

**Post-Canonical Buddhist Political Thought:
Explaining the Republican Transformation (D02)**

(conference draft; please do not quote without permission)

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Introduction

In other recent work I have looked at whether normative political theorizing can be found in the texts of Early or Canonical Buddhism, especially the *Nikāya* collections and the *Vinaya* texts governing monastic life, since those texts are viewed as authentic and authoritative by all modern sects of Buddhism.¹

In this paper I turn to investigate Buddhist normative political theorizing after the early or Canonical period, which (following Collins² and Bechert³) I treat as beginning during the life of the Buddha (c. sixth-fifth centuries BCE) and ending in the first century BCE, when the Canonical texts were first written down. At first glance this task is impossibly large, as even by the end of the early period Buddhism had already divided into several sects and had begun to develop substantial regional differences. Over the next 2,000 years Buddhism divided into three main sects: Theravada, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna. It also developed into numerous local variants as it mixed with various national cultures and evolved under different historical circumstances. To give just one example, the Sri Lankan national epic, the *Mahāvamsa*, is central to Sinhalese Buddhists' understanding of what Buddhism says about politics and very influential on other Southeast Asian versions of Buddhism, but has no obvious relevance to Buddhists in Tibet or Japan, who in turn have their own texts and traditions. Off the cuff, it seems as if one would have to investigate the development of Buddhist political theory separately in each national context.

Although there is obviously great value in such nation-specific studies (many of which have already been done), I want to suggest that there is such a high degree of commonality among the various national traditions that we can identify and meaningfully examine what I will call (again following Collins and Bechert) a *traditional* Buddhist political theory. Very briefly, on my reading the early Buddhist texts identify enlightened but more-or-less absolute monarchy

as the best possible form of lay government. During the traditional period, which spans from the first century BCE until the nineteenth century CE, all Buddhist societies were monarchies, and all Buddhist political theorizing identified monarchy as the uniquely appropriate and/or possible form of government. During the traditional period, Buddhist monarchs and commentators on politics modified the early theory, by identifying the Buddha with the mythical first king Mahāsammata (thus blurring the distinction between the spiritual and mundane spheres), by giving contemporary monarchs fictitious genealogies making them the descendants of the Buddha (and thus by extension of Mahāsammata), and finally by identifying the monarch as a bodhisattva or Buddha-to-be (the Buddhist version of treating the king as a god). Thus, by the time we come to the nineteenth century, all majority-Buddhist countries⁴ were more-or-less absolute monarchies, and all commentators were agreed that monarchy was the form of government most appropriate to Buddhist polities.

In the modern period (beginning at different points in the nineteenth century in different countries), all of that changed. Between roughly 1850 and 1950, almost every Buddhist-majority country abandoned absolutism in favor of either parliamentary government or constitutional monarchy. By 2010, there were no remaining Buddhist-majority absolute monarchies. Today the vast majority of Buddhists believe that Buddhism either requires or at least is compatible with republican government, respect for individual rights, and perhaps some form of welfare state. The historical reasons why this change took place are obvious: the conditions of colonization and modernization made the traditional Buddhist monarchies unable to rule effectively. But the philosophical and religious explanation of the change remains less clear and less well studied. How did the people involved explain this apparently radical (from an outside perspective)

change to themselves? What had to change in their understanding of Buddhism to make the change possible, and how were those changes brought about?

The Early or Canonical Buddhist Theory of Government

“Canonical Buddhism”⁵ refers to the contents of the Pāli Canon, which is the scripture of one tradition of Buddhism (Theravada), and (most of which) is recognized by the other traditions (Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna) as being authentically the teachings of the Buddha (or as close as we can come to those oral teachings). There are a number of scholarly controversies regarding the ostensibly political content of the Canonical Buddhist texts, including whether there is any truly political content at all (as opposed to parables and commentary on contemporary events), if so whether the Buddha articulates a normative political theory (or merely makes scattered comments), and if there is such a theory what it is. I have addressed those controversies in depth elsewhere.⁶ Given the present essay’s focus on the post-Canonical period, I will only briefly summarize and comment on the relevant Canonical texts here.

There are only a handful of texts in which the Buddha offers normative discussions about politics. In brief, in the *Aggañña-Sutta*⁷ the Buddha explains that the universe periodically contracts, killing all living beings, and then reexpands and is repopulated by beings still caught in the cycle of saṃsāra (birth, death, rebirth). At first all sentient beings are ethereal, being made of mind rather than matter, but through greed and concupiscence they become increasingly material, until they eventually take human form. These early humans live in groups, and have some minimal social rules, but have no institutions or offices for making or enforcing decisions. Eventually greed and selfishness give rise to theft, and the people decide to appoint one among themselves (given the title Mahāsammata, “The People’s Choice”⁸ or “Great Elect”) to enforce

the rules full time, with a share of the crops as payment. Although the Buddha does not say so explicitly, this position of enforcer of the rules appears to be heritable, since the *Aggañña-Sutta* is presented as an explanation of the caste system, and the first ruler is identified as the founder of the *khattiya* or warrior/ruler caste. This system appears to represent a primitive social contract, though without any right on the part of the people to resist a bad or incompetent ruler.⁹

In the *Mahāsudassana Sutta*¹⁰ the Buddha explains that a ruler or king can become relatively enlightened through personal purity and spiritual practice. Such a king obtains seven magical treasures, which allow him to rule peacefully, and even to conquer all neighboring nations without using violence. One such king, Mahāsudassana, revealed his relative enlightenment by adopting policies intended to support the poor, for example providing public baths and charities that provided at no cost food, drink, clothing, transportation, a place to sleep, wives (!), and gold. Ruling in this way allows the king to make further spiritual progress; he is later reborn in the highest heaven, and in a yet later incarnation becomes the historical Buddha himself.¹¹

In the *Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta*¹² the Buddha tells a somewhat fanciful story of the fall and rise of human society from the level established by such relatively enlightened rulers (who are called *cakkavattis*). The story emphasizes that although the heir of an enlightened king is capable of himself becoming an enlightened ruler, he can only do so through his independent spiritual effort; he cannot simply inherit the seven magical treasures, which disappear when the previous king abdicates to become a homeless monk. The *sutta* tells of eight successive kings who achieve relative enlightenment, and then of a ninth who achieves enlightenment but loses it when he decides to rule according to his own ideas and not in keeping with the righteous practices of his predecessors. This king's failure to provide for the poor leads to theft, which

ultimately leads to punishment, which leads to various forms of social violence, and so on through various levels of degeneration until we reach the Buddha's own time. He predicts that in the future people will degenerate even further, and ultimately almost all of them will become temporarily insane and murder each other. The small remnant will be so shocked by this experience that they will embark on moral and social self-reform, until after tens of thousands of years another *cakkavatti* will be able to emerge (which depends on society already being at a high moral level). That next *cakkavatti*'s period of rule will be especially auspicious because it will coincide with the coming of the next Buddha, Metteyya, to whom the *cakkavatti* will become a student (thus demonstrating the subordination of politics to spirituality). Because the Buddha's theory of time appears to be cyclical, the implication is that after a period of enlightened rule it will all happen again and again, until the universe contracts and the larger cosmic cycle itself repeats.

Finally, in the first portion of the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*,¹³ the Buddha recounts his advice to the Vajjians, who are facing an invasion by the spiritually gifted but evil king Ajātasattu. The Buddha had counseled the Vajjians to preserve their traditional social and political institutions, which were semi-republican in nature (that is, their major political decisions were made by an assembly rather than a single ruler). Later in the same sutta, the Buddha gives parallel advice to the *sangha* (community of monks), encouraging them to deliberate and make decisions democratically and in a spirit of egalitarianism. During the Buddha's lifetime and afterwards, the *sangha* was indeed organized more-or-less democratically. The significance of this parallel between the Buddha's advice to the Vajjians and his organization of the *sangha* is the subject of much scholarly debate. Some interpreters see the fact that the *sangha* was set up democratically as evidence that the Buddha preferred republican government for lay society as

well, and outwardly endorsed monarchy only as a pragmatic necessity given the urgency of maintaining good relations with local monarchs under whose protection the *sangha* lived.¹⁴ Other interpreters, including myself,¹⁵ conclude that while the Buddha clearly did prefer democratic government for the *sangha*, there is no evidence that he preferred it for lay society, and in fact he explicitly endorsed (enlightened) monarchy in every other canonical passage dealing with desirable forms of government. Regardless of which of those two views is correct regarding the historical Buddha's personal preferences for lay government, the existence of his advice to the Vajjians, and its parallel to the structure of the *sangha*, are important factors in the twentieth-century republican transformation.

Overall, on my reading, the canonical texts endorse enlightened monarchy based on a primal social contract. The king's authority originally arose from the consent of the governed, but is maintained by the spiritual righteousness of the king himself. The king's legitimate power extends to preserving order and preventing extreme poverty, though the people apparently have no right to resist even an incompetent or evil king, and there appears to be no possibility of reopening the terms of the social contract.¹⁶ Social and political inequality are an inescapable fact of life, though they are based on human conventions rather than on any natural or spiritual differences among the people, and the monarch has a moral duty to support the poor and unfortunate. *Cakkavattis* will not need to use violence, but inferior kings will inevitably rely on it, though even such semi-legitimate violence is ultimately socially destructive.

