

Wherein are infinite realism
 The Buddha abides in all, infinitely unbounded.
 The Buddha in the past cultivated an ocean
 Of unbounded compassion for sentient beings,
 Whom he instructed and purified
 As they entered life and death.
 The Buddha lives in the *dharma* realm complex of truth

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BUDDHISM'S ASSIMILATION TO TANG POLITICAL CULTURE

Buddhism's early claim to exist beyond the authority of the state, as asserted by Huiyuan,¹⁵ was radically transformed in Tang China when institutionally it became an arm of the state. The institution of "superintendent of the Buddhist clergy (*saṅgha*)," which first appeared under the Northern Wei in the mid-fifth century, marked the inception of this transformation. The superintendent headed a bureaucracy staffed by lay officials or nominal "monks," charged with oversight of monastic affairs. He was not the head of an autonomous religious

organization but rather an appointee of the emperor and given tonsure by the emperor's hand.

The religious rationale for this government-run Buddhism was supplied by the first superintendent Faguo, who justified monks' service of the government by directly identifying the emperor as the Buddha. In contrast to Huiyuan's rigorous defense of clerical independence, Faguo said that "Taizu is enlightened and loves the Way. He is in his very person the Thus-Come One. Monks (*śramaṇas*) must and should pay him all homage. . . . He who propagates the teaching of the Buddha is the lord of men. I am not doing obeisance to the Emperor, I am merely worshipping the Buddha."¹⁶ In response, the anonymous author of the *Perfect Wisdom Sūtra for Humane Kings Who Wish to Protect Their States* saw superintendency as a sure sign of the corruption of Buddhism in the last days or decadent End of the Teaching, saying, "If any of my disciples, *bhikṣu* and *bhikṣuṇī*, accept registration (of monks and nuns) and serve as officials, they are not my disciples."¹⁷

THE HUMANE KING AS PROTECTOR OF BUDDHISM

As an alternative to Buddhism's serving the state, the *Sūtra for Humane Kings* proposes that the state and Buddhism serve each other. Using the vocabulary of Chinese monarchy, the scripture asserts that "humane" or "benevolent" kings (*renwang*) practice "outer protection" (*waihu*) and that this protection involves the patronage of an independent *saṅgha* who practice the "inner protection" (*nei hu*) of the bodhisattva virtue of "forbearance" (*ren*). The pun on the term *ren*¹⁸ is the basis of the scripture and the starting point of all of its commentaries. Thus, according to an early seventh-century *Commentary on the Sūtra for Humane Kings*, the ruler who protects Buddhism thereby protects the state.

Because the humane king (*renwang*) explicates the Teaching and disseminates virtue here below, he is called "humane." Because he has transformed himself, he is called "king." The humane king's ability is to protect (*hu*). What is protected is the state. This is possible because the humane king uses the Teaching to order the state. Now if we consider the Highest Perfect Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*), its ability is to protect. The humane king is he who is protected. Because he uses the Highest Perfect Wisdom, the humane king is tranquil and hidden. Thus, if he uses his ability to propagate the Teaching, the king is able to protect [the state], and it is the Highest Perfect Wisdom that is the [method

16. Hurvitz, *Wei Shou*, p. 53.

17. TD 8, no. 245:833.

18. *Ren*, meaning "humaneness," and *ren*, meaning "forbearance," are near homophones, but the words are written with different Chinese characters.

15. See ch. 15, pp. 426–29.

of] protection. Moreover, one who is humane is forbearing [renzhe ren ye].¹⁹ Hearing of good he is not overjoyed; hearing of bad he is not angry. Because he is able to hold to forbearance in good and bad, therefore he is called forbearing (ren).

[TD 33, no. 1705:253 — CO]

Here the scripture's adroit use of language to reorder the relationship between religion and the state is coupled with Mahāyāna teachings of Perfect Wisdom. Amoghavajra's eighth-century recension of the text further accentuates these teachings through the addition of such passages as the following, based on the dialectics of negation.

At that time the World-Honored One said to King Prasenajit, "By what signs do you contemplate the Thus-Come One?" King Prasenajit answered, "I contemplate his body's real signs; [I] contemplate the Buddha thus: without boundaries in front, behind, and in the middle; not residing in the three times and not transcending the three times; not residing in the five aggregates, not transcending the five aggregates; not abiding in the four great elements and not transcending the four great elements; not abiding in the six abodes of sensation and not transcending the six abodes of sensation; not residing in the three realms and not transcending the three realms; residing in no direction, transcending no direction; [neither] illumination [nor] ignorance, and so on. Not one, not different; not this, not that; not pure, not foul; not existent nor non-existent; without signs of self or signs of another; without name, without signs; without strength, without weakness; without demonstration, without exposition; not magnanimous, not stingy; not prohibited, not transgressed; not forbearing, not hateful; not forward, not remiss; not fixed, not in disarray; not wise, not stupid; not coming, not going; not entering, not leaving; not a field of blessings, not a field of misfortune; without sign, without the lack of sign; not gathering, not dispersing; not great, not small; not seen, not heard; not perceived, not known. The mind, activities, and senses are extinguished, and the path of speech is cut off. It is identical with the edge of reality and equal to the [real] nature of things. I use these signs to contemplate the Thus-Come One."

[TD 8, no. 246:836 — CO]

In the preceding passage the "unboundedness" of the Buddha's body, and the principle of universal emptiness in the Prajñāpāramitā (expressed in the negation of all determinate views) could also be understood in the more affirmative terms of the Huayan philosophy, i.e., the universal tolerance and mutual non-obstruction of all things (expressed as "nothing precludes or bars anything else," shishi wu ai, or, politically, anything goes

19. A punning inversion of Mencius 7B:16, "To be humane (ren) is what it means to be human (ren)," recalling also Confucius' pun on "humaneness" (ren) and "forbearance" (ren) in Analects 12:3.

if it serves the purposes of Buddhism. Both formulations underlay the practice of Amoghavajra's Esoteric Buddhism or Mystical Teaching, which was predicated on a view similar to Huayan's "True Emptiness [allows for] Mysterious or Wondrous Manifestations (zhen kong miaoyou)." Thus mystic rites and incantations could play a part in Esoteric Buddhism's consecrating and legitimating of imperial rule.

By the time of Amoghavajra's new recension of the Sūtra for Humane Kings, Chinese Buddhism was unquestionably an arm of the state. His recension deepened its theological component while softening and transforming objections to the monks' service of the government — a transformation motivated by Amoghavajra's role as saṅgha superintendent and by his Esoteric Buddhist ideology. Thus, he added a long incantation (dhāraṇī) to the text and produced three new commentaries that outlined esoteric rites for invoking the wrathful "Kings of Illumination" (ming wang, Sanskrit vidyārāja) for the defense of the state. In Amoghavajra's new recension of the Sūtra for Humane Kings, one of these Kings of Illumination says:

Because of our original vows we have received the Buddha's spiritual power. If, in all the states of the worlds of the ten directions, there is a place where this scripture is received and held, read, recited, and expounded, then I and the others go there in an instant, to guard and protect the Correct Teaching or to establish the Correct Teaching. We will ensure that these states are devoid of all calamities and difficulties. Swords, troops, and epidemics all will be entirely eliminated.

World-Honored One! I possess a dhāraṇī that can afford wondrous protection. It is the speedy gate originally cultivated and practiced by all the Buddhas. Should a person manage to hear this single scripture, all his crimes and obstructions will be completely eliminated. How much more benefit will it produce if it is recited and practiced! By using the august power of the Teaching, one may cause states to be eternally without the host of difficulties. Then, before the Buddha and in unison, they pronounced this dhāraṇī:

Namo ratna-trayāya, nama ārya-vairocana-tathāgatāyārhatē saṃyaksambuddhāya, nama ārya-samanta-bhadrāya bodhisattvāya mahāsattvāya mahākāruṇikāya, tad yathā; jñāna-praṭīpe akṣaya-koṣe pratibhānavati sarva-buddhāvalokite yoga-pariṇiṣpanne gambhīra-duravagāhe try-adhva-pariṇiṣpanne bodhi-citta-saṃjānāni

[844a] sarvābhiṣekābhiṣikte dharma-sāgara-sambhūti amogha-śravane mahā-samanta-bhadra-bhūmi-niryāte vyākaraṇa-pariprāptāni sarva-siddha-namaskṛte sarva-bodhi-sattva-saṃjānāni bhagavati-buddhamāte araṇe akarane araṇakarane mahā-prajñā-pāramite svāhā!

At that time the World-Honored One heard this pronouncement and praised Jingangshou and the other bodhisattvas, saying, "Excellent! Excellent! If there are those who recite and hold this dhāraṇī, I and all the Buddhas of the ten

directions will always be supportive and protective [of them], and all of the evil demons and spirits will venerate them like Buddhas and in not a long time they should attain the highest perfect enlightenment."

[TD 8, no. 246:843–844 — CO]

Amoghavajra's new recension of the Sūtra for Humane Kings was part of a comprehensive relationship between the state and Esoteric Buddhism that flowered in the second half of the eighth century. Under three successive Tang emperors — Xuanzong (r. 713–756), Suzong (r. 756–762), and Daizong (r. 762–779) — Amoghavajra and his disciples developed a new vision of Buddhist-state polity that wedded the idioms of Buddhism to those of Chinese rulership. This new vision was nowhere more apparent than in the correspondence between Amoghavajra and the three emperors whom he served. It was not uncommon for Amoghavajra to address the emperor using the idiom of the loyal minister, while the emperor often addressed Amoghavajra in the Buddhist idiom of a disciple. Some exchanges are a skillful blend of Chinese and Buddhist rhetoric, a blend that indicates the assimilation of Buddhism to Chinese culture and politics. In the following memorial to Suzong, dated 17 March 758, Amoghavajra expressed his appreciation of a gift of incense in a way that simultaneously evokes his role as servant of the ruler and as the cosmocratic protector of the empire.

The monk Amoghavajra says: Your Majesty gave me rare incense; through your messenger you bestow upon me great favor. I am speechless with delight. . . . I have dedicated my life to the Buddhist cause . . . I have prayed with the strength of the all-embracing [bodhisattva] vow that I would encounter the triumphant appearance of a world-ruler (*Cakravartin*). . . . [During the early part of the rebellion]²⁰ your majesty's noble plans were carried out by you alone, yet the Teaching mysteriously contributed [toward victory]; the gang of bandits was fragmented and destroyed, and the imperial portents have returned to their normative state. . . . In the tenth month you cleansed the palace by setting up an assembly to drive out evil influences; when you rectified your rule by granting official titles, you went up to the altar (*bodhimāṇḍa*) for consecration (*abhiśeka*). . . . Already you have showered me with gifts. When can I ever repay you? It is proper that I reverently bathe the statues at the appointed times and that I perform the immolation (*homa*) rites at the half moon in order that the thirty-seven divinities [of the Diamond world, *Vajradhātu maṇḍala*] may protect your earth, my brilliant king, and that the sixteen protectors [bodhisattvas of the *Vajradhātu maṇḍala*] might guard your majestic spirit, so that you may live as long as the southern mountain, eternally, without limit.

[TD 52, no. 2120:827–828; trans. adapted from Orlando,
Life of Amoghavajra, pp. 45–49 — CO]

20. The Rebellion of An Lushan, which began in 755.