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## Not of This World ...? Religious Power and Imperial Rule in Eurasia, ca. Thirteenth – ca. Eighteenth Century\*

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Eine politisch-religiöse Feierlichkeit hat einen unendlichen Reiz. Wir sehen die irdische Majestät vor Augen, umgeben von allen Symbolen ihrer Macht. Aber indem sie sich vor der himmlischen beugt, bringt sie uns die Gemeinschaft beider vor die Sinne. Denn auch der einzelne vermag seine Verwandtschaft mit der Gottheit nur dadurch zu betätigen, dass er sich unterwirft und anbetet.

Or:

A political-religious ceremony is hugely attractive. We watch the Majesty that rules on this earth, surrounded by all the symbols of its power. But as it bows before the heavenly Majesty, it reminds us of the relationship between the two. For everyone only can show his relationship with the Divine if he subjects himself to it and adores it.

J. VON GOETHE, *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book 5—  
synthesizing (his) impressions of various imperial coronations in eighteenth-century Frankfurt.



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## Introduction: On the Relationship between Religious and Secular Power

Before, as I will do below, explaining the choices that have structured this contribution, I need to explain some of the, not to everyone unproblematic, concepts that I propose to use, viz. the notion of religion, the relationship between religion and (secular) power, and the various types of rulership that, over time, have sought to combine these two.

### *Religion*

Increasingly, Eurasians have difficulty in understanding (or making others understand) religion(s)—certainly deistic-fideistic religion(s)—as a central element in man's thinking and acting. Yet, back in 1912, in his *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Emile Durkheim reiterated the notion he had expressed earlier, viz. that religion was the prime motor of societal integration, concluding that most if not all representations of society will, on closer study, show the significance of religious culture.<sup>1</sup> But it was, a few years later, Rudolf Otto who defined religion as the 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans', the mystery of the forces that a given society feels are beyond its understanding and control.<sup>2</sup> It materializes in sacred places, sacred objects, and sacred acts, and in people who, by their association therewith, also become sacred.

What is sacred is what a society feels it wants to remember, preserve, and transmit, including from one generation to another. Thus, the 'sacred', in its multifarious, mostly visualized forms, becomes the condensation of a prevailing, dominant societal order, showing and prescribing what people are supposed to know,<sup>3</sup> to 'believe' as true, as normal. Therefore, religion is neither an eminently individual and, even, solitudinal state-of-mind, nor a solely collective one, but a complex mixture of both. It always expresses itself in sacred, i.e.

1 Cfr. also the short summary of Durkheim's ideas in: G. Pickel, *Religionssoziologie: Eine Einführung in zentrale Themenbereiche* (Wiesbaden, 2011) 75–87.

2 R. Otto, *Das Heilige* (Munich, 1917). Of course, Otto's work then influenced the thoughts of M. Eliade as, e.g., in his: *Traité d'Histoire des Religions* (Paris, 1949), and its partial reworking in: *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York, 1959), of which a German version had already appeared in 1957. Also: W. Paden, *Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion* (Boston, 1994). For an up-to-date survey of the problems involved, see: R. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge, 1999).

3 E.g., T. Holert, 'Bildfähigkeiten. Visuelle Kultur, Repräsentationskritik und Politik der Sichtbarkeit', in: idem, ed., *Imagining. Visuelle Kultur und Politik der Sichtbarkeit* (Cologne, 2000) 14–33.

ceremonial or ritual acts, often performed by, or with the help of, sacred men, or women, in sacred spaces and centring on sacred objects though it need not necessarily address concrete 'gods'.<sup>4</sup>

Although ceremony and ritual are not, strictly speaking, the same, I will use the words rather indiscriminately. They both are, I feel, forms of specialized behaviour meant to constitute—rather than only represent—hierarchical relations and thus to create power. Ritual, to be understood as the more encompassing concept, is a mechanism, mostly in the form of dramatized cultural performance, that integrates thought—beliefs, ideas—and actions. Persons in power or seeking power will always try to use ritual to affect views within society, thus, inevitably, limiting individual autonomy.<sup>5</sup> Ceremonies and rituals constantly serve to (re-) connect the (collective) emotions needed to create the permanence of a community, a society, or, even, a state by, amongst other things, taking care of and control over collective prosperity.<sup>6</sup>

Many feel that in our 'modern' world, non-religious, so-called rational or civic arguments—often presented as ingrained and indeed universally human—rightly and logically have replaced (older) belief systems as foundations of culture in general, and of power and politics in particular. In Europe, and, indeed, the West, this process started, slowly, in the eighteenth century, first among parts of the educated elites, and became more widespread in the second half of the twentieth century. In South and East Asia it started later, but, again, became more general in the late twentieth century. In the worlds of Islam it started, hesitatingly, in the twentieth century, but yet has not become mainstream ideology. As part of this development, in academia the majority of students now are ignorant of even the basics of the history of Eurasian religious cultures other than their own. Moreover, most of those scholars who do study religious cultures do so from a disciplinary perspective.

In short, the millennial realities of religious culture have become hard to grasp: we are in the throes of a process of forgetting that religion has been the driving force in human culture since time immemorial. This is the more strange since, to explore but two poles of contemporary culture, the world's evermore booming tourist industry insofar as it is geared towards 'visiting the past'—the larger part of this search for alternative experiences?—often directs our gaze at what, in the widest sense, I would call 'sacred spaces', i.e. churches,

4 E.g. S. Benoist, *When Action is Faith. The Sacrificial Rituals of the Romans* (Paris, 2006).

5 I follow C. Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford, 2009) especially chapter 9, though the post-modern jargon is, I feel, not always convincing.

6 J. Russ, *Les theories du pouvoir* (Paris, 1994).

temples, mosques, monasteries, holy mountains, pilgrim roads, or at 'sacred objects', either remaining in situ or exhibited in museums. Indeed, many—mostly Western—people want to '(re-) live' the sacred, participating in all kinds of sacred rituals both from the various Christian traditions and from other (world) religions. Conversely, many of yesterday's and today's (re-) current wars have been and still are being waged, at least partly, under the flag of religion, thus disproving predictions about the worldwide secularizing trend in cultural and societal developments.<sup>7</sup>

### *Religion and Power*

In view of the above, I feel that, certainly scholarly speaking, we shall have to continue to try to come to grips with the role of religion as an element that structures the larger society, giving cohesion to it, and, hence, as a tool of power that could and still can be manipulated by those in power or seeking power. Separating the political or social order from the religious, cosmic order is dangerous, since it tends to obscure their essential interdependence.

From the beginning, human societies somehow have sought and still seek to harness the primordial forces of nature to their needs for basic survival: food, clothing, and shelter. Consequently, rulership, the ability to control a polity and give it order and cohesion, most often has been claimed successfully by those who were able to convince their fellow men they were uniquely qualified to achieve the cosmological balance that facilitates the fulfilment of those needs—in short, men (or women) who pretend(-ed) to be able to somehow manage the 'super-natural', that 'fascinating and terrifying mystery'. When people decide to follow such leaders and the alleged powers invoked by them, 'religion' is born, expressed in faith, in belief (systems).<sup>8</sup>

To be sure, the systemic relationship between religion and power is not a scholarly, modern construct, only.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, according to some of Eurasia's most eminent 'pre-modern' political theorists, religion is a necessary element in the wielding of, especially, political power. In the sixth century BCE, Confucius, whose, partly alleged, teachings Chinese rulers have used for more than two thousand years, stated no leader would ever be great, successful unless

7 M. Burleigh, *Earthly Powers. Religion and Politics in Europe from the French Revolution to the Great War* (London, 2005) and: Idem, *Sacred Causes. Religion and Politics from the European dictators to Al Qaeda* (London, 2006).

8 E.g., L. de Heusch, *Le Pouvoir et le Sacré* (Brussels, 1962).

9 R. Bendix, *Kings or People? Power and the Mandate to Rule* (Berkeley, 1978) esp. Part I, and: A. Porterfield, *The Power of Religion: A Comparative Introduction* (New York, 1997). Also: D. Martin, *Religion and Power: No Logos Without Mythos* (Farnham, 2014).

he obeyed the command of *tian*, 'Heaven'; only by adopting virtue, his actions would correspond to 'Heaven'; he would then bring his people the moral order that supposedly was embodied in the cosmos and to help them to actually realize it.<sup>10</sup> In the Islamic world, the less ethically minded fourteenth-century author Ibn Khaldun suggested that no new dynasty could take and claim power without using religious propaganda. Moreover, the soldiers they would have to rely on would not show the necessary *'asabiyya*, or solidarity, were they not tied together by bonds of faith. Two centuries later, in the world of Christendom Niccolò Machiavelli, sometimes characterized as an atheist, cynically—or realistically?—argued that 'the prince' always should at least appear to be a pious, religious man. Moreover, the soldiers without whom he could not hope to rule would only be victorious if they were united by a strong religion.<sup>11</sup> In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at least two major philosophers commented on the intricate relationship between religion and power. Voltaire, not known for his philo-Islamic attitudes, still wrote about Muhammad—both admiringly and perceptively—that he was 'a very great man ... conqueror, law-giver, monarch and priest at the same time, thus playing the greatest role a man can play in the eyes of the common people.'<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, however, Baruch de Spinoza in his 1670 *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, had analysed the power of religion in more general and critical terms, denouncing the persistent use made of religion by (political) leaders to manipulate society for their own ends.<sup>13</sup>

In this context, I should, perhaps, qualify my use of the terms propaganda and representation. Though one might argue that they should be differentiated—the one, perhaps, indicating a conscious action, the other referring to more structural manifestations of, in this case, religious power—I will employ them more ad lib.

10 J. Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 1, The Confucian Analects* (Oxford, 1893) Analects VIII, xix. Cfr. for the notion that each individual owes moral behavior to 'Heaven': II, i4; VI, xxviii; XIV, xxxv. Obviously, such recent translations and interpretations of the accretional nature and complex context of the Analects, while of great scholarly importance—see, e.g.: E. Bruce Brooks and T. Brooks, *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors* (New York, 1998)—should not necessarily change our interpretation of the understanding contemporary readers may have had of the text.

11 Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, F. Rosenthal, ed. (Princeton, 1981) 126; Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, A. Grafton, ed. (New York, 2003) 57; 58.

12 Voltaire made this statement in his *Essai sur les Moeurs et l'Esprit des Nations*, in 1753, and repeated it in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* of 1764.

13 E.g. *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, chapter IV, par. 10.

*Divine Kings, Priests, Kings, Priest-Kings,—and Other Variants?*

Obviously, in most pre-modern societies, rulers who claimed divinity were the best positioned to ensure success and, thus, power. Yet, this 'type' is not as common as one might perhaps expect.<sup>14</sup> Certainly, both the sources and, far more, the interpretive scholarly literature are deeply ambiguous about the meaning of such concepts as 'deity' and 'deification'. If only therefore, some scholars would argue that the distinction between 'human' and 'divine' is not helpful at all, and that, rather, we should see rulers who sanctified themselves or were sanctified as embodying and exemplifying 'prototypes'.

Though China's early kings were turned into 'gods', most people realized that the divine 'founding emperors' were mythical constructions, only.<sup>15</sup> In another cultural context, the early Mesopotamian states, kings sometimes deified themselves as well. Yet, in the better part of Eurasia, most monarchs did not. However, they yet might help create a discourse that presented their ancestors as 'sacred founders', the men, and women, who had founded the land as if by divine mission.<sup>16</sup>

Japan is, of course, the longest-lasting exception, for precisely the imperial line from Jinmu up until Hirohito did have divine status, as already stated in the country's earliest histories, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*<sup>17</sup>—although in an animistic/holistic culture like the Japanese, divinity should be interpreted differently from the (monotheistic-) deistic concepts used elsewhere. All in all, there seems to have been a decided cultural—also political?—hesitancy thus to exalt the ruler, though I have not been able to ascertain why.

14 Divine kingship as a scholarly category helping us understand forms of kingship worldwide was first coined, anthropologically, by J. Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (London, 1911–1915). Cfr.: A. Richards, 'Keeping the King Divine', *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (1968) 23–35, which deals mainly with sub-Saharan Africa. See, also, the essays in: D. Quigley, ed., *The Character of Kings* (Oxford, 2005). Some scholars have argued that, in historical reality, divine kingship either did not exist at all, or certainly is not universally applicable; see: G. Feeley-Harnik, 'Issues in Divine Kingship', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 14 (1985) 273–313, and B. Ray, *Myth, Ritual and Kingship in Buganda* (Oxford, 1991) 22–53. I am not convinced by their arguments.

15 M. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002).

16 E.g.: D. Angelova, *Sacred Founders. Women, Men and Gods in the Discourse of Imperial Founding. Rome through Early Byzantium* (Berkeley, 2015).

17 Cfr. J. Brownlee, *Japanese Historians and the National Myths. The Age of the Gods and Emperor Jinmu* (Tokyo, 1997); B.-A. Shillony, *Divinity and Gender: The Riddle of the Japanese Emperors*. Nissan Institute Occasional Papers 30 (Oxford, 1999).

I would like to suggest that two other 'ideal types', in the Weberian sense, can be distinguished. These were 'the priest' and 'the king', representing the realms of 'the sacred' and 'the profane', even though, in the actual exercise of power over the ages, these realms overlapped and, consequently, these men mostly functioned in complex, ever changing interaction. Nevertheless, given the obvious advantage of 'total control', it was not uncommon for men to try and combine the two positions of power—priestly, or shamanic, and kingly—in one and the same person.

Where forms of secular might did exist—or arose—alongside a powerful priesthood, those who wielded it sometimes would attempt to usurp priestly, sacred functions and thus rid themselves of an independent, meddling, and rivalling clergy. The most famous example probably is Pharaoh Akhn-Aten's 'religious revolution', directed against the power of the caste of the Amun priests of Thebes.<sup>18</sup> Of course, his reign as pharaoh and, at the same time, high priest—or, even, semi-divine mediator?<sup>19</sup>—did not last long. But one should not forget that from the beginning the emperors of Rome also held the symbolically important function of *pontifex maximus*.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, men who, originally, had been religious leaders, high priests, pontiffs, sometimes did become kings. In Egypt the founder of the twenty-first pharaonic dynasty stemmed from the family of the—themselves hereditary—high priests of Amun. Interestingly, to fill its coffers, the new government did not hesitate to commit state-sanctioned 'sacrilege', systematically plundering the tombs of the preceding pharaohs.<sup>21</sup> Subsequently, members of the twenty-second dynasty ruled the Nile delta, while a relative, as pontiff, controlled Upper Egypt.<sup>22</sup> In ancient Judea, the Hasmonean family of (high)

18 H. Schlögl, *Echnaton* (Munich, 2008).

19 The discussion about the politics of Akhn-Aten is, actually, on-going.

20 K. Galinsky, 'Continuity and Change: Religion in the Augustan Semi-Century', in: J. Rüpke, ed., *A Companion to Roman Religion* (Malden, 2007) 71–82; S. Benoist, 'Du pontifex maximus à l'élú de Dieu: l'Empereur et les sacra', in: O. Hekster, S. Schmidt-Hofner, and C. Witschel, eds., *Ritual Dynamics and Religious Change in the Roman Empire* (Leiden, 2009) 32–52; cfr. also: E. Wilsey, *Roman World Philosophy: The Unity of Empire, Religion and Law in the Conception of a System of the World* (New York, 1930); J. Pollini, *From Republic to Empire: Rhetoric, Religion and Power in the Visual Culture of Ancient Rome* (Norman, 2012).