The Traditional Buddhist Theory of Government

Before we move into the traditional period,¹⁷ we need to look at one last major event in the early period. Emperor Aśoka Maurya ruled over a large portion of what is now India between c. 268-239² (other scholars say 274-232¹⁸). Aśoka was the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, founder of the Mauryan dynasty and by tradition the person who commissioned Kautilya to write the *Arthasāstra*. Tambiah estimates Aśoka's coronation as having taking place in 270 BCE, and the crucial Kalinga war as having taken place eight years later, in 262.¹⁸ According to both legend and the contents of various edicts Aśoka had carved onto rock pillars across India, Aśoka was so horrified by the violence he had been responsible for during the (very successful) Kalinga war, that he committed himself to peace and social welfare. Later Buddhists have claimed him as an adherent, though the evidence is mixed, and many scholars believe that Aśoka patronized all of the major sects of his time, as was the common practice of Asian monarchs in religiously diverse societies. Regardless of the story's historical accuracy, later Buddhists have held Aśoka up as the model of a *cakkavatti* in real life, and he quickly became the prototypical enlightened Buddhist monarch.¹⁹

In the period after Aśoka's reign, the most important and durable sectarian division, that between Theravada and Mahāyāna, emerged. Theravada Buddhism has been the dominant strain in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, while Mahāyāna Buddhism has been the dominant strain in the East Asian countries of China, Korea, and Japan. The Vajrayāna tradition is itself an offshoot of Mahāyāna, and has been most influential in Tibet, Bhutan, and Mongolia. Although the several traditions disagree about doctrine, history, and the authority of various texts and teachers, they maintained remarkably similar ideas about political theory, largely preserving the theory of the enlightened monarch developed in Early Buddhism, while modifying it in similar ways. Thus, Stanley Tambiah argues: "In the post-canonical works and chronicles of all branches of

Buddhism there is a dense linkage of three conceptions: Mahāsammata as first king, cakkavatti as universal ruler, and bodhisattva as a future Buddha. And there are numerous examples of actual historical kings claiming to be or being acclaimed (by monk chroniclers) as being these or having links to them on the basis of their meritorious acts and righteous rule.”²⁰ Further: “Post-canonical texts, treatises and chronicles of diverse Buddhist schools taking King Mahāsammata as the first model king creatively adopted him as the apical ancestor for developing a genealogical chronicle of kings (rājavamsa) which concludes by incorporating the Gotama Buddha and the Sakyans of Kapilavastu as belonging to the line of Mahāsammata himself.”²¹ Gard makes roughly the same points,²² and Collins and Huxley largely agree as well, though they point out that there are some later texts that instead seek to distinguish the lineage of the Buddha from that of Mahāsammata and/or contemporary kings.²³ However, they also note that “claims by real, historical kings to be descended from [Mahāsammata] are ubiquitous in Sri Lanka, standard in Burma, and somewhat rarer in - but by no means absent from - Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.”²⁴

Among them, these authors identify a number of post-Canonical texts that bear on politics. From the post-Canonical but pre-sectarian era, those texts include:

Mahāvastu – A non-canonical text apparently written between the second century BCE and fourth century CE and important as an early influence on what would later become the Mahāyāna tradition, the *Mahāvastu* provides a genealogy of the Buddha that includes the non-Canonical claim that he was a descendant of Mahāsammata, and offers guidance on rule to kings.²⁵

Abhidharmakośa – This text, written by Vasubandhu in roughly the fifth century CE and also important in the later development of Mahāyāna, repeats the origin story of the *Aggañña Sutta* and thus underlines the importance of Mahāsammata as the first king.²⁶

In the Theravada tradition:

Visuddhimagga – This text, written by Buddhaghosa and dated to the fifth century CE, adds to the canonical *Aggañña Sutta* story the claim that the Buddha had been Mahāsammata in a previous incarnation.²⁷

Dīpavaṃsa/Mahāvamsa – These two texts, the former from the third to fourth century CE, and the latter from around the sixth century, are both the national chronicles of Sri Lanka and tremendously important sources for Theravada Buddhism elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Both identify the Buddha as being a descendant of Mahāsammata.²⁸ They also provide a genealogy of early Sri Lankan kings that makes them descendants of the Buddha's Sākya clan, and thus of Mahāsammata.²⁹

Saddhamma-pakāsinī – This commentary on the canonical text *Paṭisambhidā-magga* is attributed to Mahānāma and dated to the sixth century CE. It identifies Mahāsammata as having been one of the Buddha's prior incarnations.³⁰

Jinakālamālī – This is a text composed in the fifteenth or sixteenth century CE in the Thai kingdom of Lān Nā that both claims the Buddha as a descendant of Mahāsammata and says that the Buddha was himself Mahāsammata in a previous incarnation.³¹

Traiphum Phra Ruang – A Thai text traditionally dated to the fourteenth century CE (though recent scholarship has raised the possibility that it was really an eighteenth century compilation³²) that identifies Mahāsammata as a previous incarnation of the Buddha.³³

Rājāvaliya – This Sri Lankan text (or possibly series of texts), dated by Collins and Huxley to between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries, provides a genealogy of early Sri Lankan kings tying them to the Buddha’s Sākya clan (and thus to both the Buddha and Mahāsammata).³⁴

Mahāsammatavaṃsa / *Rājavaṃsa* – This is a Burmese text from the sixteenth century that largely reproduces the *Mahāvaṃsa* lineage connecting the Buddha and Mahāsammata.³⁵

Southeast Asian Legal Codes -- Tambiah³⁶ and Huxley³⁷ separately note that the historical legal codes of several Southeast Asian countries, particularly Burma and Thailand, explicitly identified Mahāsammata as the person who first developed the codes themselves, and that these references to Mahāsammata continued to be present in the codes until the end of the traditional period in the nineteenth century.

In the Mahāyāna tradition.³⁸

Suḥr̥llekha (Letter from a Friend) – This text by the preeminent Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (c. 150-250 CE) is a letter to a king about how to govern in accordance with Buddhist principles. Much of the advice is similar in content to advice offered to all laypeople, but some elements are specific to kings, such as advice about how to choose a good queen; the overall point is that kings should rule in accordance with dharma/dhamma.³⁹

Catuḥśataka – This text, written by Āryadeva (c. third century CE), contains advice directed to kings about how to rule consistently with the dhamma/dharma, and how to avoid letting their position lead them to a false view of self and of their own merit.⁴⁰

*Kārunīkarāja-Prajñāparamitā-sūtra*⁴¹ (*Jen wang hu kuo po jo po lo mi to ching*; The Prajñāparamitā Sūtra For Humane Kings Who Wish to Protect Their States⁴²) – This text, of unknown authorship and dating to the third or fourth century CE,⁴³ is directed to kings and advises them to rule in accordance with the dhamma/dharma, especially in times of civil disorder. This sutra played a major role in forming East Asian societies' view of the relationship between Buddhism and monarchy, particularly the idea that kings were similar to (or perhaps identical with) bodhisattvas.⁴⁴

Suvarṇaprabhāsauttamarāja-sūtra (*Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra*; Golden Light Sutra) – This sutra, dating to some time before the fifth century CE, is one of the most important Mahāyāna sutras. Several of its sections discuss kingship, and argue that the Buddha and other celestial beings will protect kings who rule according to dhamma/dharma and punish kings who do not. Further, the text suggests that kings rise to their social position due to merit earned in previous lives and with the blessing of various gods.⁴⁵

Shugo-kokkai-sho – This text, written by Saicho in 818 CE, argues that Tendai Buddhism (of which Saicho was the founder) was the only system of Buddhism that could correctly guide the state.⁴⁶

Risho-ankoku-ron (*On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*) – This text was written by the Japanese monk Nichiren in 1260 CE. It argues that no government can be successful if it does not adhere to the teachings of Buddhism (particularly the Lotus Sutra, which Nichiren viewed as the only authentic teaching).⁴⁷

Finally, in texts unique to the Vajrayāna tradition:

Dulva – This is the Tibetan version of the canonical *Vinaya*, which lays out the rules for monks and nuns, as well as recounting a number of the Buddha's teachings. The *Dulva*, but not the Pāli *Vinaya*, identifies the Buddha as a descendant of Mahāsammata.⁴⁸

Despite the important differences among the various Buddhist sects, it seems clear that throughout the traditional period the only form of government that Buddhists of all kinds considered a serious possibility for lay society was monarchy, and that all of the schools adopted the canonical ideas that monarchy was the first form of government, that Mahāsammata was the first king, and that righteous and/or enlightened kings could and should rule according to dhamma/dharma. In both Theravada and Mahāyāna texts we see a persistent effort to identify the Buddha with Mahāsammata, either through descent, through previous incarnation, or both. We also see persistent efforts to identify contemporary and historical kings with the lineage of the Buddha and/or Mahāsammata, and in some texts we see that taken to the further extreme of identifying kings as bodhisattvas.⁴⁹

Modern Buddhism: The Beginnings of the Transformation

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, this traditional Buddhist political theory changes radically. The first changes are mostly efforts at modernization and Westernization of the various monarchies, largely in response / resistance to colonization.⁵⁰ Eventually the changes shift towards embracing either popular republicanism or constitutional monarchy (with relatively little power for the monarch). By the early twenty-first century, all Buddhist-majority countries are republican in form, and some are effectively republican in practice (to varying degrees), though a few retain kings with some degree of power (quite a lot in Bhutan, less in Thailand and Cambodia,⁵¹ though still more than most European monarchs).

