the subsequent section of this paper.

37) Recognition of the significance of the popular Maitreyan cult centered on Yueguang and manipulation of this symbolism to suit the interest of the state was indeed the measure of originality and political adroitness of the King Chinhung.

It is also important to recall that the first Benevolent King Sutra Assembly was organised in the twelfth year of the reign of King Chinhung (551) in the midst of important political developments. In 548, Silla had allied itself with

37) This part is adapted from my paper previously published as <Maitreya Cult in Early Silla>, 《Seoul Journal of Korean Studies》, seoul: Seoul National University, Vol. 14, 2001, pp.148-173.

Paekche to fight the joint forces of Koguryo and Ye tribes. However, Silla's victory in battle was tempered by the heavy casualties it suffered. In the year that the Inwanghoe was organised (in 551) King Chinhung appears to have taken the reins of power in his own hand and won major victories in battles against both Koguryo and Paekche. The perceived value of the cakravartin ideal was indeed immense for the Silla king, because it provided canonical validation to the wide array of his political concerns, including sacralisation of power and psychological and spiritual comfort to his countrymen during the trying war years. The fifth chapter "Hoguk p'um (Chinese: "huguo pin") of the sutra is of particular relevance to the concerns of monarchs; in it the Buddha is shown to have preached to the assembly of great kings:

"Listen attentively! Now I shall explain the Dharma of Protecting the country. You kings, when your countries are threatened with disorder, ruin, robbery, arson, bandits and the destruction of the state, you ought to receive and keep and recite this prajna paramita. you ought to decorate temples, to install one hundred images of the Buddha, one hundred images of the Bodhisattva, one hundred lion seats and invite one hundred dharma masters to teach this prajna paramita sutra."

The above noted extract is particularly important for our purpose, as it sheds light on the reasons as to why King Chinhung patronized the Inwang ritual. Faced as Silla was with danger from its two hostile neighbors, the profound attractiveness of the *Renwang jing* with its details of magical strength of Buddhism in repelling enemies and providing divine help in overcoming various calamities is not difficult to hypothesize. In these times of political crisis represented by the internal challenges mounted by the conservative aristocracy and the external military pressure from two powerful neighbors arrogation of the attribute of cakravartin could well have reinforced the sacred character of Silla kingship.

The sutra also invoked the power of gods and spirits to ensure domestic stability and victory beyond the borders and claimed to be an invincible citadel against national calamities. This was reminiscent of the political prerogatives of Shamanism. Indeed, the study of the political use of *Renwang*

Jing in Silla demonstrates the process through which Buddhism arrogated to itself some of the functions of Shamanism, and Buddhism and state mutually interpenetrated and forged a commonality of interest.

This reality of clear connection between politics and religion is also evident in King Chinhung's inscriptions. King Chinhung's tour to provinces in the company of monks is reminiscent of Asoka's tour in the company of *Dharma mahamatya* (Commissioners of *Dharma*), and like the Asokan prototype. King Chinhung's tours were meant to establish direct relationship with his subjects. As has been suggested earlier in this study, he asked monks to travel with him, because they were well versed in Chinese ideas and institutions, and useful as state functionaries in the age of transition from tribal society to a bureaucratic state on the Chinese model. Additionally, they lent credence to the dual function of Silla royalty, secular and religious. The fact that names of two monks, Popjang and Hyeja, were written at the top of the list of officials who accompanied King Chinhung to the provinces suggests that monks wielded greater influence and power than civil and military officials. It is also likely that monks composed and inscribed the edicts. King Chinhung's inscription proclaimed:

If the pure wind (of virtue) does not blow, the way of the world distorts truth. If teachings of the sages do not prevail, evil actions contend with each other (for supremacy). Therefore, emperors and kings establish their reign titles and cultivate themselves in order to bring peace to their people. The heaven ordained order of succession rested in my person and as a result, I inherited the throne of the Grand Progenitor. Assuming the mantle of power I was cautious and careful, fearing that my actions might violate the Way of Heaven. Endowed as I was with divine favour, auspicious portents became manifest and, as if numinously inspired by the gods of heaven and earth, human affairs conformed to the divine will. The four quarters entrusted me with the kingdom, and I widely increased my territory and people.

Neighbouring states swore to be trustworthy and envoys of peace were exchanged with them. My government concerned itself solely with the welfare of my old subjects as well as my new ones (in the newly acquired territory). The common people now say: "There is no place where the transformative influence of the Way (of the ruler) has not reached and there is no one who has not incurred royal favours."

In autumn, in the eighth month of *Wuzi* year (568) I made a tour of inspection through my kingdom so as to gauge popular sentiments. During the tour I also rewarded those who displayed trust and loyalty, those who were of outstanding talent, those who sensed the danger to the state and took early measures to avert it, and those who fought valiantly against our enemies and made sacrifices for the sake of the state. These people will be further honoured and rewarded with the conferment of ranks and titles for their meritorious services.³⁸⁾

It appears that King Chinhung used his tour of inspection (*xunshou*) as a technique of Confucian statecraft designed to consolidate central control over outlying areas. In the Chinese context the emperors used tours of inspection to publicise their concern for the well being of their people, impress the masses with the pageantry of power, and give rewards and punishments to the deserving officials and commomers of his state ³⁹⁾. The Confucian classics *Shijing*, *Zuozhuan*, *Zhouli*, *Liji* and *Meng zi* all refer to *xunshou* and emphasise its significance as a means by which “the people’s loyalty and the quality of government might be “continually renewed”.⁴⁰⁾

It is not at all surprising that the above noted inscription does not make any reference to King Chinhung’s devotion to Buddha (which any way had yet to make a deep impact on Korean thought and culture). The inscription demonstrates his political pragmatism, which is reflected in the emphasis on

38) Maunryong Silla Chinhung wangpi, in Ho Hung sik (ed. 《Hanguk kumsok chonmu》, Seoul: Asia Munhwasa, 1984, p.40; Kim Ch’ol jun and Ch’oe Pyong hon (ed.), 《Hanguk munhwasa》, Seoul: Ilchisa, 1986, p. 86, 420; Particularly remarkable is the exhaustive annotation of the inscription in the appendix of No Yong p’il’s book 《Silla Chinhungwang sunsubi yon’g》, Seoul: Ilchogak. 1996, pp. 225–235. Also see Yu Ch’il lo, <Hanguk kodae ui yugyo sasang>, in 《Ch’orhak sasang ui che munje2》, Songnam: Chongsin munhwa yonguwon, 1984, pp.154–155; Also compare the English translation by Peter H. Lee in Peter H. Lee ed., 《Source book of Korean Civilization, Vol. I》, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, p.39.

39) Howard J. Wechsler discusses the political significance of the Imperial Tour of Inspection in chapter 8 of his book 《Offerings of Jade and Sil: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the Tang Dynasty》, op. cit., pp.161–169.

40) Wechsler, op. cit., pp. 162–163.

the Chinese “wangdao” or the Way of the Ruler or the people oriented outlook of kingship. It is remarkable that the sentence “heaven ordained order of succession rested in my person” figures in both the *Lunyu* (Analects) and the *Shujing* (The Book of Documents).⁴¹⁾ The sentence which talks about self cultivation of emperors and kings as a basis of bringing peace to the people is borrowed adverbim from *Lun Yu*. Confucius explains to Zi Lu that a superior man (junzi) cultivates himself so as to comfort others, to bring peace to all the people.”⁴²⁾ Additionally, we discover that King Chinhung’s statement of his fear of violating the way of heaven shows the influence of the *Zhouyi* (Book of Changes). Reference to heavenly portents also indicates an influence of Mencius. Quotations from various Confucian classics that the edicts contain and Confucian precepts and principles that they emphasise are not necessarily evidence of predominantly Confucianist orientation of King Chinhung. It would also be erroneous to think that King Chinhung made deliberate attempts to develop a synthesis, accomodating elements from Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism and used them at different times in response to the different political imperatives. All of these beliefs need to be seen as components of what King Chinhung perceived as an organic belief system represented by the ideology and institutions of the continental civilisation. The allusion to the Confucian notion of loyalty is also found in Tanyang Chuksung Stele.

There is another aspect of the Inwang kyong assemblies in Silla which merits attention. Although the character of Korean Buddhism during its initial phase was influenced by the contemporary political imperatives, it needs to be remembered that the values implicit in the term “nation protecting Buddhism” (hoguk Pulgyo) are incompatible with the significance of religious ideology and rituals as an autonomous force of history. The concept of ‘nation protecting Buddhist tradition’ is generally interpreted to mean that Buddhism in Korea did not have its ideological and institutional authority independent of the will of the ruler. Such a conceptual construct degrades moral authority of the faith that shaped the pattern of thought and provided

41) Luny Yaoyu, Book XX

James Legge, *《The Chinese Classic》*, Oxford University press, Reprint Taiwan: Dunhuang shuju, n.d., p.350. The entry from the Shujing from the Dayu m section.

