The Adaptation of Buddhism to China, an Anthropological Analysis

Biernatzki, W.E.*

The Buddhist religion arose in the highly developed civilization of India about 500 B.C. During the first century A.D. it appeared in China, also a highly developed civilization, and gradually extended its influence until it became an accepted feature of Chinese life.

Buddhism achieved this relatively high degree of success in China even though it manifested several characteristics which Chinese found difficult to accept. A process of adjustment had to take place during which the original Indian forms of Buddhism were, to some degree, changed or reinterpreted to meet at least the more urgent demands made by Chinese culture. Simultaneously, Chinese culture was influenced by Buddhism in many ways.

This encounter of Buddhism with China provides the ethnologist with a well-documented case in which the process of acculturation can be studied in a developed civilization, rather than in the small scale, preliterate societies with which anthropologists usually must be content. Buddhism is a complex social, religious and intellectual institution, the product of a literate civilization which, when Buddhism began, was already more than two-thousand years old.[1] Although

* Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology Sogang University.

1) This estimate is based on an assumption of at least some continuity between the Indus civilization, represented by such cities as Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, and the later Aryan and Gangetic civilizations. Although this continuity remains conjectural, it is supported by a not-

Chinese civilization was somewhat younger, by the later Han Dynasty when Buddhism entered China the nation had achieved the respectable span of fifteen hundred years of history and a level of literary, philosophical and technological accomplishment comparable to that of India.

This case therefore is especially significant for ethnological theory because it represents the kind of acculturative event which is most common in our contemporary world. The inter-cultural encounters we most often experience have to do with the movement of complex institutions from their place of origin in one highly-developed civilization into other civilizations which are equivalently developed. The institution, like Buddhism when it first entered China, inevitably conflicts, in some respects, with the new culture in which it finds itself; although in other ways it may be more congenial to the host culture and may be eagerly welcomed by at least some of the members of that society. Furthermore, if it does not fit with at least a few of the new culture's deepest values or with at least some of its most fundamental ways of perceiving reality it has little chance of surviving long in that milieu.

I wish to emphasize that my interest in the fortunes of Chinese Buddhism from the late Han (first century A.D.) to the late T'ang (ninth century A.D) dynasties is the interest of an ethnologist, not of an historian. I will depend entirely on secondary historical sources, which competent historians have so dilligently written based on their own competent study of the primary sources. I then will rely on their conclusions as data for anthropological reflection, to search for generalizable insights into the process by which complex institutions from one civilization become integrated into the life of a different civilization.

---

inconsequential body of archaeological evidence. See, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, edited by Andrew Sherratt and Grahame Clark, Cambridge, 1980, pp.162 and 164~165.

My perspective will be that of the symbolic anthropologist, with particular reliance on the concept of the "root paradigm" developed by the late Victor Turner. Beneath the surface of culture, with its symbolic interactions and patterned norms of conduct, Turner discerned a deeper level of cultural forms, more highly resistant to change than the transient and often ambivalent symbols and norms at the surface. These deeper forms, which Turner called "root paradigms," constitute the most fundamental cultural patterns by which the responses of people to their most basic existential needs are directed.[2]

As examples of root paradigms Turner has cited the Way of the Cross, in Christian cultures, particularly as the paradigm for pilgrimage behavior,[3] Saint Thomas á Becket as one who put into practice the paradigm of "acceptance of martyrdom for an altruistic cause,"[4] the Mexican revolution of 1810, which both expressed symbolic themes from Mexico's earlier cultural history and established a paradigm for future revolutionary behavior in Mexico,[5] and the word for "word" Italicize among the Dogon of West Africa, which "provides in its various senses, contexts, and usages the master key to the understanding of Dogon culture."[6]

Like other dimensions of culture, root paradigms can change and can be changed, but they are so deeply identified with the most fundamental levels of what a culture "really is" that they are less easily changed than are more superficial symbols and norms by external influences which conflict with their essential character. On the other hand, root paradigms are cultural structures which are consciously

2) Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*. Ithaca, 1974, p.15 and *passim*.
3) Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*. New York, 1978, p.248.
4) Victor Turner, *op.cit.* (1974), *loc.cit.* and pp.60~97.
5) *Ibid.*, pp.98~155.
6) *Ibid.*, pp.156 and 156~165, based on *Ethnologie et langage: La parole chez les Dogon*, by G. Calame-Griaule, Paris, 1965.

recognized, but not consciously grasped by the people of that culture, even though they influence their cognitive behavior. Although root paradigms give direction to behavior, the actual ways in which that behavior is expressed can take many forms, depending on the particular symbols selected to express them. The root paradigm of the Way of the Cross, for example, is expressed with considerable variation in the Irish pilgrimages to Saint Patrick's Purgatory, Mexican pilgrimages to the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the more recently instituted pilgrimages to Lourdes.[7]

Consequently, in situations where innovations are more congenial to the character of existing root paradigms than are the prevailing native forms, root paradigms can be conducive to more rapid change--to more rapid acculturation of the superficial forms observed in everyday life. In such cases, the deepest levels of the culture remain only mildly affected while violent, even revolutionary changes may appear to be sweeping away the surface of culture. An often-remarked-on instance of this is the industrialization of Japan, in which the daily way of life of the Japanese people changed drastically to fit an industrial society, but many deep-seated values and patterns of behavior changed only in their surface manifestations while retaining much of their earlier form at more fundamental levels.