As I suggested above, the interesting question is not how or why this change happened, since it seems obvious that colonization and globalization made it clear to all concerned that the traditional monarchies were not a sustainable form of government, both because they could not

(with the exceptions of Thailand and Bhutan) defend themselves against colonization, and because they could not compete with Western countries in the global arena. Rather, the interesting question is how it was possible for Buddhists to justify the change to themselves. What story/ies did Buddhist tell themselves about why it was acceptable to abandon 2,000 years of monarchy and embrace republicanism in lay government? How did they (re)interpret the Canonical and post-Canonical texts to justify the change? Was this seen as a crisis, or were the philosophical issues largely ignored?

To my knowledge, these questions have not been directly examined before, though a number of studies on Buddhism and politics touch on the issue in passing. From those studies, we can extrapolate several possible explanations, which boil down to two basic positions: (1) that the republican transformation has no justification in the Canonical or post-Canonical texts and is flatly a pragmatic and/or cynical invention in response to circumstances; (2) that the transformation rests on some themes in the various historical texts, and that the shift from monarchy to republicanism represents a defensible change in interpretation and emphasis, rather than wholesale invention.

The first view—that the transformation has no basis in the historical texts—is argued by Heinz Bechert in the context of Sri Lanka, Emanuel Sarkisyanz in the context of Burma, and Donald Smith as a general causal argument about political development in the Buddhist-majority countries. Both Bechert⁵² and Sarkisyanz⁵³ argue that the experience of colonialism led to something that they call Buddhist modernism.⁵⁴ For Bechert, Buddhist modernism was an attempt to respond to both colonialism and modernization by referring back to, but also liberally reinterpreting, the Buddhist canon. Hence he writes: "In 'modernistic' Buddhism, Buddhists have the 'freedom to construct a Buddhist economic and social ethic suited to the age,' as Gananath

Obeyesekere has termed it. Such constructions may or may not be in conformity with, or at least not in contradiction with, the teachings of the Buddha. In any case, they are not 'Buddhist' in the sense of being legitimized by the teachings of the historical Buddha himself."⁵⁵ Further: "Certain references to political questions in the scriptures are now interpreted as the Buddha's guidelines for political life, and the old structure of the *Sangha* is described as a model for a democratic state."⁵⁶ (However, Bechert is slightly sympathetic to the idea that there were some democratic strains within traditional Buddhism.⁵⁷)

For Sarkisyanz, Buddhist modernism was an inevitable syncretism of the indigenous Buddhist tradition and the culture imposed by colonialism: "Though democracy and socialism were adapted by Burma from Britain, they were accepted within the context of a Buddhist social ethos....[I]deological syncretism was inevitable."⁵⁸

Finally, for Donald Smith, the transformation represents an incomplete attempt to legitimate government after the colonial powers took over. He suggests that the traditional Buddhist theory of government was irreparably damaged by the colonial victories, and that the embrace of republicanism was both inevitable and only partially effective:

For those societies which came under Western-imperialist rule, the question of legitimacy was never fully resolved. According to traditional criteria, European Christians were ipso facto illegitimate rulers when governing....Buddhist...subjects[.]....After independence, liberal, democratic, and socialist currents of thought, merged with nationalism, produced legitimating ideological formulations which were deemed satisfactory to the political elite, despite their Western origin and their near-unintelligibility to the masses still steeped in traditionalist modes of thought.⁵⁹

The second major line of explanation for the republican transformation is that it drew upon genuine republican and democratic elements in the Buddhist tradition, and thus that it represents a justifiable change in interpretation or emphasis, rather than either the invention of a specious new tradition or the outright destruction of Buddhist political models. The strongest version of this is argued by Joanna Macy,⁶⁰ Trevor Ling,⁶¹ Laksiri Jayasuriya,⁶² and Anthony Warder,⁶³ who separately argue, based in part on the Buddha's advice to the Vajjians in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, that Buddhism has always been philosophically republican, and that the historical embrace of monarchy was pragmatic rather than principled, reflecting a practical need to maintain good relations with the governments of the time, all of which were monarchical.

A more modest claim is made by Donald Smith, who argues that Buddhism has always contained elements amendable to republican government (even if, as above, he ultimately concludes that the way in which the transformation was imposed made the transition to republicanism a rupture with the Buddhist tradition rather than a reinterpretation of it). Hence he writes: "The primary implications of the Buddhist values of individualism and egalitarianism for political culture are obvious. Buddhist authority patterns are highly incongruent with authoritarian political systems and supportive of systems which recognize a broad area of individual freedom."⁶⁴ Also: "It is quite clear that the Buddhist tradition has within it ideational elements which can be used to legitimate change in the direction of democratic socialism or modernity in general."⁶⁵

Richard Gard offers a similar interpretation: "Early Indian Buddhist political thought would seem appropriate for modern constitutional monarchies and parliamentary and presidential governments in Buddhist Asia. The canonical social compact and governmental contract theories and the juridical conception of kingship could perhaps be adapted more meaningfully, at least for

Buddhist peoples, for the new republics than borrowed Western political theories which necessarily have different historical and social contexts. The Buddhist principle that the essential purpose of political authority—whether located in kingship or in village or clan legislative assemblies—is to insure individual and collective security and wellbeing could still apply to contemporary states. Similarly, the early Buddhist theory and practice concerning the qualifications and selection of those who exercise political authority on behalf of the people, and the repudiation of those who fail, might be restated in modern terms for democratic political processes; whereas the later conceptions of the Cakravartin, Devaputra, and Buddha-rāja, which induced and sanctioned political absolutism...may no longer be appropriate.”⁶⁶

Burmese political dissident Aung San Suu Kyi suggests that the important issue in Buddhist political theory has always been creating a government that both reflects and nurtures Buddhist values, and that the particular form that government takes is a matter of convenience rather than principle: "By invoking the Ten Duties of Kings the Burmese are not so much indulging in wishful thinking as drawing on time-honoured values to reinforce the validity of the political reforms they consider necessary. It is a strong argument for democracy that governments regulated by the principles of accountability, respect for public opinion and the supremacy of just laws are more likely than an all-powerful ruler or ruling class, uninhibited by the need to honour the will of the people, to observe the traditional duties of Buddhist kingship. Traditional values serve both to justify and to decipher popular expectations of democratic government.”⁶⁷

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama comes to a similar conclusion, noting that the *sangha* was organized democratically, that democracy enables the kind of open search for the truth that the Buddha encouraged (for example, in his often-cited advice to the Kalamas to trust only their own

experience of religious teachings⁶⁸), and finally that: "Buddhism is essentially a practical doctrine. In addressing the fundamental problem of human suffering, it does not insist on a single solution."⁶⁹

In the next section, I sketch the various national experiences of the transformation to try to assess which of the rival explanations of the republican transformation is most accurate. I conclude that both have some explanatory power. While the Buddhist political tradition is explicitly (and virtually exclusively) monarchist, there are in fact some republican and democratic elements in Buddhism that reformers did draw upon. But those reform efforts were largely driven by Western-influenced or –educated elites, and they met with varying degrees of success. Thus, while Thailand and Bhutan (and to a lesser degree the government-in-exile of Tibet) have successfully and relatively peacefully reinterpreted the Buddhist tradition to support their republican governments, Cambodia and Burma/Myanmar have had a much more turbulent experience of the transformation, and the stability of their more-or-less republican institutions remains in doubt.

Whichever broad explanation is right, it's clear that today virtually all Buddhists see Buddhism as being compatible with republican government, and perhaps as requiring it to some degree. There are no influential Buddhist thinkers calling for a return to absolute monarchy, even if many Buddhists retain a fondness for kings and their special role in traditional Buddhism (for example in Thailand, where *lèse-majesté* remains a regularly prosecuted crime and many citizens have pictures of King Mongkut/Rama IV in their homes or workplaces, or in Tibet and the Tibetan diaspora, in which the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has led the charge to reduce his own authority, often over the objections of the citizens he is trying to empower). Especially since the

1960s, Buddhism has come to be associated with democratic governance and liberation movements of various types.⁷⁰

The Various National Experiences of the Transformation

In this section, I am interested to briefly summarize some of the experiences of various countries of the transition from the traditional to the modern conception of Buddhist political theory. I look only at countries that have Buddhist majorities and in which Buddhism was embraced by the political power structure at the time that government shifted from monarchy to republicanism (very broadly conceived). Thus, for example, I do not look at China, Vietnam,⁷¹ or Korea,⁷² where Buddhism had been displaced by Confucianism as the state ideology well before those countries' republican transitions. I also omit India, since Buddhism had died out there more than 700 years earlier and was only reborn in the mid-twentieth century. Mongolia is out because it was incorporated into the Qing dynasty in the eighteenth century and only became an independent country in 1921, after the Chinese empire had gone through its own republican transformation. Japan is a closer case, but I have decided to omit it on the grounds that the Meiji government's disestablishment of Buddhism and embrace of state Shintō in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries resulted in Buddhists there not facing the same challenge that Buddhists faced in countries whose governments officially embraced Buddhism and its apparent commitment to more-or-less absolute monarchy.⁷³

My discussion is also focused narrowly on the beginnings of the various national transitions to republicanism—the moments at which Buddhist thinkers and practitioners had to justify their belief that Buddhism might be separated from monarchy. There is already a great

deal of excellent work on the larger histories of the role of Buddhism in the politics of these countries during the modern period,⁷⁴ but little on the question of how the people involved understood the political transformation.

Bhutan⁷⁵

The case of Bhutan is unique. Although the country was unified in 1616, and was technically a more-or-less-absolute monarchy until the early twenty-first century, in fact political power was not effectively centralized and made stable until 1907, when the monarchy was made hereditary by the creation of an explicit social contract that stated (in part): “Now therefore a contract has been drawn up in firm conclusion containing a unanimous agreement . . . made evident to all gods and men, that Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, the leader of Bhutan and Tongsa Penlop, has been empowered as hereditary monarch . . . accordingly we the above mentioned lamas and officials, subjects and followers, great and small, shall place our loyalty and render service and honor to the king . . . and to the succession of his royal heirs.”⁷⁶ This first hereditary king, Ugyen Wangchuk, immediately began a process of modernizing and centralizing Bhutan’s system of government. Thus Bhutan was not a traditional Buddhist monarchy in the model of Thailand or Tibet, and its full embrace of hereditary monarchy was in fact the earliest stage of its process of modernization. The major push towards republicanism began in the 1950s, when King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk began a process of moving the country from absolute monarchy towards republican government, establishing a legislature and a cabinet. His son and successor King Jigme Singye Wangchuk continued and deepened these reforms, overseeing the creation of a

constitution, transferring most of his powers to the cabinet, and permitting the impeachment of the king by the legislature. In 2008 Bhutan held its first general election.

Although the Constitution of Bhutan asserts that the new form of government is consistent with Buddhism, there is very little discussion in the document about that issue. The most explicit reference comes in Article 9(20): “The State shall strive to create conditions that will enable the true and sustainable development of a good and compassionate society rooted in Buddhist ethos and universal human values.”⁷⁷ Buddhism remains the dominant (though not the official) religion, and the king must be a Buddhist, but all citizens are guaranteed religious freedom. Similarly, in a series of speeches given by the king and various officials surrounding the process of drafting and ratifying the constitution, only very indirect reference is made to Buddhism, and the major emphasis is on national stability, security, and happiness.⁷⁸ As Mathou notes: “[The constitution] is inspired by traditional principles of conciliation, pragmatism, and compassion. Its support of public welfare is a modern version of the Buddhist doctrine's ‘fundamental need for harmony in human relations.’ While not necessarily ideological, such an approach does provide a political basis to the regime, which is rather new to Bhutan.”⁷⁹

The motivations for these changes are difficult to uncover. There is a relatively small political opposition, mostly in exile in India and Nepal and concentrated in people expelled from Bhutan as non-citizens during a tightening of citizenship laws in the 1980s, as well as some indigenous militant and ethnic dissident groups. Mathou argues that these groups have posed a real threat to Bhutan’s system of government, and that some of the impetus from the reforms may be a response to that threat, as well as to threats from militant groups in neighboring countries who cross the borders relatively easily.⁸⁰ Further, the changes do not appear to be driven by primarily religious motives—we don’t see evidence of a transformation in the

traditional version of Vajrayāna Buddhism that has long been established in Bhutan. Although the government asserts that the constitution is consistent with Buddhism, there is no claim that Buddhism requires republicanism. Mathou argues that the motivation for the change is largely explained by King Jigme Singye Wangchuk's invention of the idea that government's main task is to promote Gross National Happiness (GNH), which is typically explained as being a practical application of Buddhist principles.⁸¹ Mathou suggests that GNH played the role of political ideology, allowing national unity and collective purpose while also providing a standard to evaluate both existing institutions and proposed changes. Thus, this appears to be something of a mixed case—at minimum, it seems that the Bhutanese elite sees otherwise-expedient republican reforms as not contradicting Buddhist values, and at best perhaps it sees republicanism as the best way to achieve those values under modern conditions.

*Burma/Myanmar*⁸²

Like most of the states in Southeast Asia, Burma/Myanmar has a long and complex history of shifting boundaries, degrees of power and autonomy, and ethno-cultural diversity. For our purposes, the relevant era begins with the Konbaung Dynasty (1752-1886), which ruled Burma during the three Anglo-Burman Wars (1824-1885), which ultimately resulted in Burma losing its independence and becoming a British colony. The British remained in complete power until 1937, when Burma was granted limited autonomy. During World War II, Burma was a major battleground; the Japanese took formal political control in 1942, but practical power was disputed until the end of the war. In 1948 Burma became an independent republic, based on the Panglong Agreement negotiated by Aung San before he was assassinated by rivals in 1947. A multi-party civilian government, led by U Nu, ruled until 1962, when the military, led by

General Ne Win, seized power in a coup d'état and established a one-party socialist state. In 1988 a rival group in the military, led by General Saw Maung, seized control and declared martial law, with the professed aim of returning power to an elected civilian government. However, the junta refused to acknowledge the results of the multiparty elections in 1990, placing opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest. Since 2008 there have been numerous signs of reform and moves towards civilian government, including the release of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2010 and the holding of multi-party elections in 2012.

In the Burmese case, the beginnings of Buddhist republicanism are relatively clear. In 1871 U Hpo Hlaing (1829-83), one of King Mindon's (1808-78) principal ministers, wrote a text called *Maha-Samata Vinicchaya Kyàn* (An Analysis of the *Mahāsammata* Concept⁸³), emphasizing that in the Buddhist tradition monarchical power rested on the consent of the people. When King Mindon died in 1878 there was a bloody succession battle. During that period U Hpo Hlaing exercised effective political power, and attempted to impose constitutional limits on the heir, Prince Thibaw, which he outlined in his book *Raja-Dhamma-Singaha-Kyàn* (*Companion of Dhamma for Royalty*⁸⁴). In that text he argued for parliamentary monarchy as being the appropriate manifestation of Buddhist principles. The effort was short lived, and within three months Thibaw had consolidated power and dismissed U Hpo Hlaing from office. During the same period, U Kyaw Htun, a government official in a part of Burma that had already been colonized by Britain, wrote his *Essay on the Sources and Origins of Buddhist Law* (1877), which argued that Buddhist principles supported the idea of restraining government power by subordinating it, through a constitution, to higher laws.⁸⁵

These texts appear to be the first articulations in Burma of the idea that Buddhism might be compatible with, or even require, republican government. Both were written by members of

the political elite, and both offered detailed reinterpretations of the Buddhist tradition to support their claims. Emmanuel Sarkisyanz argues that the subsequent defeat of the monarchy by the British in 1886 effectively destroyed the traditional model of political legitimation, with its elaborate cosmology, and made finding a practical alternative an urgent practical, rather than philosophical, matter.⁸⁶ In the period immediately before and after independence, the nationalist movement led by Aung San was largely secular, whereas the civilian government led by U Nu was explicitly Buddhist, and actively sought to integrate a republican, socialistic Buddhism into government, including making Buddhism the state religion. Given that the earliest republican texts came before the British takeover, and that they were explicitly cast as detailed readings of the canonical Buddhist texts, I think we can class Burma/Myanmar as an example of a transformation genuinely motivated by aspects of Buddhism (even if the immediately historical motivation was the ongoing British threat).

*Cambodia*⁸⁷

In 1863 King Norodom signed a treaty with France making Cambodia a protectorate, largely as a way of protecting Cambodia from the rival ambitions of Thailand and Vietnam, both of which had been trying to exercise control over Cambodia for centuries. Although the treaty gave effective sovereignty to France, it preserved the monarchy, which lasted (despite French interference with the succession and Japanese occupation during World War II) through independence in 1953. In 1955, Norodom Sihanouk, who had been king since he was installed through French machinations in 1941, abdicated in favor of his father, Norodom Suramarit, so he could enter politics directly. He was promptly elected prime minister, on a platform of creating a

Buddhist, socialist state. In 1960, upon the death of his father, he resumed the throne (taking the title Prince rather than King), and in 1963 made changes to the constitution that effectively made him an hereditary monarch once again. In 1970 Prime Minister Lon Nol took advantage of the king's absence on a trip and convinced parliament to depose Sihanouk, creating the Khmer Republic, which claimed to be the true representative of Buddhist political values. Sihanouk went into exile, but also actively supported the Khmer Rouge insurgency. When the Khmer Rouge defeated the Lon Nol government in 1975, it nominally made Sihanouk head of state, but gave him no real power and forced him out again in 1976. The Vietnamese invasion of 1978 ousted the Khmer Rouge regime and replaced it with a socialist government controlled by Vietnam, which Sihanouk opposed from exile. In 1991 the pro-Vietnamese government and the Sihanouk-led opposition forces signed a settlement, allowing Sihanouk to return to Cambodia. He became king again in 1993 and remained on the throne until 2004, when he was succeeded by his son Norodom Sihamoni, though in this later period the power of the monarchy was significantly constrained within the framework of a parliamentary republic.

In the Cambodian case, it's hard not to see the ostensible shift from Buddhist monarchy to Buddhist republicanism as being largely a cynical ploy by elites, specifically Sihanouk, to preserve their own power under changed conditions. Gyallay-Pap argues that the Cambodian monarchy had been less damaged as an institution by colonialism than the monarchies of other Southeast Asian nations, and survived the colonial period largely intact.⁸⁸ Gyallay-Pap⁸⁹ and Suksamran⁹⁰ separately argue that, in the post-war period, there was growing pressure for republican reforms, largely driven by Western-educated, elite, urban Khmers, and that this movement was encouraged and helped by the French. In the period between 1955 and 1963 Sihanouk managed to both abandon monarchy and create a form of republicanism that was as

close to the traditional monarchy as was practically possible under the conditions, all explicitly in the name of Buddhism. When Lon Nol seized power in 1970, he enlisted the help of Ven. Khieu Chum, a prominent Buddhist monk and intellectual, to help justify the change from monarchy to republicanism as being more consistent with Buddhism than Sihanouk's regime had been.⁹¹ The Khmer Rouge attempted to destroy Buddhism in Cambodia, forcing monks to disrobe, and destroying temples and libraries. During the period of Vietnamese occupation, Buddhism slowly returned to Cambodian political life, and in 1991 the dominant Cambodian People's Party once again declared Buddhism the official state religion. As Suksamran concludes: "In the modern history of Cambodia since the 1950s, Khmer Buddhism has continuously been mobilized to achieve the political goals of the ruling élite."⁹²

Laos⁹³

Modern Laos is made up of what had been three kingdoms (Luang Phrabang, Vientiane, and Champasak), united in the kingdom of Lan Xang in the fourteenth century, separated in the eighteenth century, and then reunited by the French colonial power in 1893. France made King Sisavang Vong of Luang Phrabang nominal ruler of the newly reunified Laos, though the French retained control over Laos until independence in 1953, with a brief period of Japanese occupation during World War II and an abortive attempt at independence in 1945. When Laos emerged from French control, it established itself as a constitutional monarchy. Beginning in the early 1950s the communist Pathet Lao were the main opposition force, occasionally entering into unity governments, but primarily acting as an armed insurgency. Beginning in 1968, Vietnamese

forces supported the Pathet Lao, who eventually took power in 1975 and established a communist state.

Stuart-Fox⁹⁴ and Suksamran⁹⁵ separately argue that French colonization effectively destroyed the traditional sources of legitimacy of the Laotian monarchy by making plain to everyone the impotence of the king. Both suggest that by the time independence came, Buddhism as a basis of legitimation was no longer a serious option, and that Western-educated elites were primarily interested in creating a constitutional monarchy based on Western models. Buddhism remained culturally important, but was no longer politically significant. We see that reflected in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Laos, adopted in 1947, which makes Buddhism the state religion (Title I, Article 7) and requires the king to be a Buddhist (Title II, Article 8), but otherwise says nothing about Buddhism and government.⁹⁶ Hence Stuart-Fox argues: "...French rule effectively eliminated any political influence for Buddhism in Laos....[S]ince evidently the king ruled not by karmic right but by benevolent permission of the French Résident Supérieur, religious ritual legitimizing his right to rule was reduced to little more than entertainment, in the eyes of some, at least, of the French-educated Lao élite. Buddhism may have retained a nostalgic cultural significance, but it almost entirely lost its political legitimizing function."⁹⁷ Suksamran agrees: "The French colonial rule over Laos was long enough (1893-1954) to orient the Lao elite to Western modes of thought on constitution and government. These modernizing elite, when they came to power after independence were ambitious to pattern the Lao government after the Western democratic form....Legitimacy for the government now rested on popular participation in government through party politics and elections."⁹⁸

Thus, the case of Laos seems closest to the situation described by Donald Smith above: there never was a question of justifying the transition from monarchy to republicanism, because

colonialism destroyed the possibility of Buddhist monarchy altogether, and when independent, republican government became a possibility the traditional sources of legitimation were simply no longer available to be accepted, rejected, or modified.

Sri Lanka⁹⁹

Buddhism came to Sri Lanka very early—by tradition in the second century BCE—though the island has long had substantial non-Buddhist ethnic minority populations. Monarchy was the dominant form of government, though Sri Lanka has a complex history of internal warfare and invasion by outsiders. Starting in 1517 the Portuguese colonized Sri Lanka gradually. In 1638 the king of Kandy, the last independent monarchy on Sri Lanka, signed a treaty with the Dutch to secure their help in expelling the Portuguese, which was accomplished in the Dutch-Portuguese War in 1656, but which also resulted in Dutch colonization. Starting in the late eighteenth century, the British began to attempt to take control of Sri Lanka, and in 1815 Sri Lanka lost its independence to Britain. The British brought all of Sri Lanka under unified political control, and eventually established a system of domestic representative government. In 1948 Sri Lanka became an independent member of the Commonwealth, governed by a parliament and with the Queen as head of state. In 1972 the country adopted a republican constitution, with a prime minister as head of state. That constitution was replaced in 1978 by another republican constitution, which remains in place today. Sri Lanka has retained a republican system of government since independence, though its political culture has been intensely conflictual, especially concerning relations between the Buddhist Sinhalese majority and the minority, mostly Hindu, Tamils.

Sri Lanka was subject to colonial rule for a longer period than any of the other Buddhist-majority monarchies, which perhaps helps to explain its unique experience. Starting in the late nineteenth century we see the emergence of a Buddhist revival, which was closely tied to a resurgence of Sinhalese nationalism and anti-colonialism. At least for the Sinhalese majority, Buddhism as a religious and cultural identity became a major focus and impetus of anti-British activism. At the same time, we do not see any serious effort to reestablish a Buddhist monarchy. By this point, several generations of Sri Lankans had received Western-style educations and participated in the colonial institutions, and it seems that at least the Sri Lankan elite had accepted that republican government was at least inevitable and perhaps preferable. It is this situation that leads Bechert to conclude that the Buddhist “revival” would be better described as a Buddhist reinvention:

Another factor which contributed to change was the reinterpretation of traditional Buddhist values by the movement of Buddhist modernism. As a consequence of the leading role played by the new elite of the colonial period which had been intensively influenced by European education, the nationalist Buddhist movement made no attempt to restore a traditional form of monarchy in Ceylon, but aimed at the establishment of a democratic republic controlled by the Buddhist majority of the population. The ideals of democracy were searched for and found by the modernists within Buddhist tradition, e.g., in the structure of the early Buddhist *Sangha*.¹⁰⁰

Stanley Tambiah, though more sympathetic to the idea that early Buddhism contains strains of both monarchism and republicanism,¹⁰¹ largely agrees:

The most vivid and consequential formulation of Sinhala Buddhist revivalism with nationalist overtones is to be witnessed in the anti-Christian movement begun by monks like Migettuwatte Gunananda and Hikkaduwe Sumangala in the mid-nineteenth century, then given an institutional and propagandist basis by the Theosophists, notably by Colonel Olcott as their leader in the 1880s, and taken to its ideological limits by the charismatic Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933)...the major features of [whose] Buddhist revivalism [include] a selective retrieval of norms from canonical Buddhism.¹⁰²

Sri Lanka seems to share with Laos the experience that, by the time independence became practically possible, the tradition of Buddhist monarchy was completely dead, and no one was interested in reviving it. It also seems that there was no indigenous republican movement prior to the British takeover, and thus that the ultimate embrace of republicanism was largely the result of the influence of the colonial power and the lack of any plausible indigenous alternative. If Bechert and Tambiah are right, the connection of Buddhism to republicanism really only emerges as part of the Sinhalese nationalist revival. The question, then, is whether the assertion that Buddhism was compatible with, and perhaps even required, republicanism, was an opportunistic ploy to make Buddhism appear relevant to the modern world, or was a good-faith reinterpretation of the evidence from the canonical texts. Bechert clearly thinks it was the former; Tambiah, while acknowledging that the reinterpretation of the canon was selective, also argues that the early texts contain conflicting viewpoints on politics and government, and denies that it is obvious that they unambiguously endorse monarchy. Given these conflicting interpretations, we will need to treat Sri Lanka as an indeterminate case.

In contrast, the case of Thailand is fairly clear, if complex. During the period of Western colonization in Asia, the Chakri Dynasty (1782-present) was in power. Unlike most of the other monarchies of Asia, the Chakri successfully resisted colonization, and Thailand remained sovereign. The future king Mongkut (Rama IV; 1804-1868) entered Buddhist monastic life in 1824. Later that same year his father, Rama II, died. Although Mongkut was technically the rightful heir, the court preferred his half-brother Prince Jessadabodindra, who was crowned Rama III. Mongkut remained a monk, and in 1833 started a monastic reform movement, which ultimately became the influential Thammayut sect and which emphasized a return to the canonical teachings and disciplines of early Buddhism. When Jessadabodindra died in 1851, Mongkut was crowned as Rama IV, and ruled until his death in 1868. He was succeeded by his son Chulalongkorn (Rama V).

Mongkut initiated a sweeping set of reforms to government and Thai culture, all aimed at strengthening Thailand in its struggle against Western powers. He also continued to champion the monastic reforms he had initiated as a monk. On the political side, his reforms centralized and strengthened the power of the monarchy, although he did seek to either abandon or deemphasize some of the practices that elevated the king to divine status. On the religious side, his reforms simultaneously emphasized a return to “pure” tradition while also arguing that Buddhism was compatible with the findings of modern science.

Chulalongkorn (Rama V; ruled 1868-1910) continued and broadened his father’s reform efforts. In 1886 a group of Western-educated Thai princes and officials submitted a petition to Chulalongkorn asking him to change Thailand’s form of government to a constitutional

monarchy. Chulalongkorn declined to make the suggested changes, but responded courteously to what could have been interpreted as treason, and expressed his own support for a constitutional monarchy, though he thought that Thailand was not yet ready for that change.¹⁰⁴ In 1892 Chulalongkorn began a series of changes that moved several steps towards republican (and more fully centralized) government, without fully embracing it.¹⁰⁵

Chulalongkorn's son Vajiravudh became Rama VI in 1910 and ruled until 1925. He continued the governmental reforms, still modernizing and moving towards further centralization of political power, but retaining an absolute monarchy. In response to a letter from his brother and closest friend Chakrabongse, Rama VI also declared his support for a constitutional monarchy, but like his father thought that Thailand was not yet able to sustain that system of government.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, other elements of the Thai elite were pressing for more rapid moves towards a constitutional monarchy with a strong parliament, such as some of the plotters of the failed 1912 Palace Revolt.¹⁰⁷ After the natural death of Vajiravudh in 1925, his brother Prajadhipok became Rama VII. Prajadhipok was on the throne during the successful Revolution of 1932, also led by disenfranchised, Western-educated Thai elites, and which ended the absolute monarchy and replaced it with a constitutional system in which the king retained sharply limited powers.¹⁰⁸ Since 1932 Thai politics has been famously conflictual, though it has retained a republican structure (at times only nominally) with a relatively weak king.

It seems clear that the reform initiatives of Mongkut and Chulalongkorn (perhaps especially their encouragement of Thai elites to send their children to Europe to be educated) played a large role in the eventual change from monarchy to republicanism, and it seems that from Chulalongkorn on, the kings of Thailand were open to the idea of a constitutional monarchy, though none ever thought the time was ripe. In both the political and religious arenas,

their changes led to demystification and an increased respect for science and reason, all of which had the ultimate effect of making the semi-sacred monarchy open to rational doubt and contestation. Along those lines, Keyes argues that the reforms changed Thais' conception of karma from one that was relatively fatalistic to one that encouraged the possibility of both karmic and social mobility and agency.¹⁰⁹ Especially in the case of Mongkut, who was a monk for 27 years before ascending the throne, and who had largely stayed out of palace politics during that period, it seems fair to conclude that his religious reforms were inspired by an earnest belief that they represented a purer form of Buddhism than what had evolved over Thai history, and that his political reforms were carried out in the earnest belief that they were at least not in conflict with Buddhist teachings. The motivations of the plotters of the 1912 Palace Revolt and the Revolution of 1932 appear to have been primarily secular and political.¹¹⁰

*Tibet*¹¹¹

Tibet was effectively a monarchy, under the rule of the Dalai Lama, with a long and complicated history of dependence on other powers, independence, and various degrees of autonomy, until the Chinese took effective power in 1951. The Chinese permitted the existing government to remain in place until a failed uprising in 1959, when the Chinese government deposed the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, who fled into exile in India. Today Tibet remains an autonomous region within China, with the Chinese government exercising effective control. The Tibetan government in exile is a constitutional republic.

In the Tibetan case, the origins of the move from monarchy to republicanism are very clear: they largely affect the Tibetan diaspora in exile, and are almost entirely the brainchild of

the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. These efforts began in 1962-63 with the publication of the Dalai Lama's autobiographical *My Land and My People*, and the promulgation of a draft republican constitution for the government in exile and for Tibet proper should the government in exile be permitted to return. While it's certainly possible to offer a cynical reading of that transformation—that the Dalai Lama recognized that the world would be much more sympathetic to the plight of a democratic government-in-exile than to that of a theocratic and semi-feudal one—the Dalai Lama has consistently defended the new form of government as being better suited to Buddhism than the old regime, and his arguments on that topic seem to be consistent with his other interpretations of Buddhism. For example, he writes: "I am deeply committed to the political modernization and democratization of my native Tibet and have made efforts to develop a democratic system for Tibetans living in exile. In 1963, I promulgated the democratic constitution of Tibet, and our exiled community has, under difficult circumstances, responded well to the challenge of this experiment with democracy. In 1969, I declared that whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue to exist depended on the wishes of the Tibetan people. And in 1991, our legislature, the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies, adopted the Charter of Tibetans in Exile, which expanded the Assembly's membership and transferred from me to it the power to elect the Cabinet."¹¹² Elsewhere he characterized the new constitution as: "based on the principles of the doctrine of Lord Buddha and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."¹¹³

Thus, while it's debatable whether Tibet would have transitioned to republicanism absent the events of 1951-1959, it seems like a reasonable interpretation that the Dalai Lama's commitment to republicanism is genuinely based on a reappraisal of the Buddhist tradition, and not simply the result of cynical calculation.

Conclusion: How Should We Understand the Republican Transformation?

Of the various national experiences of the transition from Buddhist monarchy to republicanism, two (Burma, Tibet) seem to have been driven by Buddhist religious convictions, three (Thailand, Bhutan, Laos) seem to have been motivated by largely non-religious factors that the actors apparently perceived as being consistent with Buddhism, one (Cambodia) appears to be a cynical use of Buddhism to justify elite power, and one (Sri Lanka) is indeterminate. As I indicated above, this suggests that both of the broad explanatory schema—that the transition was largely cynical, and that the transition was rooted in a good-faith reinterpretation of the canonical texts—have some explanatory value. There are some clear cases in each category, as well as some cases that reflect a mixture of the two motivations. If we simply count, there are five cases that appear to be motivated by religious conviction or faith that republicanism was not in conflict with Buddhism, only one clear case of cynical appropriation of Buddhism, and one case that could go either way. That suggests that in general the idea that Buddhism was compatible with republicanism was adopted in good faith, though clearly some actors were cynical.

The republican transformation raises the question of the value of the Canonical and traditional-period Buddhist texts for contemporary political theory. As I argue elsewhere,¹¹⁴ the value of these texts comes not from their political theory (that is, their blueprint for government), but rather from their theory of politics (that is, their argument about the various elements that are relevant to political life and how they should be balanced with one another). No one is going to go back to the Canonical texts to create a new Buddhist monarchy, just as no one does that with Hobbes or Bodin. But there are plenty of reasons to go back to those texts to understand and benefit from their other concerns, such as the Buddha's naturalistic theory of ethics, his no-self

view of personal identity, and his deflationary account of the role that politics should play in a properly ordered human life. Further, the story of Buddhist political theory isn't over, just as the story of Western political theory isn't over. Most of the Buddhist-majority countries have had fewer than 70 years to develop their new political systems and theories of politics, and many of them suffered tremendous social upheaval during that period, making that work all but impossible. The present is the perfect time to tune in to modern Buddhist politics and political theory, to see where they goes now that they have a chance to develop.

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Notes

¹ See Matthew J. Moore, "Political Theory in Canonical Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West* (forthcoming).

² "I find it most useful to periodize Buddhist history not in relationship to presumed events, institutions or periods within it but to what can be known by modern academic observers, and how. The first or *early* period lasts from the time of the Buddha (whenever that was) to that of Aśoka. Some of Aśoka's inscriptions mention Greek kings, who can be dated with confidence, and so his reign, c. 268-239 BC, provides the first really secure historical data we have for Buddhism....[T]he consensus of scholarship has been to accept the approximate accuracy of the statement in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvāṃsa*...that the Pali Canon was written down for the first time in the second half of the first century BC" Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities : Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire*, Cambridge Studies in Religious Traditions (New York, NY, USA, 1997), 53-54; *ibid*.

³ Heinz Bechert, "Sangha, State, Society, 'Nation': Persistence of Traditions in 'Post-Traditional' Buddhist Societies," *Daedalus* 102, no. 1 (1973): 85.

⁴ I use the term "country" loosely, since the modern borders are in many ways the products of colonialism. Nonetheless, for the contemporary non-specialist, it's helpful to be able to talk about the histories of the areas that are today Buddhist-majority countries.

⁵ Scholars use several different terms to identify the same aspect of Buddhism: what is written in the Pāli Canon (PC), and in some cases in the major commentaries on the PC. Thus Damien Keown calls this "classical Buddhism" Damien V. Keown, Charles S. Prebish, and Wayne R. Husted, "Buddhism and Human Rights," in *Curzon critical studies in Buddhism* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1998), 17. Heinz Bechert calls this literature "canonical," as does Ilana Silber Bechert, "Sangha, State, Society, 'Nation': Persistence of Traditions in 'Post-Traditional' Buddhist Societies; Ilana Friedrich Silber, "Dissent through Holiness: The Case of the Radical Renouncer in Theravada Buddhist Countries," *Numen* 28, no. 2 (1981). Balkrishna Gokhale calls it "early" Buddhism Balkrishna Govind Gokhale, "Dhamma as a Political Concept in Early Buddhism," *Journal of Indian History* 46, no. 2 (1968).

⁶ Moore, "Political Theory in Canonical Buddhism."

⁷ Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 407-15.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁹ On the question of whether it's appropriate to call this a social contract, see Steven Collins, "The Lion's Roar on the Wheel-Turning King: A Response to Andrew Huxley's 'the Buddha and the Social Contract'," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24(1996); Andrew Huxley, "The Buddha and the Social Contract," *ibid*.

¹⁰ Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, 279-90.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹² *Ibid.*, 395-405.

¹³ *Ibid.*, DN:16; 231-78.

¹⁴ Joanna Rogers Macy, "Dependent Co-Arising: The Distinctiveness of Buddhist Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7, no. 1 (1979); Trevor Ling, "Kingship and Nationalism in Pali Buddhism," in *Buddhist Studies: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Philip Denwood and Alexander Piatigorsky, *Collected Papers on South Asia* (London; Dublin: Curzon Press, 1983); Anthony Kennedy Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, [1st]. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970); Laksiri Jayasuriya, "Buddhism, Politics, and Statecraft," *International Journal of Buddhist Thought & Culture* 11(2008).

¹⁵ See Moore, "Political Theory in Canonical Buddhism."

¹⁶ "As far as I know there are no Buddhist traditions, literary or otherwise, of kings being 'democratically' elected, of 'social contract' in the sense propounded by Rousseau, of justifiable 'rebellion' or 'just war' against a king who has broken a social contract" Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, "King Mahāsammata: The First King in the Buddhist Story of Creation, and His Continuing Relevance," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 20, no. 2 (1989): 107.

¹⁷ Collins dates the end of the early period of Buddhism to the second half of the first century BCE, when the Canonical texts were written down, as tradition has it, in 29 BCE at the Fourth Buddhist Council, held in Sri Lanka. See Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities : Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire*, 53-54.

¹⁸ Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 55.

¹⁹ However, as Tambiah notes, the idea that an enlightened king might also be a bodhisattva was a later development: "A fundamental and striking feature that Sinhalese or Burmese or Thai concepts of Buddhist kingship stridently assert is conspicuously missing in the Asokan inscriptions. Asoka never once referred to himself in the inscriptions as a *bodhisattva*" *ibid.*, 73.

- ²⁰ "King Mahāsammata: The First King in the Buddhist Story of Creation, and His Continuing Relevance," 107.
- ²¹ Ibid., 108.
- ²² "Buddhism and Political Authority," in *The Ethic of Power: The Interplay of Religion, Philosophy, and Politics*, ed. Harold D. Lasswell and Harlan Cleveland (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962).
- ²³ Steven Collins and Andrew Huxley, "The Post-Canonical Adventures of the Mahāsammata," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24(1996).
- ²⁴ Ibid., 631.
- ²⁵ See Tambiah, "King Mahāsammata: The First King in the Buddhist Story of Creation, and His Continuing Relevance," 109.
- ²⁶ See *ibid.*, 110.
- ²⁷ See *ibid.*, 111. and Collins and Huxley, "The Post-Canonical Adventures of the Mahāsammata."
- ²⁸ See Tambiah, "King Mahāsammata: The First King in the Buddhist Story of Creation, and His Continuing Relevance," 112. and Collins and Huxley, "The Post-Canonical Adventures of the Mahāsammata."
- ²⁹ See "The Post-Canonical Adventures of the Mahāsammata," 631-32.
- ³⁰ See *ibid.*, 624.
- ³¹ See Tambiah, "King Mahāsammata: The First King in the Buddhist Story of Creation, and His Continuing Relevance," 113. and Collins and Huxley, "The Post-Canonical Adventures of the Mahāsammata."
- ³² See "The Post-Canonical Adventures of the Mahāsammata," 626.
- ³³ See Tambiah, "King Mahāsammata: The First King in the Buddhist Story of Creation, and His Continuing Relevance," 114.
- ³⁴ See Collins and Huxley, "The Post-Canonical Adventures of the Mahāsammata," 631-32.
- ³⁵ See *ibid.*, 628.
- ³⁶ Tambiah, "King Mahāsammata: The First King in the Buddhist Story of Creation, and His Continuing Relevance."
- ³⁷ Andrew Huxley, "The Reception of Buddhist Law in S.E. Asia 200 Bce - 1860 Ce," in *La Réception Des Systèmes Juridiques: Implantation and Destin*, ed. Michel Doucet and Jacques Vanderlinden (Bruxelles [Brussels]: Bruylant, 1994); "When Manu Met Mahāsammata," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24(1996).
- ³⁸ Gard also mentions in passing a number of other Mahāyāna texts that are relevant to politics, though without elaborating. These include: *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā (pāla-sūtra)*, Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita* and *Saundarānandakāvya* (c. first century CE), Āryaśura's *Jātakamālā*, and Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya* and *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (c. eighth century CE) Richard A. Gard, "The Saṅgha: Buddhist Society and the Laity," in *Buddhism*, ed. Richard A. Gard (New York: Washington Square Press, 1962).. Specifically in the Japanese tradition, he also mentions Nichiren's *Kai-moku-sho*, as well as Saicho's *Shugo-kokkai-sho*. Unfortunately, my own knowledge of these texts is too limited to allow me to explain Gard's suggestion that they are in some sense political.
- ³⁹ See *ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ See *ibid.*
- ⁴¹ This is the name given by *ibid.*.
- ⁴² This is the translation given by Charles D. Orzech, "Puns on the Humane King: Analogy and Application in an East Asian Apocryphon," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no. 1 (1989).
- ⁴³ See *ibid.*, 18.
- ⁴⁴ For a brief history, see *ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ See Gard, "Buddhism and Political Authority," 44.
- ⁴⁶ See *Buddhist Political Thought; a Bibliography. [Outlines and Bibliographical Index, Sais, Summer Session, 1952* (Washington] School of Advanced International Studies, 1952), 34.
- ⁴⁷ See *ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ Collins and Huxley, "The Post-Canonical Adventures of the Mahāsammata," 628; they cite a chart presented in Geiger, William. (1912) *The Mahāvamsa*. London: Pali Text Society, Appendix A.
- ⁴⁹ See also: Heinz Bechert, "Aspects of Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia," in *The Buddhist Heritage*, ed. Tadeusz Skorupski, *Buddhica Britannica* (Tring: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1989), 21-23.
- ⁵⁰ Regarding the response to colonialism, see Ian Harris, "Buddhism and Politics in Asia: The Textual and Historical Roots," in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, ed. Ian Harris (New York ; London: Pinter, 1999), 15-17.
- ⁵¹ "Moreover the form of kingship envisioned in canonical and later legal sources, as we have now had ample cause to note, no longer seems to match the constitutional arrangements currently operative in Southeast Asia's two remaining Theravada monarchies, Cambodia and Thailand" "Something Rotten in the State of Buddhaland: Good

Governance in Theravāda Buddhism," in *Destroying Mara Forever: Buddhist Ethics Essays in Honor of Damien Keown*, ed. John Powers and Charles S Prebish (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2009), 227.

⁵² Bechert, "Aspects of Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia; "S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and the Legitimation of Power through Buddhist Ideals," in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Chambersburg, Penn.: ANIMA Books, 1978).

⁵³ Emanuel Sarkisyanz, "Buddhist Background of Burmese Socialism," in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos, and Burma*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Chambersburg, Penn.: ANIMA Books, 1978).

⁵⁴ Collins points out that "Buddhist modernism" as a concept was coined by Alexandra David-Neel in 1911, Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities : Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire*, 55, n. 72.

⁵⁵ Bechert, "Aspects of Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia," 25.

⁵⁶ "Sangha, State, Society, "Nation": Persistence of Traditions in "Post-Traditional" Buddhist Societies," 91, internal citation omitted.

⁵⁷ "The ideals of democracy were searched for and found by the modernists within Buddhist tradition, e.g., in the structure of the early Buddhist *Sangha*" "S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and the Legitimation of Power through Buddhist Ideals," 201; *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Sarkisyanz, "Buddhist Background of Burmese Socialism," 94.

⁵⁹ Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 10-11.

⁶⁰ Macy, "Dependent Co-Arising: The Distinctiveness of Buddhist Ethics."

⁶¹ Ling, "Kingship and Nationalism in Pali Buddhism."

⁶² Jayasuriya, "Buddhism, Politics, and Statecraft."

⁶³ Warder, *Indian Buddhism*.

⁶⁴ Smith, *Religion and Political Development*, 198.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁶⁶ Gard, "Buddhism and Political Authority," 66-67.

⁶⁷ Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings* (London; New York Viking, 1991), 173.

⁶⁸ Anguttara Nikaya 3.65 at Insight, "Anguttara Nikaya".

⁶⁹ Tenzin (His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama) Gyatso, "Buddhism and Democracy," The Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, <http://www.dalailama.com/messages/buddhism/buddhism-and-democracy>.

⁷⁰ See for example the rise of "engaged Buddhism": Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King, eds., *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

⁷¹ See Thiên Dô, "The Quest for Enlightenment and Cultural Identity: Buddhism in Contemporary Vietnam," in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, ed. Ian Harris (New York ; London: Pinter, 1999). and Henrik H. Sørensen, "Buddhism and Secular Power in Twentieth-Century Korea," *ibid.*

⁷² See "Buddhism and Secular Power in Twentieth-Century Korea."

⁷³ See Hiroko Kawanami, "Japanese Nationalism and the Universal *Dharma*," *ibid*; Peter A. Pardue, *Buddhism : A Historical Introduction to Buddhist Values and the Social and Political Forms They Have Assumed in Asia* (New York; London: Macmillan, 1971), Ch. 5; Thomas Borchert, "Buddhism, Politics, and Nationalism in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries," *Religion Compass* 1, no. 5 (2007).

⁷⁴ For good overviews and an introduction to the literature, see Ian Harris, ed. *Buddhism, Power and Political Order* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007); *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia* (New York ; London: Pinter, 1999).

⁷⁵ On Buddhism and politics in Bhutan, see Thierry Mathou, "Political Reform in Bhutan: Change in a Buddhist Monarchy," *Asian Survey* 39, no. 4 (1999); Marian Gallenkamp, *Democracy in Bhutan: An Analysis of Constitutional Change in a Buddhist Monarchy*, Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies Research Papers (New Delhi, India: Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2010); Tashi Wangchuk, "The Middle Path to Democracy in the Kingdom of Bhutan," *Asian Survey* 44, no. 6 (2004); Michael Aris, *The Raven Crown : The Origins of Buddhist Monarchy in Bhutan*, Repr. with corrections. ed. (Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2005); Thierry Mathou, "How to Reform a Traditional Buddhist Monarchy: The Political Achievements of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth King of Bhutan (1972-2006)," (Thimphu, Bhutan: The Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2008).

⁷⁶ Wangchuk, "The Middle Path to Democracy in the Kingdom of Bhutan," 838, quoting Aris (2005), 96.

⁷⁷ "The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan," (2008).

⁷⁸ See the transcripts at <http://www.constitution.bt/html/making/speeches.htm>. But see also: "Among the laity, my main informants, the emphasis was on a vocabulary of moral conduct with their legal cases treated as removed directly from religious values. Yet, when I suggested to Bhutanese that Buddhism was not important to the emerging laws and legal system, this was vigorously denied and I was informed that Buddhism was at the core of the laws.

Examining the emergence of the modern legal system and laws passed by the National Assembly established in 1953, it is clear that from the 1950s to 1980s as the state sought to develop the country, laws were mainly imported. In the following period, from approximately 1991 onwards, there has been a conscious engagement by the judiciary and the emerging cadre of legally educated lawyers to integrate the laws with a broader understanding of Bhutanese values. The core of these values, often referred to as 'Bhutanese culture,' lie in Buddhism" Richard W. Whitecross, "Separation of Religion and Law?: Buddhism, Secularism and the Constitution of Bhutan," *Buffalo Law Review* 55(2007): 708..

⁷⁹ Mathou, "Political Reform in Bhutan: Change in a Buddhist Monarchy," 617; *ibid.*

⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, 613, n.2.

⁸¹ See "How to Reform a Traditional Buddhist Monarchy: The Political Achievements of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth King of Bhutan (1972-2006)," 7.

⁸² On the relationship between Buddhism and government in Burma, especially in the modern period, see Donald Eugene Smith, ed. *Religion, Politics, and Social Change in the Third World: A Sourcebook* (New York: The Free Press, 1971); Harris, "Something Rotten in the State of Buddhahland: Good Governance in Theravāda Buddhism; Andrew Huxley, "Rajadhamma Confronts Leviathan: Burmese Political Theory in the 1870s," in *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*, ed. Ian Harris (London; New York: Routledge, 2007); Bruce Matthews, "The Legacy of Tradition and Authority: Buddhism and the Nation in Myanmar," in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, ed. Ian Harris (New York ; London: Pinter, 1999); Sarkisyanz, "Buddhist Background of Burmese Socialism; *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965).

⁸³ The translation is from Harris, "Something Rotten in the State of Buddhahland: Good Governance in Theravāda Buddhism," 221.

⁸⁴ The translation is from *ibid.*

⁸⁵ See Huxley, "Rajadhamma Confronts Leviathan: Burmese Political Theory in the 1870s," 27.

⁸⁶ Sarkisyanz, *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution*.

⁸⁷ On Buddhism and politics in modern Cambodia, see Somboon Suksamran, *Buddhism and Political Legitimacy* (Bangkok: Research Dissemination Project, Chulalongkorn University, 1993); Peter Gyallay-Pap, "Reconstructing the Cambodian Polity: Buddhism, Kingship and the Quest for Legitimacy," in *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*, ed. Ian Harris (London; New York: Routledge, 2007); Harris, "Something Rotten in the State of Buddhahland: Good Governance in Theravāda Buddhism."

⁸⁸ See Gyallay-Pap, 2007 #1933@esp. 81-82}

⁸⁹ Gyallay-Pap, "Reconstructing the Cambodian Polity: Buddhism, Kingship and the Quest for Legitimacy."

⁹⁰ Somboon Suksamran, "Buddhism, Political Authority, and Legitimacy in Thailand and Cambodia," in *Buddhist Trends in Southeast Asia*, ed. Trevor Oswald Ling (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).

⁹¹ See Harris, "Something Rotten in the State of Buddhahland: Good Governance in Theravāda Buddhism."

⁹² Suksamran, "Buddhism, Political Authority, and Legitimacy in Thailand and Cambodia," 137.

⁹³ On Buddhism and politics in Laos, see Martin Stuart-Fox, "Laos: From Buddhist Kingdom to Marxist State," in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, ed. Ian Harris (New York ; London: Pinter, 1999); "Marxism and Theravada Buddhism: The Legitimation of Political Authority in Laos," *Pacific Affairs* 56, no. 3 (1983); Volker Grabowsky, "Buddhism, Power and Political Order in Pre-Twentieth Century Laos," in *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*, ed. Ian Harris (London; New York: Routledge, 2007); Stuart-Fox, "Laos: From Buddhist Kingdom to Marxist State; Suksamran, *Buddhism and Political Legitimacy*.

⁹⁴ Stuart-Fox, "Laos: From Buddhist Kingdom to Marxist State; "Marxism and Theravada Buddhism: The Legitimation of Political Authority in Laos."

⁹⁵ Suksamran, *Buddhism and Political Legitimacy*.

⁹⁶ "Constitution of the Kingdom of Laos," (1947).

⁹⁷ Stuart-Fox, "Laos: From Buddhist Kingdom to Marxist State," 154; *ibid.*

⁹⁸ Suksamran, *Buddhism and Political Legitimacy*, 83-84.

⁹⁹ On Buddhism and politics in Sri Lanka, see Bechert, "Sangha, State, Society, "Nation": Persistence of Traditions in "Post-Traditional" Buddhist Societies; "S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and the Legitimation of Power through Buddhist Ideals; "Aspects of Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia; Bardwell L. Smith, ed. *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka* (Chambersburg, Penn.: ANIMA Books, 1978); Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*.

¹⁰⁰ Bechert, "S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and the Legitimation of Power through Buddhist Ideals," 201; *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Hence: "In my view some of the major issues relating to the religious pursuit and political action in both early and historical Buddhism are incapable of unambiguous and clear resolutions; rather, the text themselves portray

dialectical tensions, polarities and complementarities, in the treatment of basic issues” Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*, 402.

¹⁰² *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 5-7.

¹⁰³ On the relationship between Buddhism and politics in Thailand, see *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*; Donald K. Swearer, "Centre and Periphery: Buddhism and Politics in Modern Thailand," in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, ed. Ian Harris (New York ; London: Pinter, 1999); Harris, "Something Rotten in the State of Buddhahland: Good Governance in Theravāda Buddhism; Frank E. Reynolds, "Sacral Kingship and National Development: The Case of Thailand," in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos, and Burma*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Chambersburg, Penn.: ANIMA Books, 1978); Charles F. Keyes, "Buddhist Politics and Their Revolutionary Origins in Thailand," *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique* 10, no. 2 (1989); Suksamran, "Buddhism, Political Authority, and Legitimacy in Thailand and Cambodia."

¹⁰⁴ See H.R.H. Prince Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life: The Paternal Monarchy of Bangkok, 1782-1932* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., Inc., 1960), 260-63.

¹⁰⁵ See Keyes, "Buddhist Politics and Their Revolutionary Origins in Thailand."

¹⁰⁶ Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life: The Paternal Monarchy of Bangkok, 1782-1932*, 289-90.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 276.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 309-14.

¹⁰⁹ Keyes, "Buddhist Politics and Their Revolutionary Origins in Thailand."

¹¹⁰ See Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life: The Paternal Monarchy of Bangkok, 1782-1932*.

¹¹¹ On the relationship between Buddhism and politics in Tibet, see Harris, "Something Rotten in the State of Buddhahland: Good Governance in Theravāda Buddhism," 232; Tenzin (His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama) Gyatso, *My Land and My People* (New York: Potala Corporation, 1977), 231; "Buddhism, Asian Values, and Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 1 (1991): 4; Harris, *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, 11 ff. Ronald D. Schwartz, "Renewal and Resistance: Tibetan Buddhism in the Modern Era," in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, ed. Ian Harris (New York ; London: Pinter, 1999); Gyatso, "Buddhism and Democracy" n.p.

¹¹² "Buddhism, Asian Values, and Democracy," 4.

¹¹³ *My Land and My People*, 231.

¹¹⁴ Moore, "Political Theory in Canonical Buddhism."

Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road demonstrates that the history of Buddhist-Muslim interaction is much richer and more complex than many assume. This groundbreaking book covers Inner Asia from the eighth century through the Mongol empire and to the end of the Qing dynasty in the late nineteenth century. By exploring the meetings between Buddhists and Muslims along the Silk Road from Iran to China over more than a millennium, Johan Elverskog reveals that this long encounter was actually one of profound cross-cultural exchange in which two religious traditions were not only enriched but transf...