42) Lun Y Book XIV Xian we.

norms of ethics to the Korean people through centuries. Scholars who have interpreted the history of Korean Buddhism within the framework of a "nation protecting" tradition have also ignored the asymmetry and tension that is invariably generated at the intersection of the two autonomous forces, kingship and religion.

Examination of the character of this text and of its perceived efficacy of legitimization from the angles of both the state and the sangha reveals that the sutra's legitimization of the secular goals of the royalty was not absolute. It invested the ruling monarchs with symbolism of cakravartin and Bodhisattva, but it also gave mixed and ambivalent signals to monarchs who sought to interfere in the affairs of monastic order by establishing Monastic officialdom. Buddha is shown in the eighth chapter of the scripture as chastising King Prasenjit, "In the five impure epochs all the kings, princes and ministers will be arrogant, and they will establish laws to control my disciples—the monks and nuns." Since King Chinhung had established the organ to control sangha on the Northern Wei model, a major significance of this sutra for the monastic community in Silla lay in reminding the monarchy of the boundary within which negotiation of power between sacred and secular domains must occur. Won'gwang is also known as recognizing Buddhism and state as two separate entities. His participation in various state projects was motivated by political exigencies. But it hardly warrants an assumption that his participation in the Inwang assembly at the Hwangnyong temple collapsed the boundaries of Buddhist and state institutions.

IV. MAITREYA CULT

People of Koguryo, like the the lay patrons of Buddhism in the Northern Wei, charged the Maitreya cult with filial and familial values. It is evident from the votive inscriptions of both the states, Northern Wei and Koguryo that contain references to the desire of patrons (dedicating Maitreya statues)

for happiness of their deceased parents and ancestors to the seventh generation.⁴³⁾ It is also remarkable that Maitreya related votary inscriptions both in the Northern dynasties of China and Koguryo often show lack of distinction between Amitabha and Maitreya or Sukhavati and Tusita heaven. For instance, Zhai Man Maitreya stele of Henan, dated 520 bears votary inscription for the deceased parents 'to be born in (Amitabha's) Western Paradise.'⁴⁴⁾ And interestingly, Koguryo image dedicated to Amitabha contains the patrons's vow for his deceased parents to have the good fortune to encounter Maitreya⁴⁵⁾. Maitreya images from the Unified Silla period, evidenced by the stone statue of Kamsan Temple, reflect similar trend.

In North China Maitreya cult became closely associated with millenarianism. Although materials on Koguryo do not provide evidence of Maitreya inspired millenarian movements, it appears that the Silla rulers realized this potential inherent in maitreya cult and took measures to blunt its millenarian edge. This is evident in the state's attempt to integrate Maitreya into the fold of Hwarang and harness the appeal and influence of Maitreya to promote monarchical interests. According to the *Samguk yusa*, Miri (phonetically close to Miruk, the Korean word for Maitreya) was appointed the leader of Hwarang, and he is said to have prayed before the statue of Maitreya for his (Maitreya's) descent on the earth in the form of Hwarang.⁴⁶⁾ The fact that the band of Hwarang under Kim Yusin's leadership was called the *Yonghwa hyangdo*, the Society of the Nagapuspa or Dragon flower tree (an obvious reference to the belief that Maitreya will preach under the Dragon Flower Tree) is also cited as an evidence of the influence of the Maitreya cult on Hwarang.⁴⁷⁾

43) Some of these Koguryo inscriptions are 《Taehwa 13 nyon myong sokpul sang》, pp.11-12; 《Sinyu nyon kumgang samjon pulgwang paemun》, pp.13-14; yongkang ch'il nyon myong kumdonggwang paemun, pp.15-16; in Kim Yong t'ae (compiled), 《amguk Silla side pulgyo kumsok mun kojun》, Seoul: Minjoksa, 1992.

44) Dorothy C. Wong, 《*Chinese Stele*》, Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 2004, pp.97-98.

45) Kim Yong ta'e, 'Hyonjae bulsangmyong ul t'onghae pon Koguryo miruk sinang', In Hwang Su yong kohui kinyom misul sahak nonch'ong, 1988, pp.445-449.

46) 《Samguk yusa 3》 <Miruk sonhwa> pp.153-155; also see Lewis Lancaster, 《*Maitreya in Korea*》; in *Maitreya, the future Buddha*, edited by Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

While the paper does not aim at disputing the association of Maitreya with Hwarang, it intends to provide a more nuanced understanding by suggesting that the early inspiration of Hwarang was not the Maitreya of the orthodox Buddhist circle, but Yueguang, the messiah, the saviour and an intermediary of the distant Maitreya in the Tusita Heaven. Confucian historians of early Korea emphasized Confucian influences on Hwarang, and Buddhist historians homogenized Yueguang tongzi with the orthodox Maitreya cult in an obvious attempt to uphold doctrinal purity of Korea's Buddhist tradition. But eschatological context of King Chinhung's Buddhist policies, including his reorganization of the order of Hwarang is unmistakable. When he came of age and assumed power in his own hands (from his aunt who served as regent) in the twelfth year of his reign (551 CE), the End of the Dharma had just commenced. Since it is universally acknowledged that sacred chronological schemes have bearing on mundane realities and it can also be safely assumed that Silla was not ignorant about waves of militant chiliasm, stimulated by the vision of Yueguang, gripping China, one can easily imagine how imperative it was for King Chinhung to take measures in order to domesticate Buddhism and channel popular Buddhist movements to the advantage of the state. It was not just a coincidence that he initiated a number of important Buddhist projects in the years 551-552. The king ordered construction of Hwangnyong Temple which served for centuries as a palladium of the state and established an epocacy or an organ to control the

47) A number of scholars have written on the relationship between Hwarang and Maitreya. Some of them are: Kim Yong t'ae, 《Miruk sonhwa ko》, 《Sungnyo nangdo ko》, and 《Silla ui Miruk sasang: sinang saryo rul chungsim uro》, in his 《Silla Pulgyo yong》, Seoul: Minjok munhwasa, 1986; Kim Sam yong, 《Hanguk miruk sinang ui yongu》, Seoul: Tonghwa ch'ulp'ansa, 1983; Mok Chong bae, 《Hanguk miruk sinang ui yoksason g》 and Hong Yun sik, <Hanguksa sange issoso ui ku sinang kwa ku sasang jok kujo> 《Hanguk sasang saha 6》 1994; Kim Hye wan, 《Silla sidae miruk sinang ui yongu》, PhD thesis, Songgyungwan University, Seoul, 1991; Kim Chi gyon, <Miruk sasang kwa hwarang sasang> in 《Silla hwarang yong Songnam》, Hanguk chongsin munhwa yonguwon 1992; and Kim Nam yun, <Silla Miruk sinang ui chongaewa songgyok>, 《Yoksa yongu 2》, 1993.

All these works raise important points (and in some cases identical issues) in relation to the connection between Hwarang and Maitreya. eeEric Zurcher, 《*Prince Moonlight: Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Buddhism*》, T'oung Pa, 1982, p.68,

sangha. According to canonical formulations the last days of the dharma are characterized chiefly by fights and factionalism within the sangha, and it was important for the ruler to set in place an officialdom to keep the monastic community under check. It was also the time when political crises in Koguryo had intensified and Silla was inescapably embroiled in the war of peninsular conquest. According to an extract from the *Annals of Paekche* preserved in the *Nihon Shoki*, on 6th February 546 Sye and Ch'u factions in Koguryo fought bitterly, resulting in defeat of Sye and the subsequent slaughter of over two thousand members of its clan. This internal weakness of Koguryo resulted in forging of an alliance between Paekche and Silla and their joint attack on Koguryo in 551. In this battle Paekche was able to recover the estuaries of Han and Imjin rivers which Koguryo had earlier annexed. But Paekche could not hold its prized possession for long. In 553 Silla turned its military machinery against its erstwhile ally, Paekche and wrested from it these priceless valleys. Silla was now directly connected with China through a maritime route which opened up new possibilities of deeper religious and economic linkages with the continent. It is also important to remember that it was during this era of political crisis and eschatological nightmare that Paekche sent a monk to Yamato to spread the teachings of Buddha in the year 552. The conditions under which Hwarang was organised were likely similar 'rapid change, invalidated tradition and mass insecurity'⁴⁸⁾.

Kim Pu sik in his *Samguk sagi* inserted the details of the establishment of *Hwarang* in the last year of the reign of King Chinhung (576). But the *Samguk sagi's* date of the foundation of Hwarang has been justifiably questioned by several scholars. The same source records the valuable military contribution of Sadaham⁴⁹⁾ and his *nangdo* (band of Hwarang followers) in

48) Carmen Blacker cites these reasons as fertile ground for the rise of Chiliaistic movements of the middle age' See Carmen Blacker, *Millenarian Aspects of the New Religions in Japan*; In Donald H. Shively edited, *Tradition and Modernization of Japanese Culture*, Princeton: Princeton University press, 1971, P.564; Quoted in Anna Seidel, *Taoist Messianism, Numen 31* 1984, p.161.

49) It is also remarkable that a member of Silla aristocracy bore a Buddhist name, Sadaham (Chinese: iduoha, transliteration of Sanskrit: sakradagami). It is an evidence of the recognition of Buddhism by the aristocracy which was initially opposed to it only a few

Silla's annexation of Tae Kaya in 562. It says that when Sadaham, an upright youth of charm and distinction, was fifteen or sixteen years old, Silla invaded Kaya and he was appointed deputy to commandant Kwidong. He displayed exemplary valour and succeeded in annihilating the enemy forces.⁵⁰⁾

It is generally believed that the historian Kim Pu sik inserted the details of Hwarang in the year 576, the last year of King Chinhung's reign, because his sources did not unambiguously indicate the date of its foundation. Historians in the Chinese tradition often used this practice in relation to events of doubtful chronological provenance. King Chinhung likely transferred the leadership of the order to adepts or Buddhist monks who were given the title of Kukson, the National Immortal.

There are striking resemblances between members of the Hwarang and Yueguang. members of the Hwarang order were dongzi (tongja) or young boys like Yueguang. And like Yueguang they gave assurance and hope to the people of Silla. A Chinese traveler to Silla, Ling hu ch'eng noted that the order of hwarang was constituted of 'beautiful aristocratic youth, who were elegantly decorated' and 'whom the countrymen respected and served'. Applying Leach's theoretical model one may say that Hwarang played an important function of mediation between the commonpeople and the Maitreya. Unlike Buddhist monks who shaved their heads and wore dull cassocks members of the Hwarang order dressed exquisitely and sang and danced in a state of shamanistic ecstasy. They made the beauty, grace and power of Maitreya visible to the common people.

One may also cite a Dunhuang text named *Shouluo biqiu yueguang tongzi jing* (dated to the sixth century according to E. Zurcher) which appears to reflect in a subtle way religious developments in Silla in relation to Hwarang.

decades earlier. Sakradagamin (lit. "once returner") is the second of the four stages of the royal marga, the super a mundane path leading to enlightenment. On the attainment of this stage on earth, the person will be reborn only once more in heaven and will then return to earth for the attainment of nirvana. If this stage is attained while in heaven, the person will be reborn on earth once again, and will then be reborn in heaven where he will attain enlightenment.

50) 《Samguk sagi》, Ch.44, Sadhaham..

The opening episode of the text takes place at T'aining monastery located in 'junzi guo' (Kor. Kunja kuk), the Land of Gentlemen and shows a meeting between a Buddhist monk named Shouluo biqu (Kor. Sura piku: Monk Sura) and a Great Immortal (Daxian, Kor. Taeson) and his retinue of five hundred Immortal followers (Xianren, Kor. Sonin). They are on their way to the abode of Yueguang in the Minzi Cave in the mountains of P'englai, situated at a distance of seven thousand li from the Land of Gentlemen. The Great Immortal and his group halt briefly at the monastery and discuss with Monk Sura the approaching terminus of the universe and the various alternatives. Accounts of millenarian judgement are carefully crafted so as to temper apocalyptic fears with hope of justice for those who are righteous and pious and those who adhere to Five commandments. Even sinners who have confessed their sins and mended their ways will be able to see Yueguang, the Lord of Peace (pingjun, Kor. P'yonggun) and the Lord of Light (mingjun, Kor. Myonggun). The Great Immortal also tells him that Yueguang will soon make his advent in the world and assume kingship of the Han area (wang zai han jing, Kor. wang chae Hangyong), located south of the Weak water and north of the Long River (Yellow river).

In the following section of the text, King of the Land of Gentleman arrives with his large entourage of ministers and officials and having learnt about the purpose of the Great Immortal's travel, he joins him in his journey to the abode of Yueguang. Monk Sura also follows them. Yueguang is pleasantly surprised when this large group arrives at his seemingly inaccessible abode in the deep mountain. He paints a grim and gruesome picture of imminent deluge and various scourges and epidemic which would spread soon thereafter. Those living in such select places as Yangzhou, Xuant'u (Kor. Hyondo commandery), Gudu, Liucheng might be able to escape the crisis and calamity. He will order a great Dagon king (Dalongwang, Kor. Taeyongeang) to save the virtuous and devout followers of the faith. They will be finally transported to the beautiful 'Flowery City' (Huacheng, Kor. Hwasong)⁵¹. He

51) Zurcher translates it as *《Magic City》*, arguing that adding grass radical to the character hua (meaning change, magic) was probably erroneous. There is a description of Magic City in the seventh section of the Lotus Sutra, and the name (though not the description of the city) is derived from this sources. He also notes that confusion between hua (flower),

asks the king to advise all his subjects, one year old and above, to embrace the Three Jewels and follow the Five Commandments. He also asks the king to proclaim to his all subjects that in future he (Yueguang) will appear in the world and rule the land lying between the Yellow river and the Weak water. He also asks the king to look at an inscription on the stone statue of Kasyapa which would confirm his prophesy. The king, the Great Immortal and their followers leave the cave and return to the Taining mountain. They discover at the site a copy of *Yueguang tongzi jing* (Chandraprabha kumara sutra) and in one of their visions they see a Bodhisattva seated under the Nagapuspa tree (Longhua shu) and a monk (daoren) expounding this scripture.

I need to analyze some of the terms and place names appearing in the text to demonstrate that it bears certain degree of awareness and affinity with the world of Buddhism in Silla. Take, for instance, the term 'Junziguo' (land of Gentlemen). Eric Zurcher thinks that it represents a 'legendary' site, and following the annotation of *Shanhaijing*, he interprets it as 'an island in the eastern ocean, peopled with long lived saintly beings'. This understanding became obsolete during the Han dynasty when the *Lunyu* passages in which Confucius talks about his desire to 'sail across the sea on a raft' (V 7) and 'live among the nine Yi' (IX 14) were interpreted as references to the people on the Korean peninsula as gentlemen followers of the way, humane and gentle. Confucius' desire to dwell amongst the Eastern Barbarians was originally underpinned with the typical Confucian notion of 'laihua' or civilizing influence of Sinicization through which barbarians are converted to the ways of a gentleman.⁵²⁾ Nonetheless, it played a significant

and hua (magic) is common in Dunhuang manuscripts. See Eric Zurcher, Prince Moonlight, Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Buddhism, T'oung Pao, 68, 1982, p.42.

52) Confucius, apparently unhappy at the contemporary rulers who were not warmly receptive to his ideas, expressed in these lines his desire to live in peace amongst barbarians, illuminating dark lives of barbarians with his radiating wisdom. The last statement of the passage can, however, be interpreted to mean 'If gentlemen live there, how can there be any uncouth ways', and this line of interpretation got credence when Ban Gu (32-92 CE) wrote in th Hansh: 'But the Eastern Yi are inherently soft and pliable, different from the (barbarians) of the other three directions. Therefore, when Confucius lamented that the way

role in shaping the subsequent Chinese perception of the nine southern tribes on the Korean peninsula as 'gentlemen' and eminently receptive to the civilizing influence of the Middle Kingdom.⁵³⁾

In the fifth century a famous Confucian scholar and historian Fan ye argued that the Eastern Yi (Koreans) were 'source of life, humane, soft and compliant'.⁵⁴⁾ Yan Shigu (581-645) had a similar understanding of the statement of Confucius. He wrote that Confucius wished to dwell amongst Eastern Barbarian, because civilization of benevolent sages flourished in the land and he could practice the way there.⁵⁵⁾ Accounts on the Eastern barbarians in other Chinese sources, including *Hou Han shu* and *Sanguo zhi* mention their righteous and humane ways. John Jorgensen has correctly pointed out that 'Koreans took from these references the name Kunja hyang (Homeland of the Chun tzu (Junzi) for Silla, and Chinese saw the Koreans to be the most civilized, or civilizable, of their neighbours'.⁵⁶⁾

Geographical location of the territory where Yueguang is to appear in a

was not practiced in China, he set a raft on the sea, wishing to live amongst the nine Yi for this reason'. The IX 14 passage is flawed in another sense. It is apparently an interpolation, following after the earlier V 7 passage, as has been noted by E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, *《The Original Analects》*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, p.105.

53) According to IX 14 passage of the Lunyu, when Confucius expressed his desire to live among the Nine Yi someone reminded him of their uncouth ways and wondered how could he put up with their crudeness. The Master replied, 'If a gentleman dwelt among them, how could their be any uncouth ways'. See Bruce Books and A. Takeo Brooks, op. cit. p. 105; Simon Leys, *《The Analects of Confucius》*, New York: Norton and Company, ; and D. C. Law, Confucius: *《The Analects》*, Hong Kong : The Chinese University Press, 1983, p. 98.

54) John Jorgensen, Korea as a Source for the Regeneration of Chinese Buddhism as Seen through Ch'an/Son Literature, Unpublished Conference Paper, University of California, Los Angeles, September 1995, p.16.

55) Yan's comments are given in the modern annotation of *《Han shi, Vol. 4》*. chapter 28 B, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju. The English translation has been quoted from John Jorgensen's paper (see end note 54, p.16)

56) John Jorgensen, op. cit., p.16.

human form as a king points towards the northeastern part of China, ruled by Koguryŏ in the sixth century. The land mass located north of Yellow river and south of the Weak waters (Ruo shui) figures in many early Chinese sources on Korea. *Hou Hanshu*, *Sanguo zhi* and *Chin shu* mention this river in identifying the location of Puyo: 'To its north flows the Weak river (Bei you ruo shui)'⁵⁷ According to *Tongdian*, 'to the southeast of Liucheng county in Yingzhou province there is a Xiaoyue river, that is, 'Ruo shui'. *Chinshu* mentions this river in indicating Suksin, another tribe of the Xianbei stock on the northeastern border of China. Inoue Hideo is correct in his identification of the Weak waters of these records with the present day river Heilongjiang.⁵⁸

It is important that Yueguang does not appear in 'Junzi guo', which I have taken to indicate Silla, the Abode of Gentlemen (Kunjahyang). Sudden appearance of the Great Immortal along with his band of Five hundred Immortals in a Buddhist temple of this land and their return to the site after visiting the abode of Yueguang provide a clue to understand the influence of Yueguang on Hwarang. Sura (Ch. Shouluo biqu) as choice of a name for the monk of the T'aining monastery is also curious. These two Chinese characters (Su and ra) have been used in the Buddhist sutras to transliterate the Sanskrit word Sura, meaning a god or diety. However, Sura as a name of a Buddhist monk sounds strangely uncommon. It seems more reasonable to assume that the two characters Su and ra were used as a word play on Silla. A look at inscriptions as well as Chinese, Korean and Japanese records reveals that Silla was rendered in Chinese characters in over a dozens diverse ways, and it was not until the seventh century that the two characters which we presently use became standardized.

it is also interesting to note that the sit where Yueguang was to make his advent was not within the Silla border. Yueguang's role as a messiah and saviour was most urgently required in the hostile territory of Koguryŏ (with

57) Peng Jiusong and Kim Chae son, 《Wonmun Tongyi chon》, Seoul: Somun munhwasa, 2000, p.49; p.61; p.75.

58) Inoue Hideo, 《oajia minjokush》, p.43; I found this reference in Kim Song gu, edited, 《Chungguk chongsa choson yolkuk chon, Vol. 2》, Seoul: Tongmunson publishers, p.70.

which Silla fought a bitter war in 551.⁵⁹⁾ Identification of this area as 'Hanjing' or the territory of Han can be interpreted to mean the area of former Han commanderies. Though the four Han commanderies in Korea disappeared from the Chinese administrative map by the fourth century, examples of such anachronistic geographical descriptions in relation to Chinese political past are not uncommon in traditional Chinese historiography. Inclusion of Hyondo (of which Koguryo hyon was originally a part) in the list of select places where people could escape apocalyptic cataclysm is also meaningful. It was, after all, a place where Yueguang's power would prevail and a thorough cathartic process would start.

The text reveals so many aspects of the political and religious history of Silla in the sixth century that it seems difficult to dismiss them as accidental. Robert Buswell Jr observed in the context of Chinese Buddhism that the indigenous apocryphal sutras not just reflected the major developments of the faith but were in fact 'catalyzed and sustained' them.⁶⁰⁾ In another essay he has noted that many apocryphal sutras were composed in the Six Dynasties Period with a view to incorporate such themes as eschatological concerns of the End of the dharma age and close relations between Buddhism and the state into the Buddhist literature and thereby enhance the appeal of Buddhism amongst the masses. The *Shoulou biqiu yueguang jing* constitutes evidence that apocryphal sutras were composed in reponse to the eschatological angst and political needs of lands outside the Chinese border where Buddhism required catalysis and sustenance. By staging the opening episode in Silla, the text appears to authenticate King Chinhung's political imagination and religious faith the king as as a cakravartin and as a bodhisattva in the Buddhist tradition of the Northern dynasties. And by reflecting the contemporary political reality of Silla, the text provides the state with a model to follow. Originality and political adroitness of the King's Buddhist policies lie in recognizing the significance of the popular Maitreyan cult centered on Yueguang and manipulating the model provided by the text to suit the interest of the state. It is apparent that his policies to create the

59) 《samguk sagi》, IV, Chinhung wang.

60) Robert E. Buswell, Jr, edited, 《Introduction In Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha》, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990. p.13.

order of Hwarang youth (Immortals) and appoint Buddhist monks as their leaders (National Immortal) were inspired by the belief that the Yueguang cult needed to be domesticated and its apocalyptic and subversive potential to be not merely divested but also to be transformed into an instrument of domestic cohesion and victory beyond the border. In other words, the conversion of Hwarang to the Maitreya cult illustrates the point that the royalty wished to make the young members of the Silla society amenable to the political requirements of the state and to establish rhythmic ideological bonds between the young aristocrats and royalty.

The interpretation of Hwarang as an organisation tailored to the ideology of the monarchy conforms to most of the relevant data available to us. Kim Pu-sik has preserved a quotation from *Hwarang Segi*: "Subsequently wise ministers and loyal subjects are chosen from them, and able generals and brave soldiers are born in their ranks"⁶¹). Kakhun wrote in his *Haedong kosung chon*:

Traditions have enormous power over people. over people. If a king desires to reform the contemporary conventions (of his land) who can block his success which follows unimpeded like the downward flow of water. King Chinhung was devoted to Buddhism and established the way of the Hwarang. People rejoiced in following them and emulating their ideals... In short the king aimed at leading people in their transformation to goodness and pursuit of righteousness⁶²).

Kakhun further noted that Hwarang was a way to facilitate the king's government.⁶³ *Samguk yusa* points out in its entry on Koyollang, Silch'orang and Podongnang that "Hwarang were obliged to take arms to protect the sovereign and the land."⁶⁴

Furthermore, promotion of the aesthetic and religio-political ideals of China amongst members of the Hwarang advanced the cause of the Silla royalty, because education in the Chinese ideas and aesthetics invariably led to

61) 《Samguk sagi》, Silla pongi, Chinhungwang, p. 40.

62) 《Haedong kosung cho》, Pob'un, c.f Peter H. Lee's translation in his *Lives of Eminent Korean Monks*, p. 67.

63) Ibid.

64) 《Samguk yusa 5》, Yungch'onssa hyesongga, Chinp'yongwangdae, p. 228.

repression of their particularistic tribal affiliation by such universalistic values and virtues as loyalty to the throne and trust amongst friends (regardless of the tribal origins).

V. Conclusion

The broader problem at the heart of this paper was an examination of the historical question of changes produced by the adoption of a new ideology from Northern Wei via Koguryo and its significance in terms of social organization and institutional formation. Chinese ideas and institutions were crucial to the process of the evolution of the centralized government on the Chinese model and the detribalization of the consciousness of the people of Koguryo and Silla. Buddhism of the Northern Wei tradition, which equated the ruling emperors with the Maitreya and legitimized the political establishment, held particular appeal for the rulers of both Koguryo and Silla. Silla, however, demonstrated greater ingenuity by reorganizing the order of Hwarang on the foundation of Maitreya cult. Recognition of the Hwarang youth as incarnations of the Maitreya or manifestation of Yueguang (Prince Moonlight) divested the Maitreya cult of its apocalyptic and subversive potential and made the young members of the Silla aristocracy amenable to the political requirements of the state. In other words, the Silla royalty in the sixth century recognized the potential appeal of the heretical Maitreya sect centered on Yueguang symbolism. Silla kings promoted the cult amongst the Silla youth under their supervision, because it was the surest way to harness its appeal as a force of national unity and hope for peace and prosperity. It is obvious from the above discussion that although Buddhism equally served as an ideological prop of various early states that emerged in northeast Asia, and most of the rulers invoked the rich and versatile Buddhist symbolism rulers as cakravartin and Maitreya between the fourth and seventh centuries, the forms in which these motifs found expression varied according to local traditions and conditions.

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