One of the aims of this paper, therefore, will be to suggest how the root paradigms of Chinese culture influenced the way Buddhism was accepted by the Chinese. Some elements of the religion obviously must have been enough in agreement with those root paradigms to secure a foothold for the deep penetration of Buddhism into Chinese life, a penetration which has remained effective throughout nineteen-hundred years. On the other hand, Buddhist doctrines and practices have been attacked vehemently by Chinese scholars on the grounds

7) Turner and Turner, *op.cit.* (1978), pp.104~139, 40~103, and 203~230, for Ireland, Mexico and France, respectively.

that they violated the most basic values of Chinese civilization. This criticism has continued at least from the *T'ai-p'ing-ching* 太平經 of Yü Chi 于吉, traditionally dated in the reign of the Emperor Shun 順帝, 126-144 A.D.,[8] down through the time of the leader of the modern Chinese renaissance, Hu Shih 胡適, who bemoaned Buddhism's "Indianization of China" in an address delivered at Harvard University in 1936.[9] Diligent analysis may show us which of the root paradigms of Chinese culture encouraged the acceptance of Buddhism and which of them discouraged it. In addition, we may be able to achieve some understanding of how the root paradigms of Chinese culture have changed under the steady pressure of Buddhist influence during the past nineteen-hundred years.

China, under the Han Dynasty, had become, by the first century A.D., a sprawling empire, stretching from Korea to Vietnam and from the ocean to trading outposts in what are now Iran and Soviet Central Asia. Probably for the first time, on a significant scale, the people of the Yellow River Valley and the Yellow Plain had been brought into intimate contact with a wide diversity of other cultures; and many "barbarians" seem to have moved with relative freedom inside China, most of them as mercenaries or as merchants, selling the products of lands as distant as India, Arabia and the Roman Empire.

Although attempts have been made to credit the Buddhist religion with entering China during the early Han, or even as early as the late Chou Dynasty (1100-256 B.C.), the most reliable date seems more or less to coincide with the dream of Emperor Ming 明帝 (r.58-75 A.D.), in which the Emperor saw a golden deity flying past his palace. The dream was explained as referring to Buddha, by a royal

8) Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*. Princeton, 1964, p. 51.
9) Kenneth K.S. Ch'en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism*. Princeton, 1973, p. 3 ; citing Hu Shih, *Independence, Convergeance, and Borrowing*. Cambridge, 1937, pp. 219~247.

minister who somehow had known about Buddhism already, and the Emperor is said to have sent envoys to India to learn more about the Buddha. Although the story is historically doubtful, the timing seems approximately correct for the first noteworthy Buddhist penetration into China.[10]

Supporting this view is the biography of Prince Liu Ying 劉英 of Ch'u 楚 which contains references not only to Buddha but to an already thriving community of monks and lay people in Ch'u (now comprising parts of Kiangsu and Shantung provinces) by 65 A.D.[11] A passage in *Wei-Lüeh* 魏略 ("A Brief Account of the Wei Dynasty"), written between 239 and 265 A.D., suggests a date as early as 2 B.C. for a significant oral transmission of Buddhist doctrines to Chinese emissaries who had gone to Scythian controlled areas of Central Asia.[12]

There seems to be reliable evidence that a work called a "Sutra in Forty-Two Sections" was present in China by 166 A.D. Although the exact source and content of the sutra are historically uncertain, a sutra of that name is said to have been brought from Scythia by Chinese envoys sent out as a consequence of the dream of Emperor Ming, in the seventh decade of the first century A.D. References to and quotations from that work indicate a Hinayana (Theravada) 小乘 tendency.[13]

Indian or Southeast Asian traders appear to have established a Buddhist community in South China during the first or second century A.D., and a memorial addressed to the Emperor Huan 桓帝 by Hsiang K'ai 襄楷 in 166 A.D. provides strong evidence that Buddhism not only was present in the capital city, Lo-yang, but that Buddhist altars had been set up in the imperial palace, itself.[14]

10) Kenneth Ch'en, *op.cit.* (1964), pp.27~31.
11) *Ibid.*, pp.33~34.
12) *Ibid.*, pp.31~32.
13) *Ibid.*, pp.34~36.

During its first century or so in China, Buddhism's presence may have been veiled from official notice--and therefore escaped mention in official records and by the official historians--because of its superficial resemblance to Taoism, in spite of some rather fundamental doctrinal differences.[15] The selection of sutras for translation during this early period seems to have reflected Taoist preoccupations. For example, the Parthian monk, An Shih-kao 安世高, who is said to have been active in Lo-yang from about 148 to 168 A.D.[16], translated the *Sutra on the Nine Causes of Unexpected Death* (*Chiu-heng-ching* 九橫經), which contains much material of relevance to the Taoist interest in achieving immortality, but almost nothing that is discernibly Buddhist.[17]

By the end of the Han Dynasty, in 220 A.D., twelve Indian and Central Asian translators are said to have translated 192 books and 395 fascicles of sutras; by 394 A.D., these totals had risen to 909 books and 2,085 fascicles; and by the end of the Yao-ch'in 後秦, Dynasty, the period of the great translation project headed by the half-Indian monk Kumarajiva, in 417 A.D., a total of 1,003 books and 2,709 fascicles had been translated.[18] Not only the selection but also the quality of the earlier translations were poor, and as the numbers of Chinese monks increased they felt an urgent need for more and better scriptures, including sutras which they knew existed in India and Central Asia, but had not yet been brought to China.

One of the earliest of almost two-hundred Chinese and Korean monks known to have personally travelled to India and Central Asia between the third and the eighth centuries was Fa Hsien 法顯, who left his monastery in the city of Ch'ang-an--formerly the capital of

14) *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 38, 40.
15) *Ibid.*, p. 48.
16) *Ibid.*, p. 43.
17) *Ibid.*, pp. 49~50.
18) Carsun Chang, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*. New York, 1957, page 82.