21 R. Wilkinson and K. Weeks, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Valley of the Kings* (Oxford, 2015) 360; 448.

22 K. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 BC)* (Warminster, 1995) although the chronology and interaction of the rulers of the twenty-first dynasty has been and still is disputed.

priests asserted themselves during the first century BCE and after a revolt actually did assume the kingship.<sup>23</sup>

In both cases, the result was, one might argue, a theocracy—though the term is much debated,<sup>24</sup> basically, it means that the sacred and the profane merge(d) in a single power system.

Yet, far more widespread than the divine monarchs, the king-priests, and the priest-kings was the type of those who, in a culturally and politically complex society, operated in and acted as managers of what people still felt to be an essentially religious, sacred universe—in short, as priests.<sup>25</sup> Following a ‘vocation’ or, as in many communities, an often hereditary family tradition, religious leaders would try to arrogate as much power as possible. Obviously and inevitably, these male (and, sometimes, female) shamans, these priests and priestesses, found themselves in constant opposition to the men—indeed, with very few exceptions only men—who stated they were equally able and, actually, called upon to rule, viz. on the basis of their exceptional physical strength and their prowess in the use of arms. These, of course, were the men who would be chiefs, or kings, and, eventually, emperors.

If, as most often, the priesthood was not successful in establishing a theocracy, they at least sought to retain or gain a hold over the kings who competed with them—by convincing the people that no one could be a lawful ruler unless he had somehow been blessed by the gods, through their priestly hands. Thus, the Biblical high priests and their latter-day successors, the Roman popes, claimed the right to anoint and divinely sanction the secular prince.

In their turn, kings, in order to strengthen their bid for (sole) rule, would use the charisma their role as successful warrior gave them as proof of their own link to the forces that moved the universe. Often, myths of divine descent—not necessarily resulting in claims of personal divinity—would be devised further to legitimize their position. To enforce this argument, ancestors sometimes were posthumously deified, as, e.g., in imperial Rome.

Whatever the mixture of religious and secular power embodied in actual rulers, inevitably both ‘types’—the kingly and the priestly—would use in addition to

23 E. Regev, *The Hasmoneans. Ideology, Archaeology and Identity* (Göttingen, 2013) esp. 103–128.

24 E.g. J. Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt* (New York, 2002) 203; 299–302 seems to me not really to clarify it.

25 For the complexity of the term: L. Sabourin, *Priesthood: A Comparative Study* (Leiden, 1973).

such myths other strategic narratives to bolster their position, even in oral-culture societies, when no manuscript texts were (yet) available. There were kingly tales such as the *Iliad*, attributed to Homer, but also the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, as well as some of the books of the Jewish Bible—the Old Testament—and, in later ages across the Eurasian world from Ireland to Japan, an endless series of royal chronicles. On the other hand, the *Vedas*, the Old Testament books *Deuteronomy* and *Leviticus*, the various *Jataka* of Buddhism as well as some sutras and, of course, the *Buddhacarita*,<sup>26</sup> but also the Christian gospels, the *Liber Pontificalis*, and, finally, the early *sira* literature and the later *hadith* about the life of Muhammad all exalt the position and roles of religious leaders—and so do, in a manner, even the *Analects* of Confucius.

With the help of these discourses, both priests and kings—and the learned elites surrounding and serving them—created ideologies that, with the accompanying ceremonies, rituals, (im- or explicit) rules, and institutions, professed to bring peace and stability to the community. Actually, of course, for many millennia and, indeed, in some parts of this world up to the present, states, including imperial states, have been disrupted by the often bloody struggles between the representatives of these two powers. Consequently, the order produced by shared visions was and still is destroyed, and legitimacy crises ensue.<sup>27</sup>

As indicated above, in historical reality the three ‘ideal types’—the rare one of the ruler striving to be a god, and the more common ones of the high priest aspiring after secular power and the king who needed to be a sacred sacrificer—mostly were not that clear-cut. Even if either a high priest or a king was the supreme ruler, the one could not do without the other.

Thus, for example, in ancient Israel the original leaders, the high priests, simply had to create a military arm. Soon, these generals became kings. For nearly a millennium the ensuing relationship would be an uneasy and often troubled one, but the kings prevailed. In the pre-imperial Chinese polity of Shang, the original rulers slowly seem to have changed into ‘ritual’ kings, occupying themselves with ancestor worship and divination only,<sup>28</sup> while real power rested with regional magnates, who then became kings themselves, resulting in the age of the ‘Warring States’. A comparable development occurred in early medieval Gaul. There, the kings of the Merovingian dynasty—descending from the tribal chief Clovis who had been anointed king by Bishop Remigius to gain

26 C. Willemen, ed., trans., *Buddhacarita: In Praise of Buddha's Acts* (Berkeley, 2009).

27 A. Phillips, *War, Religion and Empire* (Cambridge, 2011).

28 D. Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China (ca. 1200–1045 B.C.)* (Berkeley, 2000).

the support of the papacy while at the same time asking to be given control over the Christian Church in his state<sup>29</sup>—slowly lost their power. They, too, became ceremonial leaders, *rois thaumaturges*, only; actual power rested with the great landholders, headed by the king's major officer, the marshal. In medieval Japan, the increasingly powerless emperors had to accept the strong arm of a shogun, a military commander, if only to curb the power of, again, the landed families. Indeed, from the twelfth to the mid-nineteenth century, shogunal dynasties such as the Minamoto, Ashikaga, and Tokugawa actually ruled the country.<sup>30</sup> No wonder that, from the late sixteenth century onwards, foreign observers decided that Japan was governed by two men: the 'spiritual' and the 'temporal' emperor, the latter being the shogun. Interestingly, the agents of the Dutch East India Company used such terms as 'den groten paep', and 'aerdtsgodt'—'high priest' and 'god on earth'—to describe and stress the priestly, sacred position of the 'dairo', the actual emperor.<sup>31</sup>

Leaving typology aside, and viewing Eurasia's past in perspective, it seems clear that in most cases kings did not choose to become either divine rulers or priestly religious leaders. Indeed, the 'ideal type' not only of the divine king but also of the priest-king was increasingly rare. But even when kings remained largely within what we nowadays would call the secular sphere and, moreover, reigned and ruled alone, they still needed the sanctification a high priest alone could give them: only thus could the 'Dieu et Mon Droit'-construction, inherent in Divine Right monarchy, become a reality.

Moreover, almost without exception kings definitely tried to control the religious culture of their polity, preferably through the appointment of family members to the highest functions in the priesthood. Many pharaohs named their male and female relatives priests and priestesses of Egypt's most important cults, and so did the kings of ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>32</sup> In papal Rome where, due to the elective character of the papacy, one never could be certain

29 W. von den Steinen, 'Chlodwigs Übergang zum Christentum. Eine quellenkritische Studie', *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*, Ergänzungsband 12 (1932) 417–501.

30 I do not go into the details of such (partly parallel) functions as *sessho*, *shikken*, and *kampaku*. They complicate the analysis without adding much to the general argument.

31 P. Rietbergen, *Japan Verwoord. Nihon door Nederlandse Ogen* (Amsterdam, 2003) 54–64; cfr. also: C. Powles, 'The Myth of the Two Emperors: A Study in Misunderstanding', *Pacific Historical Review* 37, no. 1 (1968) 35–50.

32 S. Melville, 'Royal Women and the Exercise of Power in the Ancient Near East', in: D. Snell, ed., *A Companion to the Ancient Near East* (Malden, 2005) 220–228, esp. 226–228.

of success in manoeuvring one's relatives into the highest position in Christendom, the Medici rulers of Florence still managed to do so three times. On the other hand, precisely not to upset the balance of power in the multi-state world that was Christian Europe, no major ruling family ever tried to get one of its scions elected to the chair of St. Peter. Nor, of course, would they have succeeded in doing so. However, when direct appointment was not possible, and/or no family members were available for the major religious functions, imperial rulers did keep a close watch over the higher echelons of the clergy. Charles v had his teacher and trusted friend Adriaan Boeyens nominated primate of Spain and, soon after, forced his election to the papacy. In the Ottoman empire, the grand *mufti*, the most important religious scholar and preacher, usually also styled *shaykh ul-Islam*, often was appointed by the sultan. Perhaps surprisingly, there seems to have been no tendency to recruit the men for this function from the House of Osman itself: to prevent the dangerous combination of religious power and a claim to the throne?

In any case, rulers would make sure that the clergy would not counteract but, rather, support royal rule and, indeed, positively stimulate it through religious propaganda or, even more effective, sacred legislation. In most states, precisely the existence of a body of religious legal texts—whether or not culled from the sacred books—resulted in a situation wherein the precedence claimed by the people who promulgated and upheld 'divine' laws was contested by those who argued that state legislation superseded all.

At the same time, secular rulers wanted to make sure that the often vast economic resources held by religious institutions—monasteries, temples, pious endowments—would not fall into the wrong hands. Charlemagne, for example, continued a Merovingian tradition of naming royal princesses abbesses of the monastery at Chelles when he sent his sister Gisela there.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, in medieval Japan, the Buddhist nunneries that, from the thirteenth century onwards, were established in increasing number, usually were headed by princesses from the imperial family.<sup>34</sup> Amongst other things, the women in these monasteries, both in Francia and in Japan, produced magnificent manuscripts, mostly of a religious nature: cultural products that obviously served as symbols of power as well.

33 P. Rietbergen, *Karel de Grote: vader van Europa?* (Amersfoort, 2009) 71; 91–104.

34 S. Yamamoto, 'Visual and Material Culture at Hokyōji Imperial Convent: The Significance of "Women's Art" in Early Modern Japan' (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2010) 22–58; P. Pfister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns: Treasures from the Imperial Convents of Japan* (New York, 2007).

If state supervision or, even better, control of the realm of faith was unfeasible, kings would devise other means to ensure that religious leaders at least gave them the backing they needed. Taking the European states as a whole, during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries as many as fifteen prominent clerics were made chancellor, or 'prime minister', while, at the same time, serving as (titular) archbishop of one of their country's major episcopal sees. To ensure their royal masters yet another form of hold over the Roman Catholic Church, they were put in the College of Cardinals as well, which gave them a vote in the election of a new pope.<sup>35</sup> Inevitably, however, the hoped-for collaboration did not always develop as expected. When Henry II of England appointed his most trusted collaborator, Chancellor Thomas Becket, to the archbishopric of Canterbury, he did not foresee that the new high priest would set himself up as a staunch defender of the rights of the Church vs. those of the State, which, in the end, led the monarch reputedly to exclaim: 'Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?'

Though this particular case resulted in a memorable 'murder in the cathedral'—that was, however, not unique, for in 1079 the Polish King Boleslaw had his country's primate, Bishop Stanislaus, murdered in his church as well—, generally speaking it seems to have been difficult for secular princes fully to subjugate their religious rivals. To put it another way: the ubiquity of cosmological-religious connotations in the titles and designations used by rulers across Eurasia shows that any form of supreme power needed to continuously and closely associate itself with the sacred, the Divine: *tenno* ('Heavenly Augustness') but also: *kotei* ('August Supreme Deity') in Japan; *huanqdi* ('Lord on High') and *tianzi* ('Son of Heaven') in China but used in Japan as well. In the Sunni Islamic world: *al-Khalifat al-Rashidun* ('Rightly Guided Caliph') as well as *Amir al-Mu'minin* ('Commander of the Faithful'), and, when the caliphal title was taken by the rulers of the Ottoman empire—themselves styled *pad(i)shah* like their Safavid and Mughal colleagues—, also: 'Shadow of God on Earth' and 'Guardian of the Holy Cities'. In the Iran of Ismail I: 'Absolute Truth'.<sup>36</sup> *Pontifex Maximus* and *Vicarius Christi* in the Roman Catholic world. In the German lands: Holy Roman Emperor,<sup>37</sup> and *Apostolische Majestät* in Habsburg-held Hungary. *Rey Católico*—but also *Rey Planeta*—in the Spanish empire and *Rex Fidelissimus*

35 P. Rietbergen, 'Cardinal-Prime Ministers, ca. 1450 – ca. 1750: Careers Between Personal Choices and Cultural Life Scripts', *Historical Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 39, no. 1 (2014) 48–75.

36 V. Minorsky, 'The Poetry of Shāh Ismā'il I', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10, no. 4 (1942) 1042a–1043a.

37 Actually, in German the epithet 'holy' was not used. See below.

in Portugal. In France: *Rex Christianissimus* or *Roy Tres-Chrétien*—but also *Roy Soleil*. And, last but not least: *Defensor Fidei*, Defender of the Faith, in England, but also ‘under Christ, supreme head on earth of the Church of England’ and variants thereof, later modified to ‘supreme governor of the Church of England’, still used today! Interestingly, however, while the Russian czars did rule their vast empire ‘By the Grace of God’, in their numerous titles no other reference to the sacred was included.

### *About the Structure of This Essay*

In this text, I will try to address the following issues and questions. In part I, I aim to determine, from a pan-Eurasian perspective, which religious systems—faiths, ideologies,<sup>38</sup> and, whenever applicable, their institutionalized forms—have tried to ally themselves with secular power, or even have appropriated it outright. The other side of the question is, of course, whether royal power, if it prevailed, was exercised ‘monarchically’, or if in some ways a diarchy continued to exist, wherein the leader(s) of the priesthood retained positions of significant and, indeed, independent power alongside king or emperor.

In pondering about the structure of this first part, I have assumed that the readers probably are a very diverse group indeed. There may be those who have a specialist interest in one of my three *oikoumenai*. And there will be those who are specialists in the history of Christianity, Islam or Confucianism. But there may also be scholars of comparative Eurasian history who yet do not study religion, and those who work in the field of comparative religion but have not delved into the wider cultural, including political history of the phenomenon. Therefore, I have opted for an in-depth, partly case-study presentation of the relationship between religion and power in each of these regions, to lay the foundations for the comparisons in the second part.

Though the first part will broadly adhere to the periodization stipulated for the volume of which it forms part—i.e. the thirteenth to the late eighteenth century—I will highlight a number of rulers chosen from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, to analyse not only their actual engagement with (the institutions of) religious power, but also their propagandistic use of it. This will allow me to rely on my specific knowledge rather than on more general reading, only, and, at the same time, show the peculiarities of and the differences between specific rulers. Inevitably, this approach will not reveal

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38 The concept is problematic, but as defined by: G. Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London, 1980) 2, I take it to mean thought forming conscious action; thus, it may resemble faith and, indeed, religion.

long-term historical changes, though, whenever I feel I can comment thereon, I will yet try to do so.

Obviously, since genus comes before species, differences arise from similarities: differences are specific, similarities generic. In part II, I will generalize those elements introduced in the first part that, I feel, are fundamental for a comparison. These are: religion, soteriology and economic power, ideological orthodoxy vs. heterodoxy, imperial expansion and religious mission, marital policies, (in-)visibility in life and death and the ways the various empires knew one another. In addressing this variety of topics, inevitably the same empirical data will reappear to illuminate a different perspective, resulting in some overlap. Yet, this approach will help me to show that, actually, similarities did exist between what may at first sight seem instances of power in relation to religion that originated in and were confined solely to their own cultural system, or *oikoumenè*. Looking for comparable situations, I may be able to construct, if not a typology at least a few cross-Eurasian types. At the same time I hope to indicate which cases truly can be termed unique.

### *Methods and Sources*

Some remarks about methods and sources seem in place, for during my research into the relationship between religious and secular power in Eurasia—between, one might also say, a Church, or various Churches, and the ruler, or rulers of the State in which they functioned—I have encountered a set of closely related problems.

In post-medieval, Christian Europe, the study of history always has been based on the study of texts, first and foremost. To establish textual reliability and, even, veracity, the Humanist scholars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries at a very early stage decided that comparing texts left by past generations was the only way to arrive at the interpretations and conclusions without which no *historia* was deemed valid. In a sense, this procedure was first tested in the study of the historical text par excellence, the Bible, the New but also the Old Testament. Not only comparing the various Latin versions, but, also, using the manuscripts in Greek and other Biblical languages, standard editions were, in the end, compiled for use by future generations both of (Biblical) historians and of theologians. No wonder that, in other fields of knowledge, too, comparison soon was introduced as a prime scientific method. Indeed, one might even argue that one of the first such fields was the comparative study of religion(s).<sup>39</sup> Given the fact that the Christian world was forced to deal with the Jewish

39 W. Smith, 'Comparative Religion: Whither—and Why?', in: M. Eliade and J. Kitagawa, eds., *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology* (Chicago, 1959) 31–58.

religion as well as with the claims of Islam, such texts as, e.g., the ones relating the life of Muhammad were analysed to establish his stature as a prophet, a law-giver, or as the founder of a new superstition. Perhaps not surprisingly, it took the Christian world until the late eighteenth century before it started to deal with the life of its own prophet in a similarly detached, comparative way.

Since the fifteenth century also saw a huge increase in information about the civilizations of the non-European worlds and the role, if any, Europeans saw for themselves there, inevitably all kinds of questions now needed to be dealt with from a comparative point of view, if only to be able to arrive at the conclusion that Europe was the best of all possible worlds after all. Besides studies of comparative religion, books started appearing that addressed such (related) topics as the role of ritual in various cultures—how people married, how they were buried, et cetera—, but they also tried to establish what were the bases of the power of the world's monarchs and states, or to what extent the art of writing influenced the functioning of human societies. In fact, precisely the increasingly—often implicit—comparative approach to the analysis and interpretation of all aspects of the life of humankind helped to inculcate a spirit of scientific but, soon, also more general cultural criticism in the world of European scholarship; it certainly contributed to a growing—though not, of course, generally prevailing—attitude of relativism or, even, scepticism regarding the alleged superiority of Europe.

Nevertheless, the comparative method explicitly used has always met with criticism both within and without the scholarly world. Indeed, studying manifestations of religious (and) imperial power in a variety of cultural settings across the Eurasian continent, I need to address the criticism usually levelled against the comparative approach in historical research.

Is it enough to assume, or, rather, state that applying questions asked about—and, mostly, from within—one culture to another will enable us to see, through similarities and differences, some kind of universal essence in the realities thus observed? Or will we always be impotent facing the fact that any subject-observer who studies two or more different cultures, whether or not related to or influenced by one another, will implicitly hierarchize them, and, thus, distort their singularity and uniqueness? Unavoidably, any scholar starts his observations of any aspect of culture and—indeed—even nature from his own cultural point of view as well as from his own academic discipline, habitually without acknowledging these biases. Doing so, mostly implicitly, the resulting observations and interpretations will of necessity be subjective. As Max Weber already indicated, this will result in sometimes painful accusations about self vs. other, national vs. foreign, historian vs. anthropologist or sociolo-

gist, in short about all sorts of partisan preconceptions inherent in the specializations that now characterize the Humanities, and in related remarks about the impossibility of viable interdisciplinary research and about the incommensurability of cultures.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, many people argue that comparison is possible only through the construction of artificial unities that distort complex realities because they deny the individuality and specificity, even, of 'big structures'. Last, but not least, people will say it simply is impossible fruitfully to compare the individual experiences that are the basic forces in any history. Whether all difficulties are eliminated if one stresses 'shared' or, rather, 'entangled' histories, or takes recourse to a concept like that of *histoire croisée* remains, of course, to be seen. There is, I fear, the possibility that such abstract words will actually hide the real worlds they purport to describe and interpret.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, I intend to use the following working definition.

Of course, when we compare objects or, even, people in order to better understand them, we always need to prefer the concept over the individual case(s). We strive after a certain degree of generalization, which we achieve precisely through using concepts as heuristic devices. However, a generalization created in the Humanities never amounts to such a law as results from theories tested and proven in physics. Such laws are, after all, generalizations that hold true irrespective of time and place—at least in our cosmos. Historical generalizations refer to human constructions, i.e. to culture(s) that, once we return to the specific, always will show themselves as individual, unique. Yet, by applying the comparative method, we will discover not only the differences but also the similarities that characterize our cases and thus allow us to better know the human condition.

From a religious point of view, until the mid-sixteenth century (Western) Europe presented a unity perhaps more compact than that of the non-centralized worlds of Islam, Buddhism, and Confucianism: for nearly a millenn-

40 Max Weber, *Wissenschaft als Beruf*, W. Mommsen, ed. (Tübingen, 1992) *passim*.

41 Even the terms used in the title of, e.g., A. Amelina, et al., eds., *Beyond Methodological Nationalism: Research Methodologies for Cross-border Studies* (London, 2012) are jargonistic and do not, I feel, make real sense. For the interesting part: 1–22. See also: H. Kaelble, 'Historischer Vergleich', *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte* (14.08.2012); D. Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History. Theories and Approaches in a Connected World* (Cambridge, 2011); M. Werner and B. Zimmermann, 'Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity', *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (2006) 30–50; H. Kaelble and J. Schriewer, eds., *Vergleich und Transfer. Komparatistik in den Sozial-, Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt a. M., 2003); T. Bahti, 'Anacoluthon: On Cultural Studies', *Modern Language Notes* 112 (1997) 366–384.

ium it had been the world of Christianity, a world called Christendom, a world dominated, at least until the 1520s, by the papacy and the one, Roman Catholic Church. Yet, from the point of view of state formation for many centuries already 'Europe' had shown a degree of fragmentation and, hence, variety that complicates comparisons with the huge and at least outwardly uniform empires that up to the nineteenth century largely made up the political landscape of the regions we call the Near and Middle East, India, and the Far East.

Moreover, while 'doing' comparative history presupposes asking the same set of questions to disparate sources that reflect the situation in at least superficially non-associated regions or cultures, the state of the historiography about the various societies of Eurasia is, in many ways, so dissimilar as to preclude applying this method with any rigidity.

Particularly in the non-European parts of Eurasia—and, more to the point, in the Islamic and Hindu parts—there still is a tendency to study ancient texts, especially texts with a highly normative or, indeed, religious nature, with a great deal of circumspection and, indeed, reverence. Rather than contextualizing them in order to come to an analysis, interpretation, and understanding that serve our present scholarly requirements—which, needless to say, are of, albeit recent, Western origin—they are, often, presented in a purely descriptive, uncritical way or, rather, used to defend present-day religious-cultural positions.

Another problem specifically regards visual(-narrative) sources, whether in architecture, painting, or in sculpture, the study of which we nowadays feel is necessary to our understanding of the past. Whereas Christian Europe and, to a lesser extent, the Buddhist worlds offer the historian a wealth of material to analyse the (re-) presentation of power through religion, due to its ban on 'icons' the Islamic world by and large does not. In a more general sense, neither do the Confucian worlds—at least not in large-scale, and, more importantly, 'public' representations of visual, power-related stories.

Last but not least, in many Eurasian historiographical traditions one, vitally important element is missing. For whereas since the nineteenth century European scholars have delved deeply into the economic background of religious institutions—bishopsrics, monasteries, pious foundations, et cetera—and the way(s) these were integrated in the state economy and, indeed, in power politics, such research still is largely or, even, wholly lacking for other parts of Eurasia.<sup>42</sup> Maybe, given different bureaucratic traditions, the sources needed

42 See, e.g., the perceptive remarks of: V. Goossaert, 'Counting the Monks: The 1736–1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy', *Late Imperial China* 21, no. 2 (2000) 40–85.

for such research never existed in the first place. In many cases the records that would enable such study simply have not survived: especially in South Asia climate and insects have wrought havoc with entire archives. Certainly, whatever remains does not (yet) allow us to undertake studies that yield results comparable to what has been achieved in Europe. Moreover, in this field, too, the historical profession in many non-European cultures often does not address religion and religious life and culture in a detached, 'materialist' way.

In short, regarding sources and historiography, the overall Eurasian situation does not facilitate analyses and interpretations that, in addition to the 'soft' side of the ruler-religion relation—specifically the cultures of ideology, representation, and propaganda—, also need to address the other side, that of economic and financial politics, of 'hard' power.

In the end, it is really up to the reader to judge the validity of the above considerations and, hence, of the following exercises. Moreover, as always when a historian has unravelled the tangled, complex, and essentially incomplete tissue of past human experience, it also is up to the reader to reconfigure the tapestry in his or her own mind to gain the 'complete' picture.

## 1 Religions, Regions and Royal Roles: Varieties across Eurasia

### 1.1 *The Three Worlds of Christian Europe—Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant: Popes/Patriarchs and/vs. Kings/Emperors*

Though, nowadays, in many parts of the world Christmas is celebrated, relatively few Christians realize that the 25th of December is not the birthday of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ (? – 33 CE). Indeed, from a scholarly point of view one has to admit that we have no idea on which date or, for that matter, in which year he was born. There even have been people who argue that he is, entirely, a fabrication. Many more, though admitting that he may have been a historical figure, yet accept that we know very little about his life or ideas. He has not left a single word that scholarly can be proven his own. In fact, he lives entirely in a number of 'mytho-biographies', the so-called 'gospels', that, however, do little to help us understand who he was and what he may have wanted to do. Was he a Jewish rebel leader using religious arguments to create cohesion amongst his followers? Was he a shamanist healer?<sup>43</sup> Was he a prophet who also wanted to reform the current state of Judaism?

43 B. Kollmann, *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter. Studien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum* (Göttingen, 1996).

One thing seems certain: he was not the founder of the religion that bears his name. Originating as a sect in the ancient Jewish world, only after Jesus's death did some of his followers constitute themselves into an institutionalized religion, a Church, in the course of the late first and early second centuries. This could happen precisely because the Roman empire in which they functioned was, also, a vast communication society that allowed the disciples of the Christ to travel widely and, in doing so, spread their religious ideas.

Christianity as we know it is both a theology, positing the existence of a transcendent, 'personal' god with supernatural powers, lord of all creation, and a soteriology, promising salvation to all humans who express their belief in him and his laws and act accordingly; consequently, it also is a metaphysics. Its relationship with the Roman empire and its culture, and with its later recreations and successor states was a complex one.

The Roman emperor Constantine (ca. 272–305–337 CE), who first chose Christianity as his favoured creed, considered himself no less than the equal of Jesus's original disciples, the twelve apostles. Moreover, he definitely felt that the Church should serve the needs of the State, rather than the other way round.<sup>44</sup> Five centuries later, Emperor Charlemagne (ca. 747–768–814 CE) sat in the gallery of his new palace church at Aachen and, from his throne, faced a fresco of the Christ himself. He, too, felt that the Church should obey him: he always was settling theological disputes and setting rules for the proper conduct of priests and monks, of the liturgy they performed, the teaching they should provide, et cetera.<sup>45</sup>

Priests and monks! It is easy to forget that, from the early ages of Christianity onwards, its believers divided into two groups. Those who lived 'in the world' were led by their parochial priests and their bishops, under the supreme rule of, finally, a, or the, patriarch/pope. The other group consisted of male and female monastics who lived 'outside the world', acknowledging the authority of the patriarch/pope, only. The interface between these two worlds was not only piety but, also, money, for monasteries, organized in religious Orders, developed into powerful networks spanning Christendom in its entirety, with each individual establishment often being a huge economic complex. Their increasing wealth was watched with covetous eyes both by secular rulers and by Church leaders themselves.

44 T. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire* (Chichester, 2011).

45 Rietbergen, *Karel de Grote*, 71–72.

The problem of Church-State relations in the Christian world starts with the question whether, in the end, one of the bishops or patriarchs who headed the early, major Christian communities—in the Near East, Africa, and in Romanized Europe—could claim supremacy over all his colleagues. If that question were settled, he might claim to be the ultimate representative of Christianity in the empire and thus, as God's representative on earth, the man chosen to rule beside or, indeed, over the emperor. During the first centuries of the Christian era, there was no consensus over this issue—which gave the Christian Roman emperors the opportunity to try and determine Church policy themselves, as shown by the stance Constantine took during the Church council that, at his instigation, convened at Nicaea.

As long as Rome was considered the capital of an undivided empire, and, indeed, the seat of the emperor, the preeminent position of the town's bishop, or pope, was, in a sense, guaranteed, though by no means accepted by all other patriarchs/popes. When a second capital was founded, in Constantinople, and, subsequently, the empire actually was divided, not surprisingly the patriarch of that town, too, put forward his claims. With the fall of the empire 'of the West' in the fifth century, these became stronger.

The so-called 'Petrine' or 'apostolic' theory, i.e. the Roman bishops' argument that they were the successors of St. Peter, the disciple who according to tradition had been nominated Jesus's first and only representative on earth, and hence also should rule supreme in all human affairs, certainly did not receive general support. Nor did the document they presented in the eighth century as *Donatio Constantini*—purportedly written in the fourth century and stating that the emperor, departing for the East, had left the Roman pontiff both religious and secular leader of the West—gain universal acceptance or, even, credence.

Its claims were, indeed, huge. Allegedly, Constantine had granted Pope Sylvester 'supremacy over the four other principal sees', viz. those of Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, and, indeed, 'over all the churches of God in the whole earth'. The pope also had been accorded 'power, and dignity of glory, and honour imperial', as well as such imperial insignia as the tiara, and was in the future to rule: 'the city of Rome, and all the provinces, places and cities of Italy and the western regions.'<sup>46</sup>

46 See chapters 12, 16 and 17 of the (various) editions of the 'Constitutum Constantini'. Cfr. also: J. Fried, ed., *"Donation of Constantine" and "Constitutum Constantini": The Misinterpretation of a Fiction and its Original Meaning* (Berlin, 2007).

Given the continuous disputes over their position—which this eighth-century falsification sought to settle—, no wonder the Roman pontiffs decided that alliances with the most powerful new rulers of Western, Latin Christendom definitely were necessary. In their turn, these leaders were happy to accept the Roman Church's support since it helped them to gain legitimacy amongst their subjects and, whenever their rule was contested, use their position as anointed monarchs against their noble rivals. Specifically the Pippinid princes of Francia cemented the relationship with Rome. Consequently, in 800 AD King Charlemagne, through whose assistance a reigning pontiff had been able to keep his power in his continuous struggles with the Roman aristocracy, was in a position to demand to be crowned emperor, thus recreating the old empire.

Meanwhile, for centuries already, in Constantinople, the hub of the Eastern, or Byzantine Empire, the man commonly referred to as *basileus* (toon *basiloon*, king of kings, from the Achaemenid term introduced into Greek by Alexander the Great) considered himself the emperor of all the 'Romans', i.e. all those who at one time had inhabited the undivided Roman Empire he continued to claim as his realm. His title was *Imperator Caesar*, followed by his name which then sometimes was adorned with the epithet *sebastos/augustus*. Also styled *autocrator*, or *sebastokrator*, he entertained an even closer relationship with the patriarch than did the emperor and the various other princes in the West with the pope, if only because the two men shared the same city.<sup>47</sup> However, though the Church did argue that the emperor and the patriarch/pope were equal, with the one ruling the state temporal and the other the state spiritual, the emperors did not subscribe to this interpretation. In 535 CE, Emperor Justinian had argued that:

There are two greatest gifts which God, in his love for man, has granted from On-high: the priesthood and the imperial dignity. The first serves divine things, while the latter directs and administers human affairs; both, however, proceed from the same origin and adorn the life of mankind. Hence, nothing should be such a source of care to the emperors as the dignity of the priests, since it is for their (imperial) welfare that they constantly implore God. For if the priesthood is in every way free from blame and possesses access to God, and if the emperors administer equitably

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47 G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003).

and judiciously the state entrusted to their care, general harmony will result and whatever is beneficial will be bestowed upon the human race.<sup>48</sup>

But since he also argued that only the emperor could issue the laws without which nothing in society was binding, in the end supreme power rested with him. Nevertheless, as in the West, in the East, too, this position never solved the even more fundamental question: who had the final say in matters of doctrine, in the definitions of faith?

Nor was this problem resolved in the visual representation of both men. Indeed, one might argue that in that field, the emperors held the day. Admittedly, the Eastern Empire's main church, the Hagia Sophia, was linked to the imperial palace—as, later, Charlemagne linked his chapel at Aachen to his admittedly far more modest dwelling. As indicated in the ninth-century treatise *De Caerimoniis aulae Byzantinae*, the church was the site of all imperial ceremonies that needed a sacred context.<sup>49</sup> But to present himself as God's representative on earth, the *basileus* did not have to leave his palace, which, actually, was considered *hieron*, or sacred, itself. In the 'golden reception room', a fresco above his throne showed the Christ enthroned, while on the opposite wall the Virgin Mary, flanked by the portrait of an emperor and a patriarch, looked down upon the incumbent *basileus*. Again one wonders whether Charlemagne's advisors knew of this decoration scheme, since parts of this disposition were used in his Aachen church. But then again, in these very years Pope Leo III used a comparable set-up in his Roman throne room, to visualize his own claims to supremacy over all the world under Heaven.

Other parts of the Byzantine sacred palace's main audience chamber were decked with religious symbols as well, suggesting that the emperor, though living on earth, actually was surrounded by the heavenly flock of angels and saints.<sup>50</sup>

48 F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy. Origins and Background*. Dumbarton Oaks Studies 9, 2 vols. (Washington, 1966) 815–819.

49 J. Featherstone, 'Emperor and Court', in: J. Shepard, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500–1492* (Cambridge, 2009) 505–517.

50 R. Cormack, 'But is it Art?', in: E. Hoffman, ed., *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* (Oxford, 2007) 301–314; J. Kosteneč, 'Chrysotriklinos', in: *Encyclopedia of the Hellenic World* (Istanbul, 2008) <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=12440>, and: Idem, 'The Heart of the Empire. The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors Reconsidered', in: K. Dark, ed., *Secular Buildings and the Archaeology of Everyday Life in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 2004) 4–36.

Even after the 'Great Palace' which in the eighth and ninth centuries was perhaps the grandest in the world, had been largely destroyed in the twelfth century, the message proclaimed by the decorations of the throne room continued to determine the complex claims of the Byzantine emperors. The oft-used term caesaro-papism is, indeed, an apt one.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, however, both the physical splendour and the imperial pretence had fallen victim to the greed and the religious bigotry of Christian knights and soldiers who participated in the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204) and plundered Byzantium. Actually, the king of France, Louis IX, bought—at incredible cost—some of the 'Sacred Palace's' most revered relics, including the Crown of Thorns, and housed them in his newly-built 'Sainte-Chapelle', obviously to enhance his own power vis-à-vis the other Christian monarchs, including the emperor.<sup>52</sup>

That the Crusaders felt free thus to act against another Christian empire is explained by the rift between the two worlds of Christendom, the Latin- and the Greek-speaking. It had started building up during the second part of the first millennium CE and grew ever deeper until, in the eleventh century, a definite schism occurred. This left the Church of Rome still claiming to be 'catholic', i.e. 'all-encompassing', 'universal', and the Church of Constantinople taking the epithet 'orthodox'. For, admittedly, the discussions were not only about power, but also about theological issues, including the hotly debated acceptability and status of icons, of representations of the Divine; these, of course, were sacred objects themselves, objects of power, used to manipulate power.

The relationship between *basileus* and patriarch did not alter essentially until the end of the Byzantine Empire in the fifteenth century.<sup>53</sup> Though no prosopographic study seems to exist, my somewhat random research in the biographies of the patriarchs indicates that not only were they mostly nominated and, if he so decided, deposed by the emperor, they also, regularly, belonged to the imperial family; in some cases, these men were forced to become monks precisely in order to keep them from claiming the throne, if only because in Byzantium the first-born son did not automatically succeed his father in the imperial purple.

51 C. Toumanoff, 'Caesaropapism in Byzantium and Russia', *Theological Studies* 7, no. 2 (1946) 213–243.

52 Cfr. P. Rietbergen, 'Sacralizing the Palace, Sacralizing the King. Sanctuaries and/in Royal Residences in Medieval Europe', in: M. Verhoeven, L. Bosman, and H. Van Asperen, eds., *Monuments & Memory: Christian Cult Buildings and Constructions of the Past* (Turnhout, 2016).

53 D. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330* (Cambridge, 2007).

Meanwhile, the situation in Western Christendom grew ever more complicated. Whereas the Byzantine Empire up to the end remained just that: a huge, but unified state, the empire created by Charlemagne was never meant to be transferred to his successors undivided. Following Frankish, i.e. originally Indo-European, nomadic custom, Charles apportioned his realm to his three sons, whose descendants then partitioned it amongst their own offspring. Thus, by the end of the ninth century, Western Christendom, while still a religious unity, yet consisted of a multitude of states great and small, each with its own sovereign ruler. The supreme authority of the man who happened to wear the imperial crown mostly was nominal, only. Actually, with the support of texts in the Old Testament about the God-given authority of kings, each monarch argued that he ruled by divine right and that, therefore, human opposition against his rule was against God's will. Since the Church of Rome, i.e. the papacy, claimed to be the sole guardian on earth of the execution of this will, it also claimed to be the only power on earth that actually could depose a king. Though, from the thirteenth century onwards, there were theologians who felt that kingly rule was not, in this sense, unconditional and that, if the Church did not carry out its role against a tyrannical prince, the people themselves might revolt, most Christians basically followed the old belief.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, each monarch in Latin Christendom had to create his own legitimacy especially amongst and against a mostly unruly aristocracy. It certainly was helpful to be ritually linked to God by an ordained representative of the Church. Indeed, like the kings of the Old Testament, to become rightful in the eyes of their subjects high and low the rulers of, e.g., England, France, and other states in Europe sought the blessing of the pope or, since he lived in faraway Rome, of the 'primate', the highest papal-appointed religious dignitary in their kingdom: the archbishop of Reims, the archbishop of Canterbury, et cetera, while the emperor, at least formally, could be anointed and crowned only by the pope himself.

This need, as well as their wish somehow to use the fiscal potential of the huge wealth amassed by local and regional churches and abbeys, also meant that each monarch wanted to control the Church within the boundaries of his own realm. Of course, the popes were the only ones who could actually confer the episcopal dignity on the men appointed to govern the many sees of the Latin Church. Increasingly, however, the secular rulers more or less demanded the right to nominate their own candidates for these positions, leaving the

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54 G. Burgess, 'The Divine Right of Kings Reconsidered', *The English Historical Review* 107 (1992) 837–861.

Roman pontiff the performance of the sacred ritual of ordination, only. From the eleventh century onwards, this resulted in endless bickering, acrimonious negotiations, and, sometimes, in outright war between Europe's various kings and the Roman Curia. Though there was no real winner, by the thirteenth century it had become clear that, on the one hand, an elective council in each bishopric and, on the other hand, the pope would decide who would occupy an episcopal throne—but never without tacit royal consent. If a government really insisted a candidate was unacceptable, Rome would have a hard time in forcing its hand.

By the thirteenth century, the slow evanescence of the Byzantine Empire had set in. However, when, in 1472, Sophia Palaiologina, daughter of the last claimant to the Byzantine throne, married the grand prince of Muscovy, Ivan III (1440–1462–1505), some of the empire's pretences were taken over by the Muscovite rulers as well.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, even before Ivan took power, in 1448 the metropolitans, or bishops, of Moscow, expecting the collapse of Constantinople at the hands of the Ottoman armies, had established themselves as patriarchs of an independent Russian-Orthodox Church. They continued the tradition of a very close alliance with Moscow's ruling family. Actually, even earlier, when the Mongol khans had claimed suzerainty over Muscovy, the Church of Muscovy had granted the request that they would pray not only for their Christian prince but also for the khan.<sup>56</sup>

In the fifteenth century, the patriarchs of Moscow proclaimed their town to be the 'third Rome', the heir of the two previous ones—the second one conquered by Islam, and the first one long since strayed from the path of orthodoxy. Not surprisingly, they started styling themselves 'patriarch of all Rus'. At the same time, Orthodox canonists, for obvious reasons of their own as well as, probably, prompted by the grand prince, began extolling Ivan as *czar*, the rightful heir of the imperial tradition once embodied in the rulers of Tzarigrad, the 'city of the caesars'—the Slavic name for Constantinople. I would argue that this was a policy the Roman pontiffs could not pursue nor, even, condone. Though they had hoped that arranging the marriage between the Palaiologos princess—who had been educated in Italy—and the Russian ruler would give them more power over the Church in Muscovy, creating another caesar obviously would have disturbed their relations with the one and only Roman Emperor.

55 S. Bogatyrev, 'Reinventing the Russian Monarchy in the 1550s: Ivan the Terrible, the Dynasty, and the Church', *Slavonic and East European Review* 85, no. 2 (2007) 271–293.

56 M. Cherniavsky, 'Khan or Basileus: An aspect of Russian Mediaeval Political Theory', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20, no. 4 (1959) 459–476.

Inevitably, Ivan himself, too, began to use both the title of czar as well as all kinds of Byzantine imperial ritual,<sup>57</sup> to stress his claims as ruler not only of Muscovy but 'of all Rus', and to strengthen his relations with the states of Central and Western Europe. Significantly, he also had himself styled 'keeper of the Byzantine throne', which, certainly when seen in retrospect, boded ill for the future of the Balkans and the Black Sea region. Religion remained one of his weapons, e.g., when he conquered the powerful and economically vital republic of Novgorod under the pretext of a Holy War against its inhabitants, who, he argued, had deviated from the right religious way as well.<sup>58</sup>

In the Latin Christian world, the supremacy of the papacy, which always had been threatened by both secular and religious leaders—who variously would use theological and political-constitutional arguments—, was seriously and as turned out irrevocably undermined by the religious reform movements of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Though we should not doubt the beliefs of the reformers, we definitely should question whether the princes and, indeed, elites who chose to support them always were driven by a sincere wish to set Church matters straight again and return to some, albeit (re-)constructed orthodoxy. Many felt that the huge economic power represented in the consolidated wealth of the Roman Church was too tempting a plum not to be picked. In various states of Europe this resulted in sometimes large-scale expropriations of monastic properties. If, in the process, a State Church could be created, which not only would sever all links with Rome but, also, somehow give added power to the ruling prince, that opportunity, too, was too good to be missed. Whereas these were the states where, sooner or later, Protestantism in one of its many forms was adopted, in other polities governments sought to appropriate Church revenue—if not Church property—mostly with the albeit unwilling consent of the Curia, which thus hoped to retain the loyalty of these governments to the cause of papal Rome.

Meanwhile, the religious diversity that now came to characterize the already complex European state-system did serve to produce new arguments for, precisely, inter-state war. To augment one's dynastic power one now could mobilize one's people against other 'nations' because they held non-orthodox, or even heretical, views of the one, true religion.<sup>59</sup>

57 D. Miller, 'Creating Legitimacy: Ritual, Ideology, and Power in Sixteenth-Century Russia', *Russian History* 21, no. 3 (1994) 289–315.

58 C. Toumanoff, 'Moscow the Third Rome: Genesis and Significance of a Politico-Religious Idea', *The Catholic Historical Review* 40, no. 4 (1955) 411–447.

59 D. Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change* (Princeton, 2009).

Soon, in one way or other, the principle of *cuius regio, illius et religio* became a powerful tool for all rulers in Europe, whether they turned Protestant—as in Scotland, England, Sweden, Denmark, and in many states in the German-speaking world—or stayed with Rome, as did the emperor, and many other German princes, as well as the rulers of Portugal, Spain, the states of the Italian peninsula, Poland, and Hungary. Perhaps surprisingly, whatever their allegiance, all princes still claimed to rule 'by the Grace of God'. On succeeding to the throne, they would be anointed by a representative of *the* Church, or, as in Protestant states, *their* Church. Only thus would the majority of their subjects accept their legitimacy. Failure to be sacralized always exposed them to claims from competitors.

Yet, precisely during the sixteenth century, this Divine Right concept was being challenged by Roman Catholic and Protestant legal thinkers and politicians alike. They now argued that the ruler-ruled relationship was a contract after all and that, hence, under certain conditions opposition against a tyrannical king was, indeed, allowed.

The new situation obviously altered both the image and the self-image of the Roman pope. For the European Protestants, he was the anti-Christ. For the Roman Catholics he remained the supreme pontiff, but his supremacy in non-religious issues increasingly was called into doubt. Hence, from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, the popes, though remaining the secular rulers of their own 'Papal States', concentrated on their spiritual leadership. The two major building projects in seventeenth-century Rome were designed to stress this point. In the 1640s, the construction of the Fountain of the Four Rivers, on Piazza Navona, represented Christianity and papal peace-making as the primary forces in all four worlds of the earth. A decade later, the colonnades of St. Peter's literally embraced all people who sought salvation through the one and only Church.<sup>60</sup>

Yet, to counterbalance the notion that in practising their beliefs Catholic Christians always followed one, orthodox way, only, I might point out that at least one pope, Urban VIII, seems to have indulged in what, in retrospect, we might term decidedly heterodox, divinatory rituals that his own inquisition surely would have denounced as black magic. It is an interesting instance of the underlying, shamanic side of the papal, priestly role.<sup>61</sup> Yet, for many centuries

60 P. Rietbergen, 'A Vision Come True. Pope Alexander VII (1655–1667), Gianlorenzo Bernini and the Colonnades of St. Peter's', *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 44–45, *Nova Series* 11 (1983) 11–163, 237–241.

61 P. Rietbergen, *Power and Religion in Baroque Rome: Barberini Cultural Policies* (Leiden, 2006) ch. 8.

comparable roles were taken by Christendom's secular monarchs, though these did not always sit easy with them. When William III of Orange, a confirmed Protestant, was crowned king of Great Britain and Ireland in 1689, he was asked to perform the age-old ritual of the 'Royal Touch', the laying on of hands that supposedly cured a person of scrofula. Reputedly he said to one supplicant: 'may God give you better health and more sense.' Does this point to a decrease in personal piety, or a decline in the personal beliefs of such more 'rationalist', Protestant monarchs? Not necessarily. William's immediate successor, Queen Anne, herself a Protestant too, re-instated the custom. Yet, it was abolished by the new, Hannoverian, more staunchly Lutheran English kings in the early eighteenth century.<sup>62</sup> Arguably, discontinuing this shamanistic ritual, which once had been an integral part and, indeed, proof of the idea of a monarch's God-given right to rule, points to a changing attitude towards the foundations of princely authority.

In Roman Catholic France, however, where the ceremony was performed both after a coronation and then often four times a year, the king sometimes touched as many as a thousand patients on every single occasion, saying 'Le Roy te touche et Dieu te guerit'—'the King touches you and God heals you'. The practice continued all during the *ancien régime*, although in the eighteenth century the formula was not insignificantly altered into 'Le Roy te touche et Dieu te guerisse'—'the King touches you and hopefully God heals you.'<sup>63</sup> Yet, the ritual cannot but have given a sense of royal legitimacy and of subject-ruler cohesion both to the participants and to the multitudes who witnessed it.

Meanwhile, the new situation of a divided Christendom also altered princely relations with the religious establishment, not only in the sense sketched above. Perhaps not surprisingly, in Protestant states the rulers and their entourage no longer indulged in the large-scale endowment of religious foundations; though their motives were, mostly, economic, publicly they argued that such actions did not please God, nor should they be expected by his priesthood.<sup>64</sup>

62 D. Sturdy, 'The Royal Touch in England', in: H. Durchardt, R. Jackson, and D. Sturdy, eds., *European Monarchy: Its Evolution and Practice from Antiquity to Modern Times* (Stuttgart, 1992) 169–184. Also: S. Brogan, *The Royal Touch in Early Modern England* (London, 2015).

63 A. Finley-Crosswhite, 'Henry IV and the Diseased Body Politic', in: M. Gosman, A. MacDonal, and A. Vanderjagt, eds., *Princes and Princely Culture: 1450–1650* (Leiden, 2003) 131–146; also: A. Maral, *Le Roi-soleil et Dieu: essai sur la religion de Louis XIV* (Paris, 2012).

64 For the background, see also: D. Beales, *Prosperity and Plunder: European Catholic Monasteries in the Age of Revolution, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, 2003).

Whatever their private beliefs, the relationship, at least the public one, between rulers and religion was different in the Roman Catholic states of Europe. In the lands of the Austrian Habsburgs, the so-called Catholic Reform movement—primarily an effort undertaken by the new, Jesuit Order to (re-)convert the population to Roman Catholic Christianity—was actively supported by the emperor for obvious reasons of cultural homogeneity and, hence, political control. Both they and the imperial family—the empress and other females<sup>65</sup>—continued, as in pre-Reformation times, to establish monasteries and build churches. Increasingly, they also endowed educational institutions—universities and gymnasiums—, where, of course, religion would dictate all other aspects of culture that, therefore, could be dominated by both Church and State.

Interestingly, the monasteries remained largely independent, the monks electing their own abbots who ruled over sometimes enormous estates—mini-states, really, in which local culture and cohesion were determined by them. Yet, Roman Catholic kings would use these establishments to project their own power as well. In Habsburg Spain, the monarchs still favoured such older religious foundations as the Madrilene monastery of the 'Descalzas reales', the unshod, royal Carmelite nuns,<sup>66</sup> and the most venerated one, of the Virgin, in Guadeloupe—though the latter was, in a way, superseded by the monastery-palace that Philip II built at El Escorial. In Portugal, the grand ensemble of the medieval convent-palace at Tomár was added to until well into the sixteenth century, and so were the great convents of Alcobaca and Batalha. In the sixteenth century, with the aid of African gold and Asian spices a sumptuous new religious foundation was built at Belém—also to house the new royal mausoleum—and in the early eighteenth century the discovery of precious metals in Brazil helped to finance a stupendous monastery-palace at Mafra,<sup>67</sup> which sought to mirror the Escorial. Not coincidentally, in these very same years Emperor Charles VI decided to rebuild the ancient abbey of Klosterneuburg, in Lower Austria, turning it into a part-royal residence. Most of the grandiose scheme was left unfinished, but its imperial dimensions and

65 See: C. Ingrao and A. Thomas, 'Piety and Patronage: The Empresses-Consort of the High Baroque', *German History* 20, no. 1 (2002) 20–43.

66 B. von Barghahn, *Age of Gold, Age of Iron: Renaissance Spain and Symbols of Monarchy: The Imperial Legacy of Charles V and Philip II: Royal Castles, Palace-Monasteries, Princely Houses* (Washington, 1985); M. Hernandez, *Patronato regio y órdenes religiosas femeninas en el Madrid de los Austrias: Descalzas Reales, Encarnación y Santa Isabel* (Madrid, 1997).

67 A. Pimentel, 'O Real Edifício de Mafra: Arquitectura e poder' (PhD dissertation, Coimbra, 1992).

pretensions can be seen even now.<sup>68</sup> If anything, this very visible, almost pan-European competition in building royal monasteries showed the continuing link between princely rule and religious piety.

From the sixteenth century onwards until well into the nineteenth century, the European princes consolidated their relations with the Church, whether it was that of Rome, which necessitated negotiations with the papal Curia, or with the clergy of their 'own', State Church. Inevitably, the 'reform movements'—both the ones instigated against the papacy and the ones undertaken by the papacy itself—resulted in mostly bloody civil wars, now waged because of, or at least with an appeal to religious arguments, though, of course, political competition always was an important, not to say major element as well.

In Protestant states, Roman Catholics and, often, all other 'dissenters' were persecuted and either forced to convert or to practice their belief in secret. In many Roman Catholic states, all Protestants suffered the same fate though, perhaps, nowhere were they treated as harshly as in the realms of His Catholic Majesty and His Most Christian Majesty. In Spain, those Spaniards who were Muslims, Jews, or Protestants—the latter not a major group—faced forced conversion or exile; their alternative was to die for their faith. In France, after a century of fragile accommodation, in 1685 Louis XIV finally decided that his Protestant subjects detracted from the unity of power he sought. Those who did not bow to his wishes had to emigrate. For reasons of power and, perhaps, conviction, both he and his Spanish colleagues accepted the massive damage this policy did to the economy, though they may not have gauged the real and long-term consequences of their actions. Others, however, profited from this excessive religious-political zeal. At the opposite end of the Mediterranean, Sultan Bayezid II decided to welcome the Spanish Jews to his empire, telling his courtiers: 'You venture to call Ferdinand [king of Aragon] a wise ruler, he who has impoverished his own country and enriched mine?'<sup>69</sup> Still, in Spain and France the royal dream of one country, one religion, and one king to wield power over all slowly became a reality.

The situation that developed in the England of Henry VIII (1491–1509–1547) and his daughter Elizabeth I (1533–1558–1603) during the 'Anglican Reformation' was, and amazingly still is, the perhaps most obvious example of the genesis of a 'national' Church that became an integral part of the State. Yet, what

68 H. Weigl, 'Die Genese der Klosterresidenz Kaiser Karls VI. Zur Planungs- und Baugeschichte von Stift Klosterneuburg in den Jahren 1730–1740', *Jahrbuch des Stiftes Klosterneuburg*, Neue Folge 17 (1999) 279–363.

69 A. Danon, 'Bajazet', in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia* 2 (New York, 1902) 460.

happened at the other side of Christendom, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russia is equally interesting.

First, a new dynasty was set up by Feodor Romanov (1553–1633). A powerful nobleman, he as well as his wife had been forced to enter a monastery by the ruling czar. Rising through the ranks, as Filaret he finally became patriarch ‘of Moscow and all Rus’. Meanwhile, his son had been appointed czar in 1609, but from 1619 onwards Filaret and his wife effectively ruled Russia for him, almost as a ‘holy family’. The patriarch took the reorganization of the Orthodox Church in hand, forcibly centralizing its structure, as well as allowing it to increase its landed wealth. Partly using the ‘model’ he thus created, he also centralized state bureaucracy, with the help of those nobles who were willing to support the czar; of course, they were rewarded with landed wealth as well.<sup>70</sup> Still, in a country with few cities—and those with mostly wooden, unimpressive buildings—the churches of Orthodoxy and the mystic rituals performed therein stood out as did, to a perhaps even greater degree of power representation, the huge, walled monasteries that dotted the countryside. If the czar’s authority was felt at all, it certainly always had to compete with the more visible presence of the Church.

The Romanovs remained in power. In 1703, Filaret’s great-grandson, Peter (1672–1682–1725), moved the capital to his newly-founded city of St. Petersburg: the name was a conscious, propagandistic effort to again stress Russia’s claim to be the heir of imperial and, indeed, also papal Rome. Significantly, he changed the title of czar to that of emperor. Though from the eighteenth century onwards, a Russian emperor spent his entire life in St. Petersburg, he first had to go to Moscow to be crowned in the cathedral of the Dormition. The ritual closely followed Byzantine precepts, and, contrary to custom in Latin, Catholic Christendom, prescribed that the czar/emperor, after receiving the patriarch’s blessing, crowned himself, for there was no one between him and God.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, in the prayer that followed this self-coronation, the new czar directly addressed God. All through the ceremony, the patriarch confirmed the emperor’s ‘entire authority’ and his ‘autocratic power’. He also proclaimed him the guardian of the doctrines of the Church and, last but not least, the ‘saviour of our souls and bodies.’

Not surprisingly, Peter did away with one annual, very symbolic religious-political ceremony: the one whereby, on Palm Sunday, the czar, as a humble believer walking afoot, led the patriarch, representing Jesus and on horseback,

70 J. Keep, ‘The Régime of Filaret, 1619–1633’, *Slavonic and East European Review* 38, no. 91 (1960) 334–360.

71 S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power. Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton, 2006).

through the Moscow Kremlin and, moreover, through the city, showing, for all to see, the subordination of secular to religious power.<sup>72</sup>

The other annually recurring imperial-political-religious ceremony took place in the capital itself—first in Moscow, later in St. Petersburg—, on January, 6th, the Feast of the Epiphany. A tent was set up on the frozen Neva River, and a hole bored in the thick ice. Inside the Winter Palace, down the symbolically called 'Jordan Staircase' came the czar, bareheaded and, despite the intense cold, without a coat, followed by the entire imperial family. Outside, they joined the procession of the archbishop and his clergy, to participate in the ceremony of the 'blessing of the waters', during which a cross was dipped in the river, and the holy water then distributed among the believers. It seems that, from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, the ritual changed: while, initially, the patriarch sat on a throne and the czar stood before him, later the roles were reversed.<sup>73</sup> However, according to travelogues from the early nineteenth century, maybe both men stood: a new balance in a complex ritual competition?

Despite the continued importance of Orthodox Christianity in Russia, Peter the Great decided that his State would no longer tolerate the albeit feeble independence of the Church. Therefore, in 1718 he decreed that henceforth a government bureau, the 'Ecclesiastical College', housed in the new capital, would be the highest authority in all Church matters not strictly related to faith and theology. Though the patriarch, whose seat remained Moscow, was one of the twelve members, he did not preside over it. Peter's plans became abundantly clear when, in 1721, the College was renamed 'Most Holy All-Ruling Synod' of the Church, and collectively given 'patriarchal power, honour, and authority'.<sup>74</sup> In the process, czarist bureaucracy also gained control over a significant part of the Orthodox Church's vast possessions.

Elsewhere in Europe, a comparable development towards if not personal at least institutional caesaro-papism or *Staatskirchentum*—that, if anything, made the Church into a tool of royal government and of state-controlled cultural policy—, did not occur until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, by that time, the period in which—in a sense following the Russian example—all over Europe the various Christian Churches had become instruments of the State, used to maintain cohesion amongst the people and doing so, at least partly, by sacralizing the ruler, was drawing to a close.

72 P. Bushkovitch, 'The Epiphany Ceremony of the Russian Court in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Russian Review* 49, no. 1 (1990) 3–4.

73 Bushkovitch, 'The Epiphany', 1sqq.

74 J. Cracraft, *The Church reform of Peter the Great* (Stanford, 1971) 114sqq.

Indeed, already by the end of the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic theologian and cardinal, Robert Bellarmine, in his treatise *De Laicis*, had used Biblical, theological, and rational-philosophical arguments to defend the position that:

... political power considered in general, not descending in particular to Monarchy, Aristocracy, or Democracy, comes directly from God alone; for this follows of necessity from the nature of man, since that nature comes from Him Who made it; besides, this power derives from the natural law, since it does not depend upon the consent of men; for, willing or unwilling, they must be ruled over by someone, unless they wish the human race to perish, which is against a primary instinct of nature. But natural law is Divine law, therefore, government was instituted by Divine law ...

He then went on to state:

that this power resides, as in its subject, immediately in the whole state, for this power is by Divine law, but Divine law gives this power to no particular man, therefore Divine law gives this power to the collected body. Furthermore, in the absence of positive law, there is no good reason why, in a multitude of equals, one rather than another should dominate. Therefore, power belongs to the collected body.

Ultimately, the people themselves should decide whether they wanted a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy. If legitimate causes existed to rebel against the chosen government, they could change it.<sup>75</sup>

Comparable arguments were used, increasingly, during the seventeenth century.<sup>76</sup> Obviously, these elicited counter-tracts defending both the monarchical system and the Divine Right of Kings.<sup>77</sup> With ever greater vehemence, the discussion persisted into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Now,

75 The treatise is part of a larger one, *De Controversiis*, published by Bellarmine in three volumes from 1587 onwards. The quotes are from chapter vi: K. Murphy, ed., trans., *De Laicis* (New York, 1928) 24.

76 R. Zaller, 'Breaking the Vessels: The Desacralization of Monarchy in Early Modern England', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 3 (1998) 757–778.

77 E.g. J. Filmer, *Patriarcha: The Naturall Power of Kinges Defended Against the Unnatural Liberty of the People, By Arguments, Theological, Rational, Historical and Legall* (Cambridge, 1992 [1680]).

non-religious, legal, so-called rational arguments were used as foundations for an ideology of state integrity, of state authority, and of 'constitutional' rather than 'Droit Divin'-kingship. Moreover, a formal separation of Church and State was on its way.

## 1.2 *Monarchs in Search of Total Control*

### 1.2.1 Emperor Charles V (1500–1515–1555–1558)<sup>78</sup>

Surely, Charles of Habsburg was unlike any emperor who had ever existed. First of all, he neither inherited the imperial crown and title, nor did he gain them by conquest—rather, he bought them. And whereas the early Chinese and Indian empires and, later, the Safavid and Ottoman states, too, had been created by previous conquest starting from an original centre and stretching out the imperial boundaries until they reached limits of geography or power, the lands that constituted Charles's empire(s) were not contiguous at all, precisely because he inherited them from a number of relatives. Actually, the genesis of the imperial power finally acquired by Charles I/V represents a unique combination of coincidence and cunning.

Yet, the famous phrase coined at the time: 'Bella gerant alii, tu, felix Austria, nube'—'Let others achieve their goals through war! You, happy Austria, will do so though marriage'—is, of course, a distortion of historical reality. Admittedly, the Habsburgs did acquire a number of kingdoms through marriage: first the duchy of Burgundy, when, in 1477, Maximilian of Habsburg-Austria wed Duchess Mary, and a generation later Aragon and Castile, when, in 1498, Mary's and Maximilian's son Duke Philip wed the Princess Joanna of Trastámara and the boy's sister Margaret was given to Joanna's only brother, John. These marriages, of course, were the result of power politics, certainly also directed against France. Nevertheless, two other factors explain the consequences. In Spain, a series of unforeseen deaths left Joanna the sole heiress of the two Iberian dynasties, which finally devolved upon her and Philip's son Charles. But the situation both in most Burgundian states and in Spain shows the effects of the more important fact: Salic law did not prevail there, and hence women actually could inherit the throne. To put it otherwise: dynastic

78 R. Boone, *Mercurino di Gattinara and the Creation of the Spanish Empire* (London, 2014); F. Herre, *Die Fugger in ihrer Zeit* (Augsburg, 2000); A. Kohler, "'Tu felix Austria nube ...". Vom Klischee zur Neubewertung dynastischer Politik in der neueren Geschichte Europas', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 21 (1994) 461–482; S. Perrone, *Charles V and the Castilian Assembly of the Clergy* (Leiden, 2009); M. Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Habsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor* (New Haven, 1993) esp. ch. 5.

planning would be different if no princesses were available who, through the death of male relatives, might be(-come) heiresses not only of their family but also of the state. This introduces an interesting point in the study of the origin and growth of empires. In most Eurasian states, women were not able to succeed; therefore, covetous foreign princes could not extend their power by marrying the female heir or ruler of another state. Europe was relatively special in that at least in some states this gender bias did not exist. Nevertheless, almost always an heiress was supposed to marry and the man chosen would, *iure uxoris*, by his right as a husband, rule with or even for her. Moreover, the happy Habsburgs—both Maximilian and Philip—, though lawfully ruling in their wife's name, yet constantly had to wage war to hold on to their newly gained possessions. Nor did the heir of all these states, Charles, possess his variegated territories in uninterrupted peace. Rather, he faced rebellion right and left.

Last but not least, in Christendom the imperial dignity, acknowledged in the states of the Holy Roman Empire, was, at least formally, an elective office. If the felicitous financial deal between Charles, as the Habsburg candidate, and the plutocrat Augsburg Fugger family had not brought him the money to bribe the seven electors during the 1519 negotiations over succession to the vacant throne, the outcome might well have been different: Francis I of France and Henry VIII of England were candidates as well. Indeed, Jakob Fugger, whose huge loans already had enabled Maximilian successfully to pursue his policies, was not boasting when, confronted with political opposition against his near-monopoly of a series of important European and American businesses, he candidly reminded Charles: 'Es ist auch wissentlich und liegt am Tage, dass Eure Kaiserliche Majestät die römische Krone ohne mein Zutun nicht hätte Erlangen können'—'everybody knows that Your Imperial Majesty would not have gained the Roman crown without my doing.'

Whereas this very mundane interpretation of the crowning moment of Charles's life definitely was realistic, Charles's trusted advisor in the 1520s, Chancellor Mercurino Gattinara, wrote to his master after the election in an entirely different vein:

Sire, God has been very merciful to you: he has raised you above all the kings and princes of Christendom to a power such as no sovereign has enjoyed since your ancestor Charles the Great. He has set you on the way towards a world monarchy, towards the uniting of all Christendom under a single shepherd.

Even more interestingly, Gattinara may well have used the term 'shepherd' to refer not to the pope, as tradition would have dictated, but to the emperor

himself. Indeed, when Charles had defeated Francis I in the battle of Pavia, in 1525, Gattinara's secretary, Alfonso de Valdes, wrote eulogistically:

It appears God has bestowed this victory on the Emperor in a wonderful manner, so that he might defend Christendom and fight the Turks and Moors on their own ground, so that the whole world receives our Holy Faith under this Christian Prince and the words of Our Saviour fulfilled: 'Fiet unum ovile et unus pastor' ('let there be one flock and one shepherd').

Again, I wonder whether the 'pastor' here refers to the emperor, rather than the pope?

We cannot simply assume that Charles himself interiorized the image such men as Gattinara and Valdes projected for him, though many historians do suggest as much. But even if he did, one must conclude that Charles's actions often contradicted the message expressed in these flights of grand rhetoric. He used the three 'gracias', the subsidies that the papacy allowed him to ask from—levy on—the Spanish clergy in order to finance a crusade against the Moors, almost exclusively to wage war on another Catholic prince, the French king. And when the imperial soldiers sacked the sacred city, Rome, in 1527—they were there to enforce Charles's policy to gain dominion over the states of the Italian peninsula—, any remaining chances to put forward a believable claim for the recreation of a unified, 'universal' Christian empire surely must have vanished, if not in the emperor's own eyes at least in those of most men in Christendom. Yet, the Sack of Rome did have momentous consequences. Pope Clement VII, deciding he would no longer antagonize the Emperor, ceded him the temporality of the bishopric of Utrecht, which Charles had long coveted to round-off the complex of his seventeen Netherlandish states. The Pope also, perhaps, felt his hands bound in the question of the divorce sought by Henry VIII of England: Queen Catherine was Charles's aunt. Last, but not least, with the balance of power in the Italian peninsula now altered, the Emperor himself was free to direct his energy and his armies against those princes in the Germanic lands who used Protestantism as a tool to further their own power, both in their own state and in the Holy Roman Empire at large. So what was Charles's imperial policy, and what use did he make of the Church of Rome in the three conglomerates that mainly constituted his empire: the Austrian lands, the Netherlands, and Spain with its vast overseas territories?

Though his lands were a complex amalgam of territories big and small straddling the better part of Western and Central Europe as well as Central and South America, Charles's policy seems to have been simple: he always used

the Church to consolidate or even strengthen the power of his government. That power was contested everywhere, from Spain to the Netherlands and Bohemia, by two groups. Many nobles were unwilling to give up any of their privileges to the central bureaucracies Charles was building in all his states to gain greater fiscal and legal-administrative power. The elites of the towns increasingly sought economic freedom and were willing to compromise with their ruler if the local aristocracy tried to limit their influence. This left Charles with the question which of these groups to favour. Inevitably, the situation resulted in constantly shifting alliances.

Whenever, as was often the case, either—or both—groups felt dissatisfied with Charles's rule, they tended to consider the potential of the new religious ideas put forward by a number of men who, like others in the millennium before them, argued that the Church of Rome no longer was the keeper of the true faith. Thus, all over Charles's states, a variety of religious protest or 'reform' movements united with, or even were led by, rebellious nobles and/or townsmen. Charles, both from an innate adherence to Catholicism and because he felt that allowing any kind of religious heterodoxy would disrupt the fragile cultural and political unity of his already politically complex dominions, became a staunch adversary of these 'protestantisms', in which, of course, he found himself in unison with the Curia. However, he also realized that Rome's fears for the future were even greater than his. Therefore he did not hesitate to use these as leverage to—often successfully—force a succession of popes to concede to him increased power over Church matters in his states. That situation certainly was part of the inheritance he left to his son Philip, who succeeded him in Spain, the Italian states, and the Americas, and to his brother Ferdinand, who received the Habsburg 'House lands' as well as, in the end, the imperial dignity.

### 1.2.2 King Henry VIII of England (1491–1509–1547)<sup>79</sup>

He was the king who consecutively married six wives. Countless romantic novels, films, and, even, scholarly studies have been dedicated to the man who almost seems the personification of the legendary, cruel 'King Bluebeard'.

79 This section is based on: G. Bernard, 'The Making of Religious Policy, 1533–1546: Henry VIII and the Search for the Middle Way', *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 2 (1998) 321–349; G. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven, 2005); T. Betteridge and T. Freeman, eds., *Henry VIII and History* (London, 2012); A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1989); J. Cornwall, *Wealth and Society in Early Sixteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1988); G. Elton, *Reform and Reformation:*

Often, Pope Clement VII's refusal to grant Henry's request to be allowed to divorce his first wife since she was unable to produce a living male heir is quoted as the beginning of a process that resulted in the schism between the Church of Rome and what, in the course of some three decades, became the Church of England: an institution that theologically and, also, organizationally differed very little from its mother-Church but gave the kings of England far greater power over the religious life of their subjects than the popes ever would have allowed them.

Yet, even recent historiography has not made clear whether what happened in England actually diverged that much from the actions taken by other rulers. The situation is the more complex since many scholars studying the Henrician period doubt whether the King, though he was an intelligent man, really directed the religious policy pursued in his name. Indeed, many find Henry to have been increasingly unstable in his thoughts and deeds in the course of his reign, which, of course, poses the question which persons and for what reasons actually undertook the 'reformation' of the Church in England, always in the king's name, and, on another level, whether the final outcome actually was foreseen in the beginning.

We must realize that Henry acceded to a throne without a long dynastic tradition to legitimize him. His father had been the first Tudor king, with feeble claims, to say the least. No wonder Henry, too, ruthlessly executed a number of possible pretenders. Also, the need for a male heir to continue the line was imperative—for though a female could inherit the English crown, most men associated with the new regime feared that the daughter born to Henry and his wife Catherine would never be able to hold her own in a country still rife by partisan strife. A new civil war might well put an end to their own rising power and fortunes.

Henry's domestic policy was spendthrift. And his foreign policy was as expensive as it was ambitious. Mostly, it was directed against France, for the king

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*England 1509–1558* (London, 1977); O. Grell, *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform* (Cambridge, 1995); B. Heal and O. Grell, eds., *The Impact of the European Reformation: Princes, Clergy and People* (Aldershot, 2008); W. Hoskins, *The Age of Plunder: King Henry's England 1500–1547* (London, 1976); D. Loades, *Henry VIII: Court, Church and Conflict* (London, 2009); D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (New Haven, 1996); J. Ridley, *Thomas Cranmer* (Oxford, 1962); J. Schofield, *The Rise and Fall of Thomas Cromwell* (Stroud, 2008); A. Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and his Court* (London, 2002).

of England continued the notion that the better part of the continental kingdom actually belonged to him. In joining the so-called Holy League—with the emperor, the pope, and the king of Spain—Henry secured the promise that he would be titled ‘Most Christian King of France’ and, indeed, be crowned by the pope himself in Paris if and when the French king was defeated. Nothing came of it, and over the years Henry learned to co-exist with the French monarchs, though he did not give up his claims and, on several occasions, waged costly wars on them again. These, and his wish to create a truly splendid court, constantly brought England to the verge of bankruptcy. In all this the man who, according to many, actually governed England and greatly contributed to the increase of royal power and finance through all kinds of bureaucratic and legislative measures was Thomas Wolsey, who combined the functions of prime minister, archbishop of York, and cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. He also helped his master gain the title of ‘Defender of the Faith’, given to him by the pope in acknowledgement of Henry’s anti-Protestant policy.

In the mid-1520s, Henry’s impatience over Catherine’s inability to give birth to a son increased. Also, he faced the demands of his mistress, Anne Boleyn, that he divorce the queen. Out of a number of possibilities to secure the succession, he chose marriage to Anne—pleasing himself as well as expecting her to provide him with a male heir. This meant he had to ask the pope for an annulment of his marriage. Whether Henry believed the argument he proffered—viz. that Biblical laws made sleeping with Catherine, his deceased elder brother’s widowed wife, a sin and therefore illegal—is not certain. Certainly, Pope Clement did not accept it, both for canonical arguments, and, probably, because the queen’s nephew, Emperor Charles, forbade him to. Over this—the ‘King’s Great Matter’—the all-powerful prime minister Wolsey fell from royal grace and a year later died. In May 1533, with a new chief administrator, Thomas Cromwell, at court and a new archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, in Canterbury—a man, moreover, who held heterodox doctrinal ideas and hoped for support from Anne, who seems to have been in favour of Church reform as well—Henry’s marriage was declared null and void. Subsequently, the king married his mistress and had her crowned. A few months later, Anne gave birth—to a daughter. Within a few years, various factors caused the king to decide she, too, needed to be removed. Unlike Queen Catherine, who died in a convent, Anne was sent to the scaffold, making way for yet another royal wife, who finally did produce a son who lived.

The larger context of this old-fashioned ‘royal history’ is equally important and, indeed, revealing. In the first years of his reign, Henry spent much of the enormous fortune he had inherited from his frugal father on his court and his foreign policy. By the early 1530s he discovered that his steady revenue—

provided by the Crown lands—was not sufficient to cover running expenses. No wonder he and his counsellors cast a greedy look at the riches controlled by the Church.

For years, both in England and on the Continent, voices had been raised asking for the redress of a multitude of abuses—real, imagined or, indeed, trumped-up and theological and moral as well as practical—in the daily life of the Church. Several parties, including the religious Orders, tried to achieve this within the existing structure of Canon Law and other Church regulations. However, men in Church and State government—both religious die-hards and ruthless power seekers—urged greater speed and zeal. In 1532, this party successfully had Parliament enact a law forbidding people who objected to such reforms from appealing to Rome and forbidding papal bulls from being introduced in England without the king's consent. The pope retaliated, excommunicating the king and his chief agent in all this, Cranmer—whose motives have been much discussed ever since. In 1534, Parliament recognized Henry as 'the only supreme head in Earth of the Church in England', which, basically, meant that from now on State laws would always supersede Church laws. Typically, Parliament re-introduced the king's title 'Defender of the Faith', which, of course, the pope had revoked. Later, Parliament again confirmed that in England there was 'no superior under God' but the king. Though part of the clergy was appalled, many were not; they simply thought such a construction would at least give them independence from Rome and, perhaps, even more power. Thus, a political theology of obedience to the Crown was created. Meanwhile, Church taxes once payable to Rome now filled the king's always near-empty coffers.

In fact, reform-mindedness of sorts—within the flexible limits set by the Church of Rome or without it—extended through all classes of English society, from the lowest farmers to, indeed, the king's own mistresses/wives, and, more importantly, to their relatives who, either from personal conviction or for political reasons and financial gain, would support or oppose the reforms, building factions to increase their leverage. But whereas reforming zeal was growing fast in urban milieus, it certainly did not do so as quickly in the countryside. There, opposition against the king's religious policy increased. There were dissenting monks and people in all walks of life who felt their deepest beliefs affronted. Several were punished—the first 'martyrs' died for their stance. With economic conditions deteriorating, some of the government's actions were bound to incite even greater opposition. In 1536, Cromwell ordered the visitation and dissolution of a number of lesser monasteries: those that were found to lack the property to finance their customary roles, religious as well as social. To

contextualize this decision—which heralded the first phase of what caused at least one historian to label this period of English history ‘the Age of Plunder’—, one needs to look beyond England to what happened elsewhere in Europe.

On the Continent, too, princes profited from or simply made good use of the changing religious sentiments prevalent in Christendom from the late fifteenth century onwards. In France, the royal government convinced the Curia in Rome to reconfirm and, indeed, make general and legal a practice that had existed since the twelfth century. In 1516, the pope authorized the king’s right to nominate the majority of abbots and conventual priors without demanding that they take Holy Orders, and, more importantly, to allow these men the use of part of their institution’s income—often, obviously, the better part. Within a few decades, nearly 75 % of the French abbeys and convents were controlled by the state and half their income could be disposed of by the Crown. This created an immensely effective means of patronage for the king, who thus could reward hundreds of loyal servants by making them lay abbots.

In 1527, King Gustav Vasa of Sweden—a new man, too, for he had taken power only in 1523—demanded that the Diet pass an edict that empowered him to confiscate any monastic lands he needed to increase royal revenue. He also was allowed to order monasteries to return property donated to them in the past to the descendants of the original patrons. The effect was threefold. Royal government realized a huge increase in spending power—the *Reduktion* seems to have trebled the king’s annual income. The—mostly noble—families now newly enriched remained or became the king’s loyal friends. Last, but not least, by the 1580s all Swedish monasteries had disappeared.<sup>80</sup>

Following this example, from 1528 onwards Frederick I of Denmark and his successor forced the country’s monasteries and friaries to transfer their possessions to the Crown, which doled them out to supportive aristocrats. In Denmark, too, monastic life vanished during the sixteenth century.

In short, the policy proposed by Cromwell to his master in the 1530s was not without precedent, to say the least. Yet, it created an outrage, also because precisely in the English countryside the monasteries did have huge religious and social importance: they often provided the only support for a growing number of impoverished, landless people. Inevitably, anti-Tudor feelings mingled with all this opposition. One of the most dangerous manifestations of dissent was the so-called ‘Pilgrimage of Grace’, a massive upheaval in northern England in 1536. Despite promising the rebels, who numbered some thirty thousand, that

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80 M. Berntson, *Klostren och reformationen: Upplösningen av kloster och konvent i Sverige 1523–1596* (Stockholm, 2003).

he would heed their grievances, the king reneged, and the leaders of the revolt were executed.

After the first dissolution, a second, far more comprehensive one was sanctioned by Henry in 1542. The confiscation of Church property—in the end some 900 religious houses were dispossessed—greatly enlarged the king's wealth. He used some of it to arm the country against the eventuality of an invasion from a Catholic, French-German/imperial alliance. However, the Crown, always short of ready money, soon decided to use the ecclesiastical property it had appropriated—approximately a fifth of the country's landed wealth—to reward those bankers, merchants, and nobles whose services it needed. A vast economic redistribution took place that not only altered the situation in rural England but, also, created a group of men, and, of course, families who, at least for the time being, would loyally support the king, thus strengthening the kingdom's cohesion. While not originally foreseen, this development was of great consequence nevertheless.

Whereas this part of the government's 'religious' policy plainly was financially motivated, it had other implications and consequences as well. Also in 1542, the abbots of the kingdom's remaining monasteries lost their seats in the House of Lords; only the (arch-)bishops retained their political positions. This decreased their power as a group, for now they were outnumbered by the Lords Temporal. However, it increased their power in and over the Church, for the dissolutions—and the dislodgement from power of the monastic leaders—ended the ongoing dissension between the regular clergy and the religious Orders. As many monasteries had been exempted from episcopal oversight and reported directly to Rome, a constant battle was fought over authority and power within the Church's institutions, also involving the right to levy religious taxes or impose religious fines and spend the moneys they yielded. Of course, this battle was not specific to England, only. It had been waged all over Roman Catholic Europe for many centuries. In England, however, it was won by the men who remained the country's sole Lords Spiritual. Now, however, they were wholly dependent on the Crown: the king, his government, his favourites. These men held the right to nominate candidates for the country's bishoprics, candidates whom the formal electors, the chapters of the various sees, were forced to accept.

After Henry's death, his only son succeeded him, nine years old. He died before he came of age and was followed by his elder half-sister, who had remained a staunch Catholic. During her reign, she and her advisers tried to turn back the reforms Henry and his government had introduced. However, many measures could not be undone, if only because by then part of the ruling elite had become dependent on the new political-religious and, even more

important, economic order. When Queen Mary died, her half-sister Elizabeth, Henry's last surviving child, ascended the throne. She wisely decided that it was in her own best interest to preserve the Henrician inheritance and the power it gave her. Also wisely, in 1558 she accepted an Act of Supremacy that confirmed the royal person as 'Supreme Governor of the Church of England'—a suitably equivocal title that made her head of the Church without saying she was.

My conclusion is twofold. On the one hand, if England had not been an island, Henry would perhaps not have succeeded in pursuing his policy, for his wife's nephew, Emperor Charles v, might well have tried to stop him, for various political and, indeed, ideological reasons even beyond family feeling. The kings of France, from quite other motives, might have done so, too. On the other hand, we should not forget that the English case was far from unique. Some princes on the continent, too, chose to abandon their allegiance to Rome altogether, founding their own, national Churches, either along Lutheran, egalitarian lines or, because that allowed them greater control, installing a hierarchical, episcopal order not unlike the 'Anglican' model. Others rulers decided that siding with Rome remained to their advantage, but succeeded in bargaining a hefty price for their support of the papacy, agreed upon in the so-called concordats. These contracts between, e.g., the monarchs of France and Spain and the Roman Curia gave them far more extended and, also, formalized power over the Church in their state than their predecessors ever had had, though none ever claimed the grandiose titles Henry had conferred on himself.

### 1.3 *The Two Worlds of Islam—Sunni and Shia: Caliphs/Sultans, Shah-in-Shahs, Imams, and Sufi Leaders*

Even nowadays, the Day of Ashura commemorates the battle of Karbala, which was fought in present-day Iraq on 10 October 680 CE. All over the world, Shia communities engage in ceremonies that show their sorrow over the death of the Prophet's younger grandson Husayn (626–680 CE)—his, according to them, only legitimate successor—, at the hands of his rival, the Umayyad caliph Yazid. This day exacerbated a controversy that had started some decades earlier over a mixture of religious-theological and political issues, all related to the ultimate question of leadership over the entire *al-Umma al-islamiya*, the 'community' of those who 'submit' themselves to the one, true god. It finalized the greatest schism Islam ever experienced, dividing it into what, slowly, became a Sunni world and a Shia world that continue their antagonism up to today.<sup>81</sup>

81 W. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1997); also: P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge, 1986) especially chapter 2.

It seems this fateful rift had not been foreseen by the man who is credited with founding Islam, Muhammad (c. 560–632 CE), ‘the Messenger of Allah/God’, or ‘the Prophet’. But then, we know very little about his life, and even less about his ideas and the reasons behind his actions: all texts concerning him, including the Qur’an, the holy book transmitted by him to his followers, were recorded or codified after his death. As with Jesus of Nazareth, studying the sources critically shows one thing only: writing a reliable biography is impossible. Was Muhammad a man who assembled a war band amongst the nomadic inhabitants of the interior of the Arabic peninsula, using religion, and then went on to conquer the rich agricultural and trading communities on the coast? Was he a religious reformer who, slowly, created something approaching a coherent belief-system, which, however, was written down only later and, hence, should be understood not as his own words but as the creed of his followers—a situation that obviously mirrors the one in which Christianity developed?<sup>82</sup> However this may be, undeniably, Islam is a deistic as well as monotheistic religion. It also is a soteriology, promising salvation to those who follow the right way. And, indeed, it is a metaphysics.

During the last months of his life, Muhammad supposedly gave a sermon in which he urged his audience to honour his nephew and son-in-law, ‘Ali. This much seems undisputed.<sup>83</sup> However, those who later were called Sunni<sup>84</sup> argue(d) that he did not name ‘Ali the leader of the faithful, who, they felt, should be elected by the believers—reflecting, in a sense, older, tribal customs of power transfer in the nomadic Arab world. Contrarily, ‘Ali’s adher-

82 Rather than referring to any of the numerous recent biographies of Muhammad, I suggest: J. Brockopp, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad* (Cambridge, 2010).

83 L. Veccia Vaglieri, ‘Ghadir Khumm’, in: P. Bearman, et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden, 2012) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_2439](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_2439).

84 Discussions about the question whether the opposition between Sunnism and Shi’ism dates from the seventh and eighth centuries or is, rather, a (much) later construct. Since I deal with the period from the thirteenth century onwards, I assume that forms of both then did exist and, moreover, were used in internal as well as external politics, especially between the Safavid and Ottoman states but also in Central Asia and Mughal India. Obviously, over the past decades, the concepts of Shi’ism and Sunnism have changed (again). Cfr.: O. Bengio and M. Litvak, eds., *The Sunni and Shi’a in History: Division and Ecumenism in the Muslim Middle East* (New York, 2011); cfr. also: M. Dressler, ‘Inventing Orthodoxy: Competing Claims for Authority and Legitimacy in the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict’, in: H. Karateke and M. Reinkowski, eds., *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power* (Leiden, 2005) 151–173.

ents claimed that both the sermon and the undeniable family ties made him the rightful successor. While a large (?) group of Muslims chose the Prophet's trusted friend Abu Bakr as the first caliph, within a few decades after Muhammad's death a smaller group proclaimed 'Ali and, later, his descendants, to be the *imam*, the one person on earth who possessed true knowledge of the Divine.

Both the elective position of *khalifat rasul Allah*, i.e. 'successor of the Messenger of God', or *amir al-mu'minin*, the 'leader of the believers', in the Sunni world, and the hereditary character of the imamate through Muhammad's bloodline in the Shia world were discontinued, or, one might say, transformed from the seventh century onwards. On the one hand, there were those who felt that, no matter his personal or public piety, any and every ruler actually usurped God's prerogative as sole owner and hence monarch of the universe.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, those who did accept the necessity of rulership, already in 634 CE witnessed the demise of the idea and, certainly, practice of election by the community of the believers. For even the so-called Rashidun caliphs, they who were supposed to 'walk in the right way',<sup>86</sup> were not chosen by the faithful. Soon, fully blown hereditary dynasties took over power in the Islamic world, which, by then, had lost not only its religious unity but also its political integrity, fragmenting into an ever greater number of independent states. Yet, all dynasties—whether of Sunni or Shia persuasion—tried to legitimize supremacy through often far-fetched or indeed spurious links to Muhammad's family. The caliphate was claimed by such men as the Umayyads, who belonged to the Quraysh-clan of which Muhammad had been a member, and, later, by the Abbasids—descending from an uncle of the prophet.

Inevitably, Islamic rulers tried to regain the combined political and religious authority that once had belonged to Muhammad. The second Abbasid, al-Mansur—'he who receives victory from God'—described himself as 'the Power of God on Earth'. The third one was called al-Mahdi, 'he whom God leads in the right way', and so on. Actually, the first caliphs did exercise a number of religious functions: ensuring the proper observation of the law, which, essentially, was *shari'a*, Islamic religious, or 'canon' law; for though they did not usually make it themselves, they did nominate the *qadis*, the judges, and served as last

85 H. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago, 1974) I, 281 and *passim*.

86 D. Sourdel et al., 'Khalifa', in: P. Bearman, et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden, 2012) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_0486](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0486); cfr. also: Th. Arnold, *The Caliphate* (Oxford, 1965).

arbitrator in unresolved disputes. They also conducted the Friday Prayer in the capital's main mosque and, often personally, performed the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.

Especially the seventh Abbasid, al-Ma'mun (786–813–833 CE),<sup>87</sup> and his two successors reasserted their hold over the interpretation of religious doctrine. al-Ma'mun took power from his brother in a bloody civil war. Later, he faced severe, mostly Shia-inspired rebellions. He told his provincial governors and those of the *'ulama'*—the religious-legal establishment—who held important judicial functions, that as caliph he was the guardian of God's words and laws. In this, he seems to have been inspired by the Shi'ite notion that on earth the caliph, or, rather, imam was closest to the Divine. He instituted an inquisition, the *mihna*, in order to wrestle authority over the interpretation of religious doctrine from the *'ulama'* and, even, arrogate to himself the quality of infallibility.<sup>88</sup> Obviously, the main motive behind these efforts was to strengthen his power in the face of disturbing and, indeed, disruptive opposition and thus recreate cohesion, also by somehow reconciling various Sunni and Shia theological and political ideas. Yet, this policy failed, and caliphal authority was damaged severely in favour of, precisely, the *'ulama'*.<sup>89</sup>

In the early centuries of Islam, other rulers, too, tried to maintain an undivided religious/political power. In 909 CE, the Fatimid sultans, who traced their origin to the offspring of the Prophet's favourite daughter, occupied Egypt. They were of a Shia bent and claimed to be imams, without sins, infallible, and, hence, supreme interpreters of the law. No wonder an Umayyad descendant decided to set up a rivalling, Sunni-inspired caliphate in Muslim-conquered Spain, in 928 CE. Indeed, from the tenth century onwards, sometimes for relatively shorter periods other, competing dynasties in the Islamic outer worlds arrogated the caliphate as well: in the Maghreb, in al-Andalus, but, also, in present-day Iraq and Iran, where the Shia Buyids took power.<sup>90</sup> Even rulers in Central and South Asia took the title. In short, the erosion of the institution was inevitable, despite the efforts of a few individual caliphs to heal the rifts

87 M. Cooperson, *Al-Ma'mun* (Oxford, 2005).

88 J. Nawass, 'A Reexamination of Three Current Explanations for al-Ma'mun's introduction of the Mihna', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 4 (1994) 615–629.

89 M. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early Abbasids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunni Elite* (Leiden, 1997) esp. 70–119.

90 H. Busse, 'Iran under the Buyids', in: N. Frye, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, 1975) 250–304.

and restore unity. People increasingly felt that, effectively, the caliphate of the East was reduced to nothing, as the famous historian Ibn Khaldun later noted. Basically, the caliphal title was used by any Muslim prince—amir, sultan, et cetera—who felt he had a right to it and wanted to create additional legitimacy through it.

Thus, already from the tenth century onwards, unlike Christendom the 'House of Islam' lacked a supreme religious authority. The word of the popes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, functioning within an as yet undivided Christian world, might be disputed but nevertheless carried great weight. They could and actually did call for a holy war, a crusade—at least partly to enhance their own power; moreover, they succeeded in moving many believers to 'take the Cross', but also convinced the sometimes less willing Christian princes that it was in their own—also political—interest to at least publicly pay lip service to that ideal.

In the Islamic world, resistance against the Christian onslaught had to come from various secular rulers who did appeal to a common religious need for *jihad* but whose internecine wars did not help to create this common cause precisely because their *oikoumenè* lacked an undisputed religious leader.

Yet, by the twelfth century the spread of Christianity came to a halt: the Crusades did not have a lasting effect. Church imperialism was resumed only, and then on a global scale, in the fifteenth century. Meanwhile, Islam still was expanding. Though in the West—on the Iberian Peninsula—, Muslim conquerors no longer were successful, south- and eastward they were, both through trade and through military expeditions. By the thirteenth century, the world of Sunni Islam did reach from al-Andalus and Western Africa to the southern shores of China, as the Islamic globetrotter, Ibn Battuta (1304–1369 CE)—Marco Polo's near contemporary—, complacently noted during his voyages, which brought him, reputedly, not only as far as the Middle Kingdom but, also, to Mali.

Obviously, in each polity that became Islamicized, the rulers tried to use the new religion to their own ends, always fusing it with older, indigenous traditions and concepts of religious kingship. Below, I will concentrate on the period from the late fourteenth century onward, i.e. on the Ottoman and Safavid worlds, and the Indo-Turco-Persian empire of the Moghuls—or, rather, of the family who designated itself *Bayt-i Timur*, the House of Timur.

Actually, in a complex way, all three dynasties derived political-ideological ideas and practices from three sources: from Islam, from their Turkic-Timurid background—historical or fictive—, and from their Persian past, the latter definitely conducive to notions of divine kingship. In all these empires the cult of the sovereign pioneered by Timur was developed further, presenting him

as an object of veneration both in a general political and, sometimes, more specifically religious way.<sup>91</sup>

Unless the rulers united religious and secular power in their own hands, in the absence of a hierarchically led and centrally organized Church they as well as the *'ulama'* felt the need for an institution that somehow represented the religious sphere at court. Therefore, the office of *sadr* was instituted.<sup>92</sup> He was ostensibly chosen from the ranks of, but certainly not by, the clerical establishment. At times, he may have appeared to and sometimes actually did reach the position of supreme religious leader and often was given the honorific of *shaykh ul-Islam*: a man functioning independently from but respected and consulted by the ruler. His *fatwa*, legal-doctrinal pronouncements, always were to be obeyed. However, mostly this 'office' became just that: a high office of state held by an appointee of the sultan, shah, or emperor himself.

In Safavid Iran as well as in Mughal India, the *sadr* also oversaw the execution of the state's main religious duty towards deserving (Islamic) subjects: charity, in the form of gifts in kind, in money, and, last but certainly not least, of land and labour.<sup>93</sup> It gave him power as well as abundant means of corruption. One of the most important religious instruments Islamic rulers used to establish and enhance their power was the *waqf*, a pious endowment that, mostly, served as a memorial monument to its founder, and, at the same time, was a major economic and, therefore, also socio-political institution. The innumerable *awqaf* reflected the Qur'anic precept that one of the principal religious duties at least of those who could afford to—the exemplary, virtuous prince first and foremost—was to support the indigent. Endowing a mosque, a school, a hospital, a fountain—often these would be combined in one, grand complex—the founders also created dependency: prayer leaders, Qur'an readers, scholars and students, doctors but also the menial staff attached to such establishments all became part of an intricate network of power, as did the poor who often benefitted from the food and the clothing doled out there. No wonder both the rulers and the elite invested in *awqaf*: it enhanced their authority in many ways. But though the Safavids and their Ottoman and Mughal colleagues tried to establish some form of central control over all *awqaf* in their state,

91 D. Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire* (New Delhi, 1989) 23 sqq.

92 J. Calmard, et al., 'Sadr', in: P. Bearman, et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden, 2012) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_0961](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0961), is, alas, not very illuminating.

93 Ibn Hasan, *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire and Its Practical Working Up to the Year 1657* (Oxford, 1967) 254–266.

to actually administer these endowments they, or rather, their *sadr*, appointed members of the clergy.<sup>94</sup>

### 1.3.1 The State of the Safavids

In the ninth century, the disappearance—or rather ‘going into hiding’—of the twelfth imam from ‘Ali’s line left the Shia communities of the Islamic world, which mainly though not exclusively existed in present-day Iraq and Northern Iran,<sup>95</sup> free to develop a great variety of interpretations of religion and of rulership.<sup>96</sup> Specifically Twelver Shi’ism gained wider influence due to the tolerance habitually practised by the so-called Ilkhanate, the state founded by Turco-Mongol conquerors in what is now Iraq and Iran, though they themselves converted to (Sunni) Islam. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they extended their rule over the entire region between eastern Anatolia and present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, all through the Islamic *oikoumenè*, both religious and political life sometimes were complicated by the phenomenon called Sufism—perhaps from *sufa*, ‘purity’, though the origin of the term is disputed. It variously is considered a series of notions and practices relating to the possibility of reaching a mystic, inner knowledge of—and connection with—God specific to Islam, or an already pre-Islamic set of metaphysical ideas that, in a way, characterizes many religions, including Buddhism and Christianity.<sup>97</sup>

However this may be, in Islamic culture forms of Sufism had been present right from the beginning, showing a tendency towards monasticism and asceticism but, also, religious practices not favoured by the Qur’an. It soon branched out in numerous Sufi Orders, often organized around local or regional holy men. These Orders, besides being centres of religious heterodoxy, often also were quite powerful economically, since they were the recipients of the wealth donated to them by their followers, institutionalized in a *waqf*. Thus, though not uniquely attached to either Sunni or Shia Islam, varieties of Sufism became part of the already variegated religious cultures of the Ilkhanate polity as well.

94 R. Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge, 1980) 185; cfr. also: G. Kozłowski, ‘Imperial Authority, Benefactions and Endowments (*awqaf*) in Mughal India’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38, no. 3 (1995) 355–370.

95 For a time, there were Shia dynasties in Egypt and Morocco, too.

96 See: M. Dakake, *The Charismatic Community: Shi’ite Identity in Early Islam* (Albany, 2007) and: L. Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi’ite Islam* (Albany, 2012).

97 A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, 1983). See, also: N. Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Oxford, 2012).

When, in the late fifteenth century, the leader of a Sufi Order gained power in present-day Iran, he found a population still largely Sunni. Yet Ismail I (1487–1501–1524) and his successors effectively tried to convert them to a Shia variant, if only to distinguish their new state from its powerful Sunni neighbour, the Ottoman Empire, and from the less staunchly Sunni rulers of north-western India. However, the main reason may well have been that Ismail understood the power of religion as a factor of cohesion in society and wanted to give a specific ‘identity’ to the peoples in what was now his state, greater Iran. To achieve all this, the empire’s founder successfully used precisely the influence he wielded as a Sufi leader over a warrior group who embraced a religious, almost ecstatic master-pupil relationship. Indeed, when, in 1979, Iran became an Islamic ‘theocracy’, with a ‘revolutionary guard’, many observers felt that an understanding of the policy of Shah Ismail helped them to come to grips with the new situation,<sup>98</sup> though, obviously, there is some danger of unwarranted hindsight in such analyses.

To further strengthen their power, Ismail and his successors also took on the imamate, the role of supreme religious leader, by claiming descent from the eighth imam, ‘Ali ibn Musa al-Reza (765–818 CE), also named Imam Reza. This resulted in the generous patronage of the two shrines involved, the one of the first shaykh of their line at Ardabil and the other of this purported ancestor, at Mashhad. Especially ‘Abbas I (1571–1588–1624) made sure that his subjects knew of his devotion: before a military expedition, he always went on pilgrimage to these sites, to offer prayer and supplication, even sitting or bending down to perform the most menial tasks at these sanctuaries. In 1601, he travelled to Mashhad on foot, a pilgrimage that took him four weeks. Actually, I wonder if, in all this, he did not follow his Mughal colleague Akbar’s noted examples. He certainly liked to publicize them.

In the late 1590s, ‘Abbas, hailed as ‘the world-adorning creator’,<sup>99</sup> started constructing his new capital at Isfahan on the plan of an enormous square divided into four rectangles representing the four quarters of the earth—

98 R. Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London, 2004); cfr. A. Ashtiani, ‘Cultural Formation in a Theocratic State: The Institutionalization of Shi’ism in Safavid Iran’, *Social Compass* 36, no. 4 (1989) 481–492. There is, however, a ‘revisionist’ interpretation that sets out to downplay the religious element in the founding of the Safavid empire: A. Anooshahr, ‘The Rise of the Safavids According to their Old Veterans: Amini Haravi’s *Futuhāt-e Shahī*’, *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 2 (2014) 249–267.

99 This and the next quote are from a seventeenth-century description of ‘Abbas’s projects edited by: R. McChesney, ‘Four Sources on Shah Abbas’s Building of Isfahan’, *Muqarnas* 5 (1988) 103–134; the quotes on 112.

thus denoting his domination. The town's central piazza was the magnificent *maydan*. The vast number of commercial establishments surrounding it all paid their rent into a *waqf* created by 'Abbas in the name of the 'Fourteen Infallibles': the twelve Shia-imams, Muhammad's daughter Fatima, and, ultimately, the Prophet himself.<sup>100</sup> His architects gave the town a series of grand ceremonial buildings, including both the congregational Masjid-i Shah, or Imam mosque, and the more private, court-oriented Shaykh Lutf Allah mosque, respectively on the south and west sides of the *maydan*, adorned with huge inscriptions extolling the dynasty's descent from 'Ali and their special role as protectors of Shi'ism.<sup>101</sup> Yet, I would argue that this splendid calligraphy was understood only by the highly initiated. Inside the Masjid, under a cupola that pretended to recreate on earth the 'nine-vaulted dome of heaven', a gilt cupboard above the *mihrab* holds a relic of great sanctity: the blood-stained robe of the dynasty's martyred ancestor, the third imam, Husayn, supposed to be especially effective in battle. Unlike comparable relics in the possession of the pope, the emperor, and the other princes of Europe—and they possessed them by the thousands—apparently it was never shown to the faithful gathered below. From the *maydan*, people entered the palace compound through the 'Ali Qapu—sometimes translated as imperial gate, but, obviously, also: 'Ali's Gate, since its central ornament was a sacred stone brought to Isfahan from 'Ali's tomb at Najaf. After his installation, each Safavid ruler had to cross it without touching it.

However, to create a powerful state, a powerful government, a powerful dynasty, more was needed than rhetoric and ritual, only. A major problem was, inevitably, the role of the shari'a. It is debatable whether it applied only to what we call private law or should be considered as ruling public law as well. To have supreme authority, the shahs needed to somehow fuse the two into one, overriding 'political' institution that they could control. In the end, supreme judicial power was given to the *divanbagi*, an officer appointed by the emperor and a member of the council of state.

Another problem was finance. The Safavid shahs took a number of measures that converted state lands into crown lands and, partly as a follow-up, concentrated trade and, also, industry—especially silk-production and weaving—in the hands of the imperial family. Moreover, Iran's rulers chose to expropriate a

100 R. McChesney, 'Waqf and Public Policy: The waqfs of Shah Abbas I', *Asian and African Studies* 15 (1981) 165–190.

101 S. Blake, *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590–1722* (Costa Mesa, 1999) 143–144, as well as the very critical review by S. Babaie, *Iranian Studies* 33, no. 3/4 (2000) 479–482. Also: S. Canby, *Shah Abbas. The Remaking of Iran* (London, 2009) 28sqq.

number of older pious endowments; the income thus freed was given to new, state-sponsored ones, significantly also schools where the Shia version of Islam was taught.<sup>102</sup> Subsequently, through the office of the *sadr*, they also arrogated supreme power over the country's remaining, numerous and wealthy *awqaf*, which helped them weaken the erstwhile more independent position of the *'ulama'*.

Undeniably, Ismail I and his son, Tahmasp (1514–1524–1576), succeeded in making their empire into a Shia state and its subjects into at least nominally devout Shi'ites. Also undeniably, they used considerable violence in converting them, but then so did their European counterparts during the various Reformations. Tahmasp, however, and even more his grandson 'Abbas realized the potential danger in using a heterodox version of Islam that was abhorrent to many. Nor did they relish the continued military and, due to the previous policy of granting them lands and other riches, political-economic power of the warrior groups who had first enabled them to take power. Soon, the more heterodox Shia- and Sufi-characteristics of Safavid authority were modified—also under pressure from the conservative Shia *'ulama'*—to accommodate more moderate views and, moreover, at the same time not entirely alienate the polity's remaining Sunni subjects. When, in the early decades of the eighteenth century, the power of the Safavid dynasty waned and, finally, was broken, their ultimate successor, Nader Shah (1688–1736–1747), reversed their religious policy precisely to strengthen his own position. Acknowledging that the Shia majority would not, perhaps, support him wholeheartedly, and, at the same time, that most of the troops he relied on for his conquests hailed from Central Asia and were of a Sunni persuasion, he (re-) introduced Sunnism. Though Nader himself seems to have held no observable religious ideas, he still tried to create a new brand of Islam that bridged the differences between Shi'ism and Sunnism. This also helped him to placate his empire's traditional enemies, the Ottoman rulers, which was a decided necessity if only because he could not hope to hold them at bay while, at the same time, combating the forces of imperial Russia that now tried to reach south beyond the Caucasus; in this policy he partly succeeded. Another reason Nader wanted to create a more nuanced Islam was economic: accommodating Sunnism again allowed Iranians to go to Mecca—dominated by the Ottomans—, which, of course, enabled the new shah to profit from the highly lucrative pilgrim trade.<sup>103</sup>

102 Kozłowski, 'Imperial Authority', 362.

103 M. Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant*

### 1.3.2 The Ottoman Empire

Obviously, the Sunni sultans of the House of Osman could not claim the imamate. Nor did they take the title of *amir al-mu'minin*, which might have suggested they felt themselves to be the rightful rulers of the entire Islamic world. Interestingly, some historians argue that the Ottomans, despite the capture of Constantinople, did not officially adopt the title of caliph, either. However, when the Ottoman Turks first started their conquests in Anatolia and the adjacent regions, Murad I (1326–1362–1389) was addressed as 'chosen Khalifa of the Creator'<sup>104</sup> and 'Shadow of God on Earth', which obviously took religious pretences a step further, since this designation no longer involved succession to the Prophet, only. Bayezid I (1360–1389–1403) applied to himself the 26th verse of sura 38 of the Qur'an: 'we have made of you a Khalifa on earth'.

By that time, a complex mixture of pre-Islamic religious notions, (Sunni) Islam, and Sufi ideas—which spread along the axis of Central Asia via Iran/Iraq to Anatolia—had come to characterize the Ottoman religious-imperial makeup, which also retained elements of the Seljuk-Byzantine alliance of the previous centuries. By the time Mehmed II (1432–1444–1481) conquered Constantinople, this mixture reinforced Ottoman imperial ambitions which, interestingly, also appeared from their decision to preserve the city's name: Kostanti-niyye—Istanbul being a late-nineteenth-century usage that, moreover, was formally adopted only in 1925.

Showing that they really were the *sultan-i Rum*, the successors of the Byzantine emperors, the Ottoman monarchs ingeniously adopted and adapted the old, imperial cityscape to their new needs. Perhaps most surprising was one of Mehmed's first deeds: he converted the Hagia Sophia into the Aya Sofya: it became the pre-eminent imperial mosque. Admonishing his learned advisers to create an ideology that legitimized this, to many of Islam's faithful, abhorrent act, he constructed a tradition that traced the history of the building to Biblical notions of world power and Solomon's connection with the church, via Muhammad's supposed prophesy that Islam would conquer Constantinople to, finally, his own victory.<sup>105</sup> To ensure the church's conservation, he endowed it with an enormous *waqf*, in which he put nearly all the spoils he

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(London, 2006) *passim*; see also: E. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Gainesville, 2006).

104 D. Pitcher, *An Historical Geography of the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden, 1972) 107.

105 G. Necipoglu, 'The Life of an Imperial Monument: Hagia Sophia after Byzantium', in: R. Mark and A. Çakmak, eds., *Hagia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present* (Cambridge, 1992) 195–225; cfr. also: G. Veinstein, 'Le rôle des tombes sacrées dans la conquête Ottomane', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 4 (2005) 509–528.

personally had gained from the town's conquest.<sup>106</sