

THE CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY IN PRE-MODERN ASIA: ITS SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

FROM EARLY TIMES MAN SOUGHT TO EXPLAIN THE VARIOUS PHENOMENA in him and around him through a trust in the existence of a divine and supernatural control which linked and governed natural phenomena and human affairs by means of laws of mutual interrelatedness and inter-influences. This universal concern of mankind covering "the Power manifesting itself in the universe" remains a characteristic of Eastern ways of thought and culture from the Semite's cry of humble incredulousness:

"I look up at your heavens, made by your fingers, at the moon and stars you set in place — Ah, what is man that you should spare a thought for him, the son of man that you should care for him? . . ."

(Psalm 8)

to the Taoist's groping for expression of this great unity he felt in him, and which he saw in his meditations:

"There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before Heaven and Earth. How still it was and formless, standing alone, and undergoing no change."
"I do not know its name, and I give it the designation of Tao. I am also forced to add the name Great."

(Hwai Nan Tzu, p. xii)

and the Vedic Indian's highly enigmatic and philosophical feelers for unravelling the riddle of the universe:

"Not having seen, I ask the poets who have seen, for the sake of knowing, not having known. Who has held apart firm these six regions, what then is that One, in the form of the unborn?"

(Rgveda 1, 6.)

The unfathomable depths of the workings of the Universal Power remained man's preoccupation as he forged his way from a "primitive" culture

towards more "sophisticated" levels; and as he put meaning and movement into his lifeways and social order, his fascination with magic and mysteries became as the earth which nourished his other cultural concepts, like the breath which gave life and vitality to them as the elemental water which purified and simplified, and the fire which energized and consecrated into persistence and perpetuity.

The dependence of man on his perception of the unity within the universe is seen clearly in the concept of sovereignty which evolved in the different Asian regions. That the East has retained much of the magic spirit of its primal state is a perception attested to by Martin Buber, foremost Jewish existentialist when he observed that "The magical character adheres for a long while to the products of separation" in the Orient (1957, p. 32). The "products of separation" can only mean the results of process of evolving and extracting through rationalizations independent social institutions from their fused state within simple societies.

This paper attempts to bring out the particular and the common in the ancient and cosmic theories of sovereignty in South Asia, specifically represented by India; in the East Asian countries of China and Japan; and finally, in Southeast Asia, seen either as the area of convergence or point of containment of the great Asian cultural systems. Hopefully, it will draw out the socio-political implications of the concepts of kingship.

I. INDIAN CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY

COSMOLOGY

In the Brhadaranyaka-Upanisad 2, 1, 19, there is the image of a spider at the center of its cobweb actively emitting equidistant and concentric webs in expanding lines parallel and perpendicular to the central point. The spider and central point are a representation of Svayambhu Brahman (i.e. The Self-Existent or the Universal Life-Force), and all other existents which are but continuing manifestations, variations and mutations in time of it, the sole constant and immutable being. (Heimann, 1964, p. 99). The image conjured immediately gives an impression of ceaseless activity but as in a kind of distant subterranean or cosmic throbbing where all the different points of the structure are interconnected. Outside of the relation and creative influence of Brahman, nothing can exist and in Brahman, the Neuter Principle, all things eventually converge in fulfillment and maturity.

The same idea is expressed in the "Asya Vamasya" Hymn of the Rgveda-1 through the image of the "cakram"—

"The Wheel of Law, with twelve spokes
goes round and round the heaven; it is
indeed not to be decayed . . .

(*Rgveda 1, 164-11*)

“ . . . In that wheel having five spokes,
 which rolls on, all the beings stand
 out. Its axle bearing immense load,
 does not get heated. Having its navel,
 it does not break, from the beginning
 itself.”

(*Rgveda 1, 164-14*)

The poetic evocation of a wheel which does not break in spite of its immense load or risk decay is interpreted by Dr. C. Kunhan Raja as a vehicle for clear-seeing of what could be the first cause, as could be inferred from Verse 12 of the same hymn:

“They call him the father, having five
 feet, having twelve forms, full of water
 in the far side of heaven. Then these
 others say (of him) as the clear—
 seeing, placed in the high (chariot) with
 seven wheels and with six spokes.”

What strengthens his case is the observation that in the Veda, a clear-seeing Sun-God is frequently mentioned. (Kunhan Raja, p. 26). For us, the interest clearly emerges in the image of interdependence and a centrally-controlled yet eternal cyclic activity. As in the spider simile, there is the perception of a distant yet pervading presence. “Behind of that heaven they utter in a low voice the word that comprehends all, that does not move all.” (*Rgveda 1, 164-10.*).

In India of Vedic Age, Masson-Oursel concurs, “every act is merely the symbol of another act not revealed to our eyes; every object is the symbol of a secret power, every word has a hidden meaning. One is surrounded by mystery. . .” (p. 234).

KINGSHIP

There have been countless and voluminous attempts to decipher the mystic in Indian life and philosophy. Some prefer to view Indian cosmology as one nebulous unity, subtle and suggestive. Others, like Henri Berr, emphasize the structured divisions of this unity and declare dividing and ranking an Indian penchant. C. Kunkan Raja's cautious approach of a context analysis of available literature seems to be the prudent road, one which this paper tries to imitate.

Kingship in ancient India was strongly based on its cosmology. In the “Laws of Manu,” the nature of kingship was expressed thus:

“Because a king has been formed of
 particles of those lords of the gods,
 he therefore surpasses all created

being in lustre; and like the sun,
 he burns eyes and hearts; nor can
 anybody on earth even gaze on him.
 Through his supernatural power he
 is Fire and Wind, he Sun and Moon,
 he the Lord of Justice (Yama), he
 Kubera, he Varuna, he great Indra."
 (VII, 5-7)

The question that poses itself before us is the nature of the divine kingship in India. If we were to take the words of the great law-maker Manu at face value, we would get the picture of an unreachable king, whose presence was more of a theophany liable to unnerve any average man, even if he were an Indian supposed to have absorbed those concepts.

In another article (V, 96) Manu explains that the king is an "incarnation" of the eight guardian deities of the world, viz. Indra and company. The problem then centers around this: was the king a god "incarnated" or was he a human being divinized? If the latter, the corollary question would be: why and how was he divinized? A closer examination of the first quotation which exuberantly proclaimed the king's divine nature reveals an apparent inherent neutralizer and clue to the solution of the problem. Manu says:

" . . . he therefore surpasses all created
 beings in lustre. . ."

It would be easy to infer that since the king is merely one above the rest of creation, he falls in a rank below the gods, that is, if we were to apply Western monotheism and concepts on the East. But in India, the many gods, like men, animals and plants, were manifestations of the Supreme Principle, the neuter IT, which supersedes all gods. Because of this, it would not be correct to jump to the conclusion that the king was a human being raised to the level of the gods solely on the basis of Manu's phrase, "therefore surpasses."

A nearer clue would be to find the nature of Hindu gods. This we find in the Asya Vamasya Hymn (Rgveda I, 51, p. 83):

"The gods performed a sacrifice with
 sacrifice. They became the first
 dharmas. Lo these greatneses resorted
 to the heavens, where ancient Sadhyas,
 the gods, are."

This tells us that there was a progression in the Vedic concept of god. One could "become" a god through a rite—"a sacrifice with sacrifice." A sacrifice which was made sacred. Another way of passing from mortality to divinity was through performance of great deeds, like the Rbhus and Maruts (C.

Kunhan Raja, p. 84). Having become a god, one still had to progress through different degrees, like the Saddhyas, who although in heaven, have not reached the fullness of divinity. (*ibid.*)

That India harbors in her cosmology the graduation of "becoming" is another phase of her tendency to regulate and restore every single person and object to the vital primary unity. At this point, it can safely be surmised that in all probability, the king was a human being who became, through a process of transformation, one of the deities. The king, according to Manu, has been "created to be the protector of castes (*varna*) and orders." (VII, 35). We can take the word "created" to mean "elevated" for another article of the *Manusmriti* leads us to the social class from which kings sprang: ". . . a *kshatriya* who has received according to the rule the sacrament prescribed by the *Veda*, must duly protect this whole (world). (VII, 144).

A *Kshatriya* becomes. This idea goes back to earliest times when the first ruler (Manu *Vaivasvata*) was ordained by Brahma to protect the people and the world. The sacrament was carried out in the coronation rites which was called the *mahabhiseka* in early times. The important thing about these rites was a re-birth for the prince who became the son of the sacrificial priests. A symbolic entry into the *homa* fire and exit from it signified a totally different person with heightened and invigorated faculties. The codification of the rites of coronation, specifically the *Rajasuya*, shows the evolution of the people's consciousness of the cosmic influences. The king becomes the associate of Indra if he governs well and eliminates the thief, the adulterer, etc. (*Institutes of Vishnu*, V, 196). The king becomes identified with the ages of the world for his behavior must resemble the Kali (iron age), *Dvapara* (bronze age), *Treta* (silver age), *Krta* (golden age).

In the coronation rites, much is made of the king sitting on a throne, being fanned, and facing a blazing fire. One possible explanation is that Lakshmi, who as Vishnu's wife is also his *sakti*, energy or active power, resides in throne, in an umbrella, in a blazing fire (*Institutes of Vishnu* XCIX, 12).

The king's coronation, which as can be noted is radically a consecration, must partake of the essential elements for the king's divine nature, is taken from "particles of the gods." For that purpose, therefore, "eternal particles of Indra, of the Wind, of Yama, of the Sun, of Fire, of Varuna, of the Moon, and of the Lord of Wealth" are taken. (*Manu*, VII, 4). In this way, he becomes "a great deity in human form." The fundamental elements, especially water from the sacred rivers, chief among which was the *Sarasvati*, became "divine quickeners" which gave vigor and oblativeness on the king's part.

The king is made to look like a deity, and the process was by treating him as one, calling him with the titles of Supreme King of Kings, Chief of

Chiefs, Brahman, Indra of true energy, Rudra, the most kindly. It seems to be a characteristic of Eastern peoples to hold that the title and the person eventually became identical, and calling a person by this name was to draw from the person the characteristic of the name, or, to confer on him the responsibility of living up to it (Coedes, 1963, p. 26). The candidate for consecration did not remain a passive subject of the rituals, in spite of the abundance of deification. He had to prove that he was *the* Kshatriya worthy to become king. This proving of self above the others, and the necessity of rising from the common number is clearly shown by another rationale for the importance of the throne. "They then bring a throne-seat for him; for truly he who gains a seat in the air, gains a seat above others." (V Kanda, 2 Adhyaya, 1 Brahmana 22). Also, the prince-candidate had to ritually conquer the different parts of the world through the use of bows and arrows, etc.

In these coronation rites, the core was the sacrifice whose magical operation creates or preserves the world (Masson-Oursel, p. 130). Hence ritual correctness was the key to success.

SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Because of the central idea of a king's role as protector, the original question of a theophanic presence is not upheld in the Vedic literature. The king was regarded as a father and his success lay in this paternal role. In the Ramayana epic, the image of the ideal king is depicted this way:

"Like the ancient monarch Manu, father
of the human race, Dasa-Ratha ruled his
people with a father's loving care."

*(Kanda Ramayana
Bk. I, Ch. I, p. 2)*

Social order was implied to be dependent on the king's right conduct.

"Kshatras bowed to holy Brahmins,
Vaisayas to the Kshatras bowed,
Toiling Sudras lived by labour,
of their honest duty proud."

(Romesh Dutt, p. 2)

Masson-Oursel points out that dissimilar theories of kingship in India pale in significance for the essential point brought out was that "Indian politics consisted not in doctrine of the state but in an art of government, the keystone of which is formed by the education of the prince" (p. 95). Fundamental to the king's training was to learn from the people regarding the various trades and professions. Because of this, a king was supposed to hold a daily audience with the people (Manu, VII, 43). He had to learn

how to govern well for the need of improving his prosperity and that of the people was imposed on him at the coronation when among the names given him, was that of "Much-Worker, Better-Worker, More-Worker."

That the prince had to be educated is indicative that kingship in India was a human institution which had been raised to the level of the divine by rites and magical gestures which made of kingship a microcosm of the larger universe. After the consecration, success lay in the king's conduct and his conformity with the *dharma* which governed and judged the value of each act. Sovereignty, we can say, rested in the people's happiness under a king. But in India, the people were dependent on the right functioning of government.

There has been an emphasis placed on the king's possibility of improving himself. To give the complete picture, it has to be said that the danger of losing one's merit of *karma* was another leverage that the people had on the king. "Doubly armed is the hero—he who battles for the right!"—was a favorite lesson of the epics.

The interrelationship between the king and people was strengthened further by the political novelty that the king earned 1/6 of the merits as well as the demerits of his subjects. There must be a connection here with the fact that the king's paternity was especially recognized in the relation of taxation with the people. He was expected to be lenient, which would make the people happier and earn more merits for them and himself.

At this point of the paper, it becomes clear that the divine kingship in India was more analogical than real. (Masson-Oursel, p. 90). Although to say that the king was divine could be true, provided one kept in mind that the Hindu concept of divinity was a limited, evolving concept which held that divinity could be lost. There was no absolute monarch, especially during the times prior to Buddhist influence, and the seven elements of a kingdom which consisted of the king, his minister, capital, realm, treasury, army and friend were as the triple staff of an ascetic (*Manusmriti*, IX, 296), where each was declared to be the most important for that particular purpose it alone could accomplish. Human action on the part of each constituent element seems to be the more important factor as compared to fate. But we have to acknowledge that the strongest links which bound the people into a political unit were religious ties (Saletore, p. 84), for as has been repeated, "individuals are nothing else than limited manifestations of Universal being." (Nakamura, p. 67). There is no strong evidence to show that the people participated actively in political affairs but one can infer that they remained present and capable of overthrowing a tyrannical government. Perhaps in the village councils and administrative sections which some authors believe to have existed then. The degree of suppression, however, has to be intense for the people to overthrow what is otherwise deemed to be someone sacred.

The concept of kingship in ancient India will undergo change of emphasis during the time of Kautilya (4 B.C.) where a militant and politically astute king replaced the dove king of Manu's creation.

II. CHINESE CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY

A study of the religious cosmography in East Asia showed an 18th century Korean wheel-map which depicted Mt. Khun-Lun Shan as the center of the center of the universe and around which were islands and oceans surrounded by continents and further oceans. The whole imagery is reminiscent of the Mt. Meru concept found in Indian cosmology. The names on this map could not be dated later than the 11th century although its usage in Korea was recorded as an 18th century event. The assumption is made that Korea got it from China which got it when the Buddhist started to penetrate the country (Needham, 1959, p. 216). This must have been around the 4th-6th centuries A.D. when a number of Indian monks went to China to do translations of Buddhist works.

Diplomatic relations between India and China must have existed earlier. We are sure, for one thing, that commercial relations existed since at least the 2nd century B.C. (Filliozat, p. 133). Around 144 A.D., the Indian king Kanishka called himself the Devaputra which in Chinese meant "Son of Heaven." Around the 7th century A.D. a king of Assam boasted of Chinese ancestry, and a Sanskrit version of Lao Tse's work was available (*op. cit.*)

What could have been an active cultural exchange between these two countries was impeded by the Himalayan boundary and by the constant attention that India had to give to her Western and Northwestern passages. Apart from this Northwest orientation, Indian culture will spill over to Asia through Indonesia.

Whatever similarities, then, that we see between Indian and Chinese cosmology and concept of kingship will be more of a parallel development (and a proof of the universality of explaining human affairs by cosmic concepts) rather than of a mutual feeding into each other's cultural strains. A proof of independent development was that the above-mentioned cartograph of Mt. Khun-Lun did not appear to be widespread in China, as it was in Korea.

COSMOLOGY AND KINGSHIP

If Indian principles, as enumerated in the Dharmasastras and Arthasas-tras, merely hinted at the opportunity of the people to revolt, Chinese political writings from pre-Confucian times were explicit on this matter:

"He has cast himself off from both
spirits and men. The spirits are
incensed against him and the people
revolt. How can he last long?"

(*Fung Yu Lan, p. 25*)

The primary duty of the ruler, it seems, was to pacify the spirits and to put order into men's lives.

Another indigenous belief was that of the spirits coming to rest on men possessed of certain qualities and the spirits entered them. This differs from the parallelism of Indian macrocosmic universe and its variant microcosms. Aside from this belief in a multitude of spirits, there was the belief in a separate Heaven which, however, remained directly active in human affairs—"Heaven has commanded me to destroy him."

The Confucian disregard of Heaven has not been able to obliterate this indigenous belief which will find more refined reflections in the *Shu Ching*. "From Heaven come the relationships with their several duties. . . . Heaven punishes the guilty."

Before Mencius and Lao Tzu were able to crystallize their doctrines into the more significant influences they are now, there arose a school of thought whose deviating teachings can elucidate what generally was the trend of Chinese concepts. This deviating school was the legalist school around 233 B.C. In complete anti-thesis to Confucianism, especially as perfected by Mencius, the Legalist School, the foremost exponent of which was A. Hsun, Tzu emphasized government by law rather than by individual leadership. Reminiscent of Kautilya's difference vis-a-vis Manu, the Legalists put state and political processes above human or moral concerns and ethical values. Their zenith was in the short-lived but brilliant Ch'in dynasty which effected the first unification of China (221-207 B.C.). The contrast between its brilliant ascent and rapid downfall must have struck Chinese sages. The monograph on "The Faults of Chin" provides an important entry-point into the Chinese socio-political concepts.

"Why did Chin fail, great and powerful empire that it was, before a commoner's troops of peasants and farmers?

—Because it failed to rule with humanity and righteousness and to realize that the power to attack and the power to retain what one has thereby won are not the same."

(*de Bary, p. 152*)

As a result of Ch'in downfall, there arose a new political thought which remained influential till the beginning of the 20th century (*ibid.*, p. 156). It retained the emperor and invested him with a stronger aura of divine mystery but this did not detract from an actual working of the government through ministers and a bureaucracy of scholars. Indicative of this trend was Ch'en She's speech in the first revolt against Ch'kn:

"Kings and nobles, generals, and ministers—such men are made, not born!"

Even though the Indian monarchy was not absolute but more selective and allowed for a choice among a number of Kshatras, it pales in comparison to the apparent generality of Chinese monarchial choices. Was this the reality?

If we continue with the implied assumption in the first pages that there is a close correlation among the cosmic forces and socio-political processes, we would find interesting the fact that the basic concept of Chinese cosmology was the eternal triad of heaven, earth and man. Man stands in equal status with the universe and completes the triad. In fact, his first duty and obligation was to study and comprehend the laws of Heaven so as to live and fulfill them. The Chinese idea of man as a microcosm of heaven does not spell out in a need for parallelism and convergence as in the Indian concept. If man was a microcosm in India, it was the reality for he was wholly the cosmos or heaven but on miniature scale. (de Groot, p. 15). The round shape of his head represents heaven and the square form of the feet the earth. Kingship or leadership, then, was theoretically open to any man as all participated in the excellence of the cosmos. In India, the story of the creation of man ranked according to caste could not allow for a Sudra, born of the feet of Prajapati to rule over the Brahman or Kshatras who belonged to the upper parts.

While anyone was in principle free to assume political leadership, what prevailed was the usefulness of hereditary succession with the sage as adviser to the king.

It is interesting to note that it is difficult to extract the concept of kingship in China from description of man in general. This is especially true in the earlier writings like Tung-Chung-Shu's "Three-fold Obligations of the Ruler" (de Bary, p. 162). The later descriptions given by Mencius show the difference to be in a greater benevolence and righteousness residing in the sovereign.

Otherwise, the king's duties are fundamentally equivalent to the functions and concept of every man. Tun-Chung-Shu in fact easily jumps from the idea of the king as the basis of the state to the idea of man as one of the three bases for all creatures. This correlation between king and man can be the probable reason why the early kings of China delightedly and constantly referred to themselves as "The One Man." (The Shu King, Bk. III).

"Ah! ye multitudes of the myriad
regions, listen closely to the
announcement of me, the One Man."

This explanation could also be the light to Chuang Tzu's enigmatic statement: "Only a king who can forget his kingdom should be entrusted with a kingdom."

What singled out one man for kingship if the concepts of king and man were close to each other? The answer is found in the book of *The Great*

Plan 4, 4 which set the model for the government of the nation. The sovereign, having established the highest degree and pattern of excellence, concentrates, in his own person the five sources of happiness and proceeds to diffuse them to the multitude of people who will embody this perfection and give it back to the king and secure its preservation. But it is heaven who calls and descends on the future king who is called to rule and instruct the little people. The king, as in the Indian concept, becomes one for the people for "Heaven sees as my people see; Heaven hears as my people hear." (The Books of Kau, V, p. 128). This has been called the concept of the "mandate of heaven" and it has haunted rulers for fear that it would be taken away from them. Actually, it was effectively taken away by the people through rebellion for Confucius codified the indigenous concept of death to a worthless ruler. The sages, as did Mencius, can proudly say: "Let the rulers have their wealth—I have my benevolence. Let them have their nobility—I have my righteousness." (Works II, 2). The people or inarticulate masses find seething hate for an oppressor by declaring: "He who soothes us is our sovereign; he who oppresses us is our enemy."

The succession to kingship became a matter of "vox populi, vox Dei." A chosen person was presented to heaven and acceptance came from the people.

In China, the relation between king and people was like fluid water, or a magnet drawing iron to him. If a king was good, people came and ratified his kingship.

As the concept evolved, the king gradually emerged from one among men to be the Son of Heaven. James Legge tries to trace its development in *The Sacred Books of China*, but this is unnecessary for this paper.

FURTHER COMPARISONS BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA

The overall impression, after having compared Indian and Chinese scriptures on the concept of kingship, reveals rigidity and strain in the Indian attempts to exalt a god-king above his nature as a human being. *Dharma* (duty) had to be maintained and the least incorrectness in rite or formula could result in the loss of *Karma*. Chinese scriptures, on the other hand, seem to carry a certain amount of ease when they show the relation among the King, Heaven and Man. A tentative explanation to this impression might be evinced when one notes that the trust of Indian efforts was to reproduce and duplicate, although on different scales or dimensions. Hence the parallelism with the gods and their lifestyle through grandiose titles and painfully exacted rituals, so as to rise in rank and status. Perfection would be attained by precision, therefore a strong accent on formulaism.

The Chinese drift was towards completion and harmonization, not of formulas and rites, but of lives lived day by day. While there was also the

emphasis on ritualism, there seemed to be greater emphasis on the correctness of one's conduct, on the enjoyment of food and cloth, and on the right relationships. Instead of the upward exertion of India, and its marked gradations, there were in China the ambient principles of Heaven, Man and Earth. The Emperor's duty was to work for the transformation and completion of his fellowmen and of all nature through good government. Secure in the peace and rationale of his function, the Chinese emperors were wont to humble themselves in a manner of losing themselves among their subjects by referring to themselves as the One Man, the Parent of the People, the Little Child. Herein also lay his perfection; for it was the philosophy of Chinese life that the well-springs of an individual's fulfillment were found in his multiple and mutually complementing relationships. (Houn, 1965, p. 8).

But for both the Chinese and Indian emperors, the main instrument of government, whether executed in precision or harmonization, was moral persuasion. He had to be the divine king as described by Manu or the virtuous king of pre-Confucian and Confucian China. Both were considered protector of the people.

SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

From the above discussion, we may say that power in traditional Chinese society was well distributed and did not rest on the monarch alone. It was not monolithic nor absolute. A Chinese emperor could not deceive himself into thinking that his authority and position were permanent. The right to rule was contingent upon performance. The various social groups, like the businessmen, the powerful class, the gentry, and the autonomous villages were the check and balance to authority. This, however, does not deny the existence of Chinese tyrants.

Early Japan absorbed the Chinese concepts of imperial rule and called it Tennoism. But the One Man and Son of Heaven concepts were specialized for Japanese rulers who were declared to be descendants of the gods as inherent birthrights. The prevailing concept was the *Mandate of Heaven* which allowed an emperor's merit to "shine through the universe like sunlight" (Tsunoda, p. 88). The Japanese also borrowed the Chinese concept of an eternal trinity of Heaven, Earth, Man, but made man occupy a place midway between the other two. Heaven was superior and in it lay the basis of authority and order and the heavenly bodies communicated heaven's decrees to earth. Heaven also decreed who the sovereign would be and it alone determined the fate of the nation. (Tsunoda, p. 35). The fact that Japan boasts of a one continuous dynasty of succeeding generations seems to be an indication of heavenly nepotism!

Because of this elaboration of heaven's mandate which Japan had originally borrowed from China, we notice an excessive concern for conformity

to the pattern established by heaven as demonstrated in the rhythmic procession of sun, moon and planets across the firmament.

In the reading of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, Japan's sacred records and chronicles, there cannot be found the humanism of Chinese literature. One explanation could be the peculiar phenomenon of a country which purports to inhabit only "divine" people, including the soil on which they draw sustenance. A further explanation could be that which was posited by Tsunoda. The well-known legends have been selected to perform the functions of supporting and confirming the religious and political claims of the sole ruling dynasty. (Tsunoda, 1958, p. 12). Thus, the singular route taken by chroniclers was the emphasis of the ancestral line from the sun goddess Amaterasu down through Jimmu Tenno (ca. 700 B.C.)

Other Chinese influences filtered through the adoption of the *Yin* and *Yang* cosmic principles, the adaptation of the Chinese calendar, the proclamation of a 17 article constitution in a combination of 8 smallest *yin* number and 9 largest *yang* number (Tsunoda, p. 35).

This is not to say that the Chinese were the only influences on Japanese culture. Around 1765 A.D., a resurgence of Japanese nationalism sought to disparage Confucian influence by laying claim to an indigenous observance in Ancient Japan of the natural laws of heaven and earth. (Tsunoda, 1958, p. 11). There were also the Buddhist influences to be reckoned with. That is why, around the 6th century A.D., Prince Shotoku of the Soga clan, in his historic attempt to rationalize the Japanese administrative structure, chose Chinese models although he retained Buddhism, brought from India, as the state religion. Confucianism, as utilized by the Japanese served to reinforce the absolute powers of the king. The Shotoku Constitution and the adoption of Chinese legal and bureaucratic institutions buttressed the existing political structure. The choice of posthumous names like Tenchi (Heavenly Wisdom) and Temmu (Heavenly Might) together with the recording of auspicious events preserved for posterity the mythology of the Emperor-Son of Heaven. For it was also shortly after these times that the *Kojiki*, the Records of Ancient Matters were written.

SOUTHEAST ASIAN CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY

Of all Southeast Asian countries, Vietnam was relatively untouched by the effusion of Indian culture because Chinese influence had penetrated earlier, faster and for a longer time. Traces of Chinese influence are seen in the low prestige of the military and the high social status of the scholar or mandarin. Chinese influence, it seems, was also evident in the strain of political fatalism which accompanied the terrible struggles that marked the many revolutions in Vietnam. The fatalist attitude was supported by the "mandate of heaven" belief that any outcome of the struggle would always prove favorable to the Vietnamese for defeat for the reigning person symbol-

ized the withdrawal of heaven's favour. The Vietnamese, unlike the Japanese, did not systematize or ritualize the mandate of heaven concept for it may have been diluted by the strong streak of spiritism which colored every Vietnamese house and village. Ngo Quyen, a culture hero, appealed to this quiescent Vietnamese tradition by building his capital on the ancient site of worship. On this traditional foundation, the layer of Chinese civilization was laid through the influx of Chinese refugees, scholars, discharged officials, deserters, draftsmen, peddlers, merchants and laborers. Inter-marriage with the local aristocracy produced the Sino-Viet nobles, the potential revolutionary force born out of a growing urban merchant group.

For the rest of Southeast Asia, the attempts to cut across the tropical jungle of regicides, revolts and assassinations in order to arrive at the concept of sovereignty are encumbered further by the lack of literature on the matter. The sources of information that remained were the epigraphs—inscriptions which reveal only the magnified achievements of the king in whose honor they were set up. Very little was disclosed about the life of the people and their conditions although a certain amount of knowledge about the life of the high priestly and aristocratic families was revealed. More objective sources of information were the Chinese dynastic annals.

An important clue is the fact that a cultural study of Southeast Asia, Vietnam apart, cannot be done without taking into consideration the permeation of Indian cultural influences which have earned for the region the designation "Farther India." (Coedes, 1968; p. XV).

Central to Indian influence was the predominance of the Meru concept. Mt. Meru, according to the Mahabharata, was the best of all mountains. It touched the sky and was immersed in the earth. On it the gods lived and enjoyed themselves. The Brahmanic and Buddhist concepts perceived Mt. Meru as the center of the universe surrounded by a succession of islands, oceans, and continents. The idea of a close parallelism between the macrocosmic world and microcosms of this world resulted in the attempts of Southeast Asian kings to replicate the cosmic world on the level of their political setting. Hence the parallelism was effected either in the person of the king, especially during his coronation with rituals serving the same purpose as Indian coronation rites, in the style of a temple or palace as the Angkor Vat, or in law and in the division of the administrative structures. (Singaravelu, 1969; p. 55). The acculturation process however resulted in some preferences or mutations. The worship of Siva, particularly its cult of royalty which emphasized the cult of the royal *linga*, quickly took root in the political practices of the time. (Singaravelu, 1969; p. 58). Other inscriptions and pillars reveal that Southeast Asian kings took names which could be variations of Siva's names, or that certain rites of the courts were imitations of Brahmanic ceremonies. But as the Shaivite cult penetrated the native culture, further changes of emphasis evolved. The Shiva *linga* became a cult intended to emphasize and legitimize the person of the ruler. The *linga* was

viewed as representing both symbolically and factually the essence of royalty. As such it took a central and primordial place in the king's capital city for the royal *linga* also served as a reminder of the close union between Siva, source of power, and the king, his earthly embodiment. The *linga* cult was further refined into the cult of the *devaraja*, god-king, and would serve to represent the god into whom the king was absorbed at the end of his life. The transformations of the *linga* cult enhanced the prestige and influence of the brahmanic class. For if the king was regarded as the rightful monarch, it was not because he was a god but because he had undergone the proper rites performed by the qualified priests. (Mabbett, p. 208). It was left to the kingly family to ensure its permanence by rendering the priests beholden to the king's lineage. To preserve their authority and mutual interests, the kingly and priestly families inter-married and thus intensified their separation from and superiority to the masses. The lack of independent political communities did not provide the check to despotism as what India had. Coedes reports that several inscriptions recorded the contemptible names given by the upper classes to the people at large. The entrance of Vaishnavism into Southeast Asia was another proof of the careful selection made regarding external influences. The ruling class found support in Vaishnavism as they did in the Shaivite cult. Clearly, the *devaraja* cult was a deliberate effort of the king to exalt himself with his family into the ranks of the gods, Buddhas, or Buddhist saints. Where were the people at this time? The *devaraja* cult was not a spontaneous accolade from them. Their duty, it seems, was to work and build under conscription. Their political participation can be glimpsed in the numerous revolts which took place. These were not popular revolts, however, for these were battles staged by those noble members who were denied a share of the largesse. The lot of the people remained the same no matter who the ruler was. It has been pointed out that the convergence of two main ideas on kingship contributed to the making of more absolute kings in continental Southeast Asia. The king, through the efforts of the court brahmans, was identified with the Hindu gods, Siva and Vishnu; this imposed notion of kingship was completed by the more popular belief of his being a bodhisattva. (Quaritch-Wales, 1959; p. 131).

Other measures intended to divinize the king were done by surrounding him with an aura of mystery and sanctity by the mechanism of taboos, the elaboration of royal pomp and ceremonials, the use of special signs and an official court language. In the diffusion of culture, cyncretism in the linking of the divine and human was not only a common practice, it was a daily thing. (What can be called Indian were the forms and symbolisms of their gods, etc.) That the Southeast Asian colored Indian influences native elements is something to be assumed. No nation has a cultural vacuum. One proof for this is the way modifications have occurred. In Malaysia and Indonesia, for example, much importance is given to the regalia. Among the

Bugis and Makassarese of Ceylon, it is the regalia which reign and the prince governs in their name. (*op. cit.*) In the Ramayana, the two brothers exchange sandals and the younger one uses the rightful monarch's sandals during his temporary reign.

Ancient Siam carried out in peculiar ways the parallelism with the universe. A study of the evolution of its bureaucracy shows a careful count of the cosmic numbers of queens, ministers, court priests, provinces, etc. The whole country was so divided to belong to the right side or left side of the king who was regarded more as bodhisattva.

CONCLUSION

It may be every Asian's pride that the concept of sovereignty which predominates in the great cultures is the idea of protecting the people and a subservience of the ruler in promoting their happiness and prosperity. The problem before us now is the unearthing and nourishing of this concept so it can grow to maturation, but especially that the principle of protection may effectively reach the masses for whom it is intended.

We know little about their true situation for aside from a few shafts of light a peasant leading a revolt and establishing a new dynasty, the majority remain covered by the common noun of "the people" which appears in the records and documents of the nobles and literati. Asia groans for the liberation that modernization and industrialization promise; Asia carries in her soul the seeds for the kind of social order which will preserve the warmth and depth of relationships with the Universal Power and mankind. Asia suffers from the ravages of colonization; Asia can offer the promise of a political order where sovereignty truly resides in the people.

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