the Early Han Dynasty--in 399 A.D., by the overland route through the desert, and returned to China by sea, with stops in Ceylon and Sumatra, in 414 A.D.[19] Fa Hsien, himself a believer in Mahayana, reported on the presence or absence of Buddhism and also on whether the monks encountered were followers of Mahayana or Hinayana. For example, all 4,000 monks in Shen-shen, near Lop Nor, were said to follow Hinayana, but nevertheless studied Sanskrit.[20] On the other hand, most of the "several myriads" 乃數萬人 of monks in Yu-teen (Khotan) were students of Mahayana.[21] The same mixture may to some degree still have prevailed in China, but Mahayana was rapidly becoming dominant. No interest in Pali texts or Hinayana seems to have been manifested by such later emissaries as Sung Yün 宋雲 and Hui Sheng, 惠生 who obtained 170 volumes of Mahayana texts from Gandhara in 518, at the command of Empress Dowager Ta-hao 太后 of the Great (or Northern) Wei Dynasty 北魏.[22] The prodigious translator Hsüan-tsang 玄奘 spent the years 629 to 645 on a journey to India, during which he "obtained and translated 657 Sanskrit Buddhist texts" and sought the best training he could find in the Sanskrit language.[23] I-ching 義淨 left China by the sea route from Canton in 673, and spent the ten years from 676 to 685 A.D. studying in India, after which he lived for approximately ten more years in the city of Bhoja, apparently on the island of Sumatra, which then was a strong Buddhist center, translating Sanskrit texts, before returning to continue his translation work in China.[24] The Korean

19) James Legge, translator and editor, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*. Delhi, 1971 (1886). The figure of "almost two-hundred" travellers is from John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia, Tradition and Transformation*. Boston, 1973, p.91.

20) Legge, *op.cit.*, pp.13~14.

21) *Ibid.*, p.16.

22) *The Hye Ch'o Diary*, translated and edited by Yang, Han-Sung, *et al.*, Seoul and Berkeley, n.d. (1984), p.9.

23) *Ibid.*, pp.10~11.

24) *Ibid.*, pp.12~13.

monk Hye Ch'o 慧超, whose diary recently appeared in a new English translation, left China via the sea route in 724, and returned by way of the "silk road" through the desert in 727. His beliefs, too, were strongly Mahayanist, and he reportedly was involved in the introduction of Tantric Buddhism into China.[25]

The Chinese reverence for the written word can be interpreted as a root paradigm to which the Buddhists could and did respond, chiefly through their translation projects, aided, when necessary, by these long expeditions to procure documents. The "wall posters" of twentieth century Oriental politics are evidence of the persistence of a tradition which has demanded that an opinion must find its expression in writing before it can be expected to attract serious attention.

Although the monk-travellers were chiefly interested in collecting manuscripts and describing what they observed, contrasts and potential conflicts among the various religious tendencies sometimes appear even in their writings.

For example, Fa-hsien delayed his journey for three months so he could observe the great ceremony held in Khotan from the first to the fourteenth days of the fourth (lunar) month. One feature of the elaborate processions was a huge float ("car") made by the Mahayana monks of the Gomati monastery. In the middle of the float was an image of Buddha, flanked by two bodhisattvas and followed by devas. In a footnote, Legge comments that the "devas" represent all the Hindu gods and that the characters Fa-hsien uses for "devas", *chu-t'ien* 諸天, mean "all Heaven," while *t'ien*, alone, can mean "God," in ordinary Chinese usage. The Mahayanist monks by this symbolism therefore subordinated both the Hindu deities and the Chinese supreme Deity, "Heaven," not only to Buddha but also to the bodhisattvas in attendance on him.[26] Furthermore, the king of Khotan removed his crown, changed clothes, and walked barefoot to the gate of the

25) *Ibid.*, pp.14~22, and *passim.*
26) Legge, *op.cit.*, pp.18~19 and 19n.

city to meet the procession, whereupon he kow-towed to the image of Buddha, scattered flowers and burned incense before it.[27] The Buddhist expectation, which prevailed in India and at least parts of Central Asia, of symbolic subordination of the royal authority to the veneration of Buddha and, either explicitly or implicitly, to the religious superiority and independence of the *sangha*, the monastic brotherhood, would be a perennial stumbling block in the relations between Buddhism and the extremely centralized hierarchy of Chinese society, and it proved to be a point on which the *sangha* ultimately would have to yield. Centralization of all political and social power in a bureaucracy under an emperor who enjoys the "mandate of Heaven" can be seen as a strong Chinese root paradigm whose external expression has been only slightly affected even by today's Communist government. On the more purely religious issue of the subordination of "all Heaven" to Buddha, however, Chinese Buddhism has been tolerated or ignored by other traditions, which, in any case, interpret "heaven" from very different perspectives.

Early Chinese objections to Buddhism are briefly summarized in *Mou-tzu on the Settling of Doubts* (*Mou-tzu Li-huo-lun* 牟子理惑論), which appears to date from about 250 A.D.[28] The *Mou-tzu* is a pro-Buddhist work designed to defend the religion against its Confucian detractors. Kenneth Ch'en has summarized Mou-tzu's chief concerns under four headings: confusion about the meaning of "Buddha," objections on the ground that if the religion were of value it would have been taught by the ancient sages and Confucius, objections that monks are unfilial to their ancestors when they shave their heads because hair is part of the natural body inherited from the ancestors, and confusion about the meaning of rebirth in another life in Buddhism.[29]

27) *Ibid.*, p.19.
28) Kenneth Ch'en, *op.cit.* (1964), p.37.
29) *Ibid.*, p.38.

Of these arguments or problems the one which may have carried the greatest weight with the Chinese of that time might have been the one concerning Buddhism's novelty. Mou-tzu answered that there are many things which are good and in accord with the classics but which are not actually written down in books, and that Buddhism is one of these and should be accepted on its own merits, not rejected simply because Buddha's doctrine is not specifically mentioned by the ancient sages.[30]

Mou-tzu defended head shaving by citing an allegedly parallel situation in which a son saves his father from drowning, but only through actions, such as pulling him bodily from the water and turning him upside-down, which ordinarily would seem extremely unfilial but in the circumstances worked to the father's advantage. The spiritual benefits to parents of head-shaving--and, implicitly, of celibacy--ultimately would far outweigh the seemingly unfilial actions.[31] It is doubtful that either of these arguments converted any really determined opponents, but they would have been of great value for those who already were attracted to Buddhism but were held back by Confucian scruples.

The difficulty of explaining the original Buddhist understanding of rebirth without some surviving or transmitted entity from the previous incarnation seems to have driven Chinese Buddhists to the position that some kind of indestructible soul (*shen-ling* 神靈) survived death, rather than merely the karma, in contrast to the standard doctrine of earlier Indian and Central Asian Buddhism. This adjustment of doctrine to Chinese understanding is evident in both the *Mou-tzu* and the *Annals of the Later Han* (*Hou Han Chi* 後漢紀), by Yüan Hung 袁宏 (328-376 A.D.).[32] By the fifth century the mainstream of Chinese Mahayana seems to have moved closer to the original

30) *Ibid.*, p.39.
31) *Ibid.*
32) *Ibid.*, p.46.

doctrine of karma as the only thing transmitted from one life to the next, without an accompanying entity; but a new challenge appeared, surprisingly from India, in the form of the Mahayana *Mahāparinirvānasūtra*, translated by Fa-hsien and Dharmakshema, particularly as it was interpreted by Tao-sheng 道生.[33] Tao-sheng criticized the translation as incomplete and argued for an idea of nirvana in which a "blissful and pure life," where being and nonbeing are unified, is enjoyed by the "true self" (*chen-wo* 眞我 or *shen-wo* 神我), "which is in reality the Buddha-nature in each individual."[34] In this way, the Chinese-Taoist root paradigm of an individual seeking immortality was restated, even if in an adapted way which could be accommodated to the words of the sutras. Taoism, by this time, had abandoned its original idea of corporeal immortality in favor of a concept near that of an incorporeal soul.[35]

Buddhists adopted three methods for answering the Confucian objection that Buddhism was "unfilial."[36] They were, first, able to point to some passages in existing sutras which stressed filial piety. Secondly, some apocryphal sutras were written with filial piety as their central theme. Finally, the claim was made that Buddhist filial piety actually was superior to that of Confucians, since it aimed at the salvation of all previous ancestors, not merely those of one contemporary family. These examples illustrate the power of the Chinese root paradigm of filial piety, to which Buddhists were forced to accommodate--by fair means or foul, if the charge can be believed that sutras, supposed to contain the words of Buddha, himself, were forged to

33) *Ibid.*, pp.114~115.

34) *Ibid.*, p.117.

35) John K. Fairbank, *et al.*, *op.cit.*, p.85. See Kenneth Ch'en, *op.cit.* (1964), p.63, for a description of the idea of an indestructable soul, burdened by *karma* and continually transmigrating, which eventually became the standard view of both Neo-Taoists and Chinese Buddhists in South China during the fourth century.

36) Kenneth K.S. Ch'en, *op.cit.* (1973), p.18.

lend weight to the argument.

Forgery of sutras also is said to have been done to integrate Taoism with Buddhism. One such "sutra" claimed that both Confucius and Lao-tzu had been disciples of Buddha in India.[37] Such approaches were not one-sided, however, as is illustrated by the development of the Taoist doctrine of "the conversion of the barbarians" (*hua-hu* 化胡), which claimed that Lao-tzu had gone to India, had converted the "barbarians" there, and had become the Buddha, thereby identifying not only the founders of the two religions with each other but uniting the religions themselves.[38]

Not only does this illustrate the tendency for Chinese of the time to think of Buddhism as just another Taoist sect, as Ch'en indicates in the same passage, but it suggests that Taoists of that time (ca. 166 A.D. and later) felt they had something to gain from a close association with Buddhism in the public mind. It also suggests the strength of "consensus" 大同 as a root paradigm in Chinese culture, particularly in regard to religious matters. The persistence of the theme of consensus or overriding unity of religious doctrines--or, some might say, the reduction of religious doctrines to a meaningless lowest-common-denominator for the sake of unity of belief or the avoidance of conflict--is evident in its recurrance as a central theme of the Unification Church (Tong-il Kyo 統一敎), led by Korean evangelist Moon Sun-myong, which has spread to many Western countries in the late twentieth century.

Not all Taoists were enthusiastic about consensus with Buddhists, however. The *T'ai-p'ing-ching* 太平經 of the middle second century A.D. was an explicitly Taoist work which attacked Buddhism on the grounds that it encourages the abandonment of parents, it results in the neglect of wives and children and the non-production of children

37) Alicia Matsunaga, ***The Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation.*** Tokyo, 1969, p.101.

38) Kenneth Ch'en, *op.cit.* (1964), p.50.

due to celibacy, it permits the eating of impurities, and it promotes begging.[39] Apart from the evidence this work provides of monastic practices in the eastern provinces (Kiangsu and Shantung) at an early date, it also touches on the root paradigms of care for aged parents and for wives and children, as well as the duty to produce offspring, all as part of the broader root paradigm of filial or familial piety, on a custom (probably not deeply-seated enough to call a root paradigm) of avoiding the consumption of certain substances defined as "impure",[40] and on the very powerful root paradigm of the need to "save face," both for oneself and for others--in this case, by not encouraging the "degrading" act of begging. The opposition to begging appears to have been effective in discouraging the practice, since fifth and sixth century critics of Buddhism seem not to have mentioned it.[41] More recently, of course, it has resumed its place as a central feature of monastic practice in all Buddhist countries and in both Mahayana and Hinayana.

In traditional East Asia, filial piety (Chinese: *hsiao* 孝) is not merely an abstract virtue. With personal well-being and even survival almost wholly dependent on the individual's relationship with his family and, in turn, on the rise and fall of the family's fortunes, the guaranteed socialization of the next generation in this virtue was a life-and-death matter for the elders, whether or not they subscribed strongly to other principles of Confucianism. It therefore was not only the central principle of public and private morality but also served as a system of old-age insurance, to be perpetuated at all costs.

The vehemence of the Chinese objections to Buddhism on the issue of filial piety and the seriousness with which the Buddhists countered them are therefore quite understandable. The adroit Buddhist answer, that by winning merit for their parents monks and nuns performed

39) *Ibid.*, p.51.
40) Apparently, in this case, urine taken as medicine. *Ibid.*
41) *Ibid.*, p.52.

the most filial act possible, again would not have persuaded someone who was not already attracted to Buddhism, but for the many who were attracted but were held back from full commitment by the charge of unfilial behavior this answer was enough to tip the balance in favor of the new religion. For some it may have been conviction, for others rationalization, but millions were enabled to persuade themselves that they could become Buddhists while remaining filial sons and daughters--or even becoming more filial than had been possible under earlier religious systems. While children could be taught filial piety in an undiminished way, acceptance of Buddhism was no longer identified as "unfilial," and it became, in many communities, a viable option.

An extension of filial piety was the requirement for loyalty to the emperor and to all the officials who represented him in the centralized bureaucratic hierarchy of the Chinese state. In India, and in such Central Asian states as Khotan, which has been mentioned above, kings would come out of their palaces to do homage to passing holy men and even to kiss their feet. Buddhism originated in that cultural environment, and the sangha of India soon came to consider itself apart from the law, as from secular life and temporal concerns, and under no obligation to any ruler.[42]

Han Dynasty China, on the other hand, had perfected a monolithic hierarchy of centralized authority with the emperor at its apex, answerable to Heaven, alone, and ruling all things through a graded bureaucracy, under the Confucian principle of *li* 理, proper conduct, which called for all to keep their proper place in society, perform their proper functions, and especially to give proper homage to the emperor. China had no concept of a quasi-independent monastic life or of special status in society for religious personages. The adamant bureaucracy therefore ultimately forced the Buddhist monks to give

42) Kenneth K.S. Ch'en, *op.cit.* (1973), p.66.

up any claim they had to special treatment, but only after many centuries of conflict over the issue.[43]

Confucian arguments on this point often were based on the time-honored use of signs of homage or decorum 禮 as a means of establishing order in society. It is interesting to note that, in their replies, the Buddhists tended to concede this basic value, but they argued that their way of life also promoted it, independent of a governmental dictation which it was inappropriate to exercise over those who had abandoned temporal affairs.[44]

Although much mixing of Buddhism with Taoism took place, particularly during the Han Dynasty, neither religion was quite comfortable with the marriage between them, and countless instances can be cited in which followers of both religions, but particularly the Buddhists, attempted to declare their independence and to endeavor to maintain their own doctrinal purity.[45] The process of syncretization had been exacerbated by the Chinese translators' practice of substituting Taoist words for difficult Sanskrit terms; although the degree to which Taoist terms were used by Buddhist translators is somewhat debated by authorities, with Züercher admitting that some Taoist expressions were used by An Shih-kao and other early translators but downplaying their effect on the over-all translation. Wholly new improvisations seem to have been used much more frequently than Taoist words to translate the Sanskrit texts, according to him.[46]

Criticisms of Buddhism continued through the period of China's disunity, in the "six dynasties" period, from 222 to 589 A.D., and through the brief Sui Dynasty (581-618) into the T'ang (618-907).

43) *Ibid.*, pp. 67~69.

44) *Ibid.*, pp. 69~71 and 81. Control over ordination of monks and regulation of their lifestyle also came increasingly under state control, as did construction of temples and monasteries. *Ibid.*

45) Kenneth Ch'en, *op.cit.*, (1964), pp. 52~53.

46) E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: Text.* Leiden, 1972, pp. 33~34.

In a famous memorial to the throne on a "Bone from Buddha's Body," in the early ninth century, Han Wen-kung 韓文公 listed most of the objections which had surfaced earlier and added a few of his own. The bone of Buddha, which the emperor proposed to honor in the royal court itself, was called a "disgusting object" by Han, who added that Buddha was a barbarian who did not speak Chinese and whose clothes were of an "alien cut." Buddha did not reiterate the maxims of the ancient rulers nor conform to the customs they handed down. Buddhism showed a disregard for life and encouraged "scorching of heads and burning of fingers" in homage to Buddha, and rulers who gave in to an attraction for Buddhism were doomed to brief, turbulent reigns, in contrast to the long, peaceful reigns and lives enjoyed by the legendary rulers of early Chinese history.[47] A materialistic bias is evident in Han's emphasis on long life as a high value endangered by Buddhism. This bias might be considered something of a root paradigm, and although it is not universal in Chinese culture it became a central feature of the Neo-Confucianism which was soon to emerge to dominate the remainder of China's dynastic history.

Shortly after Han Wen-kung, appeared the proclamation of Emperor Wu Tsung 武宗帝 suppressing Buddhism, in 845 A.D. The emperor argued against the religion on the grounds that it was an innovation of the Han and Wei dynasties and thus not derived from the ancient sages, that much wealth was wasted on embellishing shrines and on supporting monks and nuns who did not contribute to production, and especially that this "paltry creed from the West" was attempting to dispute with the emperor the sovereign power of the empire. By his estimate, 4,600 monasteries had been destroyed, 40,000 temples and shrines demolished, and 265,000 monks and nuns compelled to return to lay life.[48]

47) Herbert Giles, editor, *Gems of Chinese Literature*. New York, 1965 (1923), pp.124~128.

48) *Ibid.*, pp.153~154.

It is interesting to note that the positive social functions being performed by the monks and nuns had been overlooked by Wu Tsung, and emergency measures had to be taken by the state to ensure that the large numbers of charitable works previously administered by the sangha, particularly hospitals and homes for the aged, could continue to operate.[49] Fortunately, Wu Tsung passed to his ancestors the following year (846), and the monks and nuns were allowed to resume their religious lives with little permanent harm done, although the period of suppression coincided with a change in the direction of Chinese Buddhism away from a religion of external ritual and preaching and towards the more individual and meditative Buddhism represented by the Pure Land Sect and Ch'an.

Ch'an 禪 Buddhism entered China, according to tradition, in the person of the Indian monk Bodhidharma, in the early sixth century A.D. Nevertheless, the way had been prepared for it since the end of the Han Dynasty, when austere and intellectual schools of both Buddhist and Neo-Taoist practice grew up in South China. The Buddha was identified with emptiness (*sūnyatā*), just as the sage of Neo-Taoism was identified with non-being, and both religions emphasized simplicity of life, meditation and breathing exercises. Considerable friendly interchange took place, with Taoists studying the Prajnā Sutras, emphasized by the South China Buddhists, and the Buddhists exploring the Taoist philosophical ideas of the leading scholars. This interchange became especially active in the Western Chin Dynasty (265-316A.D.).[50] Taoist stress on oneness with nature and on non-action 無爲 also established a sympathetic climate for the Ch'an tendency.

While the intellectual rapproachment between Buddhism and Taoism was developing, at one level and in certain places, a less desirable syncretism between popular Buddhism and the occult or magical ten-

49) Kenneth K.S. Ch'en, *op.cit.* (1973), p.298.
50) Kenneth Ch'en, *op.cit.* (1964), pp.62~65.

dency in popular Taoism was occurring at a different level and in most parts of China. Coupled with deficiencies in religious discipline, acquisition of excessive land and other forms of wealth by the monasteries, and a certain worldliness which came to dominate much popular preaching making it a secular entertainment rather than a means of purification and salvation,[51] a climate arose which inspired not only governmental repression, like the edict of 845 A.D., but also a desire for reformation within the ranks of the sangha. Confucianism, too, had been weakened by the collapse of the Han Dynasty and had been unable to recover its internal dynamism, even by the late T'ang Dynasty. Many Confucianists turned to Taoism and to the intellectual syncretism of Taoism and Buddhism, mentioned earlier, in an effort to find a satisfactory world-view, as well as a refuge from the struggles of political factions, which could destroy a career and with it the fortunes of a family or an entire lineage practically overnight. The doctrine of *karma*, in particular, gave those unfortunate in political life an intellectual basis for the resignation they had to practice in their rural exiles.[52] Consequently, Confucianists, too, were ripe for the influence of Ch'an ideas.

Control of breathing had long been associated with the practice of Buddhism, as with Indian yoga and Taoism, but Ch'an made it and passivity the central Buddhist practices, stripping away much of the rich imagery which had characterized Indian Buddhism and the even richer symbolic world which had sprung from Buddhist-Taoist syncretism.[53] Bodhidharma preached the simple doctrine that true enlightenment could be achieved without the use of books or special formulas or studies, by developing the art of meditation by "wall-gazing" 面壁. Ch'an monks originally tried to maintain the lifestyle of the Indian

51) Kenneth K.S. Ch'en, *op.cit.* (1973), pp.240~255.

52) *Ibid.*, pp.179~239, illustrates this tendency by an extended discussion of the life of the scholar-official Po Chü-i (白居易, 772-846 A.D.).

53) Kenneth Ch'en, *op.cit.* (1964), p.350.

holy men, but the Fourth Patriarch of Chinese Ch'an, Tao-hsin 道信 (580-651), abandoned the itinerant mendicant life in favor of the sedentary life in monasteries practiced by other Chinese Buddhist sects and more appropriate to Chinese customs[54] (and probably to the Chinese climate, as well).

As China's Buddhists reconstituted their religious institutions in the wake of the suppression of 845, two sects, or traditions, of Buddhist practice tended to attract the greatest following: Ch'an and the Pure Land School, the popular veneration of the Buddha Amitābha and the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, or Kuan-yin. The two tendencies probably appealed to different kinds of people in Chinese society, as well as conforming to different root paradigms.

Ch'an was both practical and intellectual. It fits a paradigm of religion as a philosophical activity involving mental discipline and an appeal to order, both in society and in personal thought and behavior. In this it shared many of the goals and ideals of Confucianism, including Confucian reluctance to delve too deeply into "useless" theological speculation but, instead, to emphasize practical self-discipline according to well-defined ethical norms. On the side of Taoist interests Ch'an fits a paradigm of salvation through practices, which also accords with, and may ultimately have originated from, Indian yoga. The "practices" of Taoism covered a considerably wider spectrum than those of Ch'an, including magic, geomancy, alchemy, herbal medicine, fortune telling, and numerous kinds of occult practices which went far beyond the meditations Ch'an emphasized. Like Taoism, Ch'an went to nature, referring to a root paradigm which saw union with natural phenomena and natural forces as a means to achieve purification and enlightenment. Ch'an, at least in its earlier manifestations, undoubtedly gave a more pantheistic interpretation to this "union" than did early forms of Taoism. This is an instance of

54) Heinrich Dumoulin, S.J., *A History of Zen Buddhism*. Boston, 1963, p.77.

the adaptability of root paradigms, which can serve as the common foundation stones of cultural edifices which have very different surface appearances.

The idea of the bodhisattva is a distinguishing mark of Mahayana Buddhism and is closely related to the view that the Buddha-nature is present in all sentient beings. Although the idea originally appeared in India it was left to Chinese Mahayana Buddhists to develop, and probably no school of Chinese Buddhism did more to shape the modern idea of the bodhisattva than the Pure Land sect. In particular, the transformation of the perceptions of two bodhisattvas in Chinese Buddhism furnishes us with revealing cases of the effect of root paradigms on symbols.

Avalokiteśvara, in Indian Buddhism, was depicted as a male. The name, in Sanskrit, could be translated in various ways, "the lord who looks down," "the lord who is seen," "the lord of compassionate glances," etc. In China, the Bodhisattva is called Kuan-yin 觀音, "one who hears sounds," or Kuan-shih-yin 觀世音, "one who hears the sounds (prayers) of the world."[55] By the fifth century, Kuan-yin had come to have a special role as the one to whom women should pray when they wished to bear a son. During the T'ang and early Sung dynasties, Kuan-yin usually continued to be depicted as a male, with a mustache, but a Tantric sutra of the eighth century depicted the Bodhisattva as a white-clad female, and after the tenth century this became the usual way of picturing Kuan-yin, who then usually was called Pai-i Kuan-yin 白衣觀音, the "White-clothed Kuan-yin."[56] This introduction of the female element, probably originating in Tibetan Tantrism, may have symbolized enlightenment as the conjunction of wisdom (male) with compassion (female).[57] More mundanely, the fertility role which Kuan-yin had assumed in China may have been

55) Kenneth Ch'en, *op. cit.* (1964), p.340.
56) *Ibid.*, pp.341~342.
57) *Ibid.*, p.342.

thought more appropriate to a female than to a male, particularly by the many female suppliants who sought help from the Bodhisattva.

Maitreya, the "future Buddha" of the early Pali tradition, was of relatively little significance in Indian Mahayana, but by the fourth century he had become the center of an important Chinese cult, which declined in the seventh century but was reborn in the thirteenth as the decidedly non-Indian "Laughing Buddha," which merged the Maitreya identity with the legend of a popular tenth century Chinese monk. The Laughing Buddha's substantial girth symbolizes prosperity, and he often is depicted as being climbed over by many playful children. This figure of popular Buddhism clearly refers to many aspirations of Chinese culture, including the persistent theme of immortality, in Taoism, and the desire for many children, as well as the wealth and security implied by obesity and joviality.[58]

Finally, in this catalog of changes which occurred in Chinese Buddhism, a brief mention of art, particularly statuary, is necessary. The first Buddhist art to influence China seems to have been from the Parthian and Gandharan traditions of northwest India, Pakistan and Central Asia. Gandharan Buddhist statues, influenced by Mediterranean contacts as well as by India, were masterpieces of idealized realism. Features are rendered in natural style, and the sculptors were especially adept at the way they were able to represent the natural folds of clothing in its relation to the anatomy of the figure. Chinese statues of the third and fourth centuries A.D., which seem intended to have been faithful copies of the Gandharan originals, are disappointing in their inability to match these features and to use them to express Buddha's humanity and the personal meaning of his teachings. Instead, they tend to represent the folds of the garments in a geometric, ornamental manner and to exaggerate or distort anatomical proportions in an apparent effort to achieve psychological effects. This

58) *Ibid.*, pp.405~408, and Kenneth K.S. Ch'en, *op.cit.* (1973), pp.7~8.

tendency may have been due to artistic ineptness, but some authorities feel it may represent a conscious effort, evident in the Tun-huang 敦煌 and Yün-kang 雲崗 cave temples and other examples from the fourth to the early sixth centuries, but especially from the middle sixth century on, to represent the underlying reality beneath the accidents of superficial appearances. The use of geometric forms to represent the folds of garments thus can be interpreted to suggest a reality deeper than would naturalistic representation.[59]

The Tun-huang caves, in western Kansu Province, also contain an interesting example of Buddhist adoption of Taoist themes, dating from the early sixth century. It is a painted ceiling showing a view of the heavens dominated by typically pre-Buddhist figures, some of them uniquely Taoist, and seemingly borrowed from Taoist representations of the Taoist deity Hsi Wang-mu in her cloud kingdom. However, the goddess herself is missing from her central position, and a lotus has been substituted for her.[60]

Prior to the coming of Buddhism, Taoist worship usually was conducted in the open air, without temples and seemingly with few or no images used as objects of veneration. The abundant clay figures of the Han Dynasty were usually grave furnishings, rather than foci for worship. Later, Taoism copied Buddhism, setting up images of Lao-tzu and various other divinities or immortals. Buddhism also seems to have been responsible for the introduction of religious buildings, other than family ancestral shrines, into China.[61]

59) William Watson, *Style in the Arts of China*, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1974, pp.77~79.

60) Basil Gray, *Buddhist Cave Paintings at Tun-huang*. London, 1959, p.40.

61) Osvald Siren, *A History of Early Chinese Art, Vol. II: The Han Period*. New York, 1970 (1929), pp.70~71.

Summary and Conclusion

An encounter between two cultures or between a complex social instituiion and a culture different from that in which it originated, can usefully be viewed in terms of the root paradigms which provide the "script" by which the "social drama" of each respective institution and culture is played out.[62] Root paradigms establish the cultural patterns of relatively stable values and meanings which underlie the behaviors and symbols observable at the surface of everyday life, and an analysis of institutional and cultural encounters at the level of root paradigms may reveal aspects not apparent from other methods of study.

In this necessarily brief discussion of the entrance of Buddhism into China several such paradigms have become evident, both on the side of the impinging institution--Buddhism as it was known in India and Central Asia around the first and second centuries A.D.--and the host culture--China of the same period. Some of these root paradigms proved to be more deeply rooted, and therefore less subject to change, than others. The latter, more easily changed paradigms might be regarded as intermediate between surface symbols and the deeper, more truly "rooted," paradigms of which they are an expression. The interaction between Buddhism and Chinese culture can be described, and hopefully better understood, if it is viewed as a process of conflict and accommodation between these paradigms at various levels.

Evidence for the following root paradigms of the Buddhism which entered China can be found in the historical materials which have been reviewed in this paper:

1. Holy men, including monks, have departed from the ordinary world of human life and have no obligations relative to merely human concerns

62) Victor Turner, *op.cit.* (1974), pp.23~59, 98~155 and *passim.*

or to control by political authority.

2. The Buddha is the supreme center of value and the ultimate realization of the oneness of the universe and man.
3. Individual existence is a delusion, and only karma is transmitted from one life to the next; but merit can be acquired which eventually will eliminate the dualism which karma creates. The result of this is nirvana, which could be described as "oneness."
4. The merit acquired by the sangha surpasses all other values, both for self and for others. The bodhisattvas are both the outstanding example of this and the role-models for the sangha.
5. Enlightenment can be achieved through practices centered on the elimination of desire, which include meditation and breath control

Of these five paradigms, the first and the third, in particular, encountered special difficulties in Chinese culture, with the eventual result that they underwent changes which affected their fundamental character. The second and fourth paradigms encountered less difficulty and even received some reinforcement from Chinese root paradigms; while the fifth was especially compatible with and reinforced by Chinese root paradigms, accounting, to at least some degree, for the relative success of Ch'an Buddhism in China, in contrast to most other schools of Buddhism.

Some of the Chinese root paradigms which are most evident in the historical materials include:

1. The emperor enjoys the mandate of Heaven, and personally and through his officials he exercises total control of religion and all other activities of his subjects; although to retain the mandate of Heaven he should govern according to the traditions handed down from the ancient sage kings, through Confucius.
2. Antiquity of doctrine is a sign of the value of that doctrine.
3. All other values must be subordinated to filial piety, which includes care for parents, production of male offspring to continue the ancestral line, care for one's wife and children, and care for one's own body, as

a sacred inheritance from one's ancestors.

4. Immortality is a practical goal of life and religio-magical practices, while long life and long reigns by individual kings or dynasties are a sign and reward of correct behavior.
5. Consensus is a religious and social ideal, and it is one aspect of harmony and balance with nature, which is central to living an ethically good life. A corollary of this is that speculation about theology is to be avoided as futile and divisive.
6. A dialectic of mutual complementarity in which differences, such as male/female, light/dark, etc., complete each other and tend toward unity.
7. The individual, although only one element in Nature, exists and pursues the path to immortality as a material entity, or at least as a substantial entity.
8. Clear separation of spheres and roles, especially in society is necessary to good order.
9. Regulation of external behavior, including meditation and breathing exercises, is a means to achieve internal and external harmony, ultimately that harmony with nature which is the path to immortality and all other good things. Non-action usually is more conducive to harmony than action.
10. Harmony is promoted by avoiding loss of face to oneself and, insofar as possible, to others.
11. An opinion must be well expressed in writing before it can be given serious consideration.

The themes of unity, harmony and hierarchy as high values recur in so many of the above that they can be seen as almost a "super" root paradigm in Chinese culture. The first paradigm in the list of eleven was so powerful that it ultimately outweighed the first paradigm on the Buddhist list, despite centuries of resistance by the sangha. Numbers two and eleven drove the monks to seek texts of the sutras and to translate them for use in China, and not even Bodhidharma's stated disdain for texts could keep his Ch'an followers from writing

and using books to a degree; although its minimal dependence on texts, images, and other paraphernalia helped their school to survive the suppression of 845 more successfully than others.[63] The third Chinese root paradigm was so strong that Chinese Buddhists had to exert great effort and ingenuity in their attempts to show that their own fundamental beliefs really agreed with it, particularly by reference to their own fourth paradigm, which implied that the highest expression of filial piety was to earn merit for parents, even through the practice of celibacy. The Chinese concepts of individuality and immortality in numbers four and seven, were not sharply enough defined to resist Buddhist influences, resulting in the mutual accommodation described earlier, but the resulting synthesis probably changed the Chinese paradigm less than it did that of the Buddhists. Paradigms five, six, eight and ten held nothing directly opposed to the Buddhist paradigms, although they may have contributed to an enrichment of Buddhist thought. Paradigm nine was strongly receptive to the Buddhist fifth paradigm, with the positive results for Ch'an which were mentioned above.

This analysis must be incomplete because of the brevity of this paper, but it is submitted as an example of a method of analysis which may prove useful in understanding similar cases of institutional acculturation, accommodation. and assimilation. Although the author is personally interested in applying it to cases in which Christianity, particularly Catholicism, has been introduced into a new culture, the method is not necessarly limited to the study of religious institutions, but should prove useful in any case in which a large institution developed in one culture has entered another culture.

63) Kenneth Ch'en, *op. cit.* (1964), pp. 350~364.

〈國文要約〉

중국에서의 불교의 정착 : 인류학적 고찰

버 넷 스 키

중국으로의 불교의 유입과 아울러, 그 풍습 및 교리가 무난히 인정되기도 했고 또 중국문화에 맞도록 변화되기도 했던 불교의 정착 방법은 "근원적 전형(root paradigm)"으로 분석될 수 있다.

근원적 전형이란 비교적 불변적이고 깊이 뿌리 박힌 문화 유형을 말하는데, Victor Turner는 이것을 문화내의 역사의 중요한 연극을 상연케 하는 "대본"에 비유한다.

인도문명에서 유래된 불교의 "근원적 전형"은 중국의 "근원적 전형"의 저항에 부딪히는데, 결국 이 중국의 근원적 전형은 불교의 중요한 점들을 변화시켰다. 이를테면 정부와의 관계에서의 성자나 승려의 역할이라든가, 환생에 대한 인과응보 및 개인적인 주체성의 역할에 대한 이해 같은 것을 예로 들 수 있다. 어떤 교리들은, 예를 들면 효도정신에 분명히 위배되는 승려의 독신생활 같은 것은 중국인의 거부감 때문에 재해석을 시도해야만 했다.

한편 어떤 불교의 "근원적 전형"은 중국의 기존 "근원적 전형"과 아주 잘 일치되기 때문에, 이런 점은 궁극적으로 중국인들에게 인정되기도 하였다. 예를 들면, 불교가 외적 행동의 통제에 가치를 두며, 자연과의 일치 또는 조화에 역점을 둔다는 면이 그것이다.

"근원적 전형"에 의한 분석은, 종교적인 것이든지 또는 비종교적인 것이든지간에, 발생지의 문명이 다른 문명권으로 소개되는 복합적인 제도의 이동과 같은 문화변용의 문제를 연구하는데 유익하기도 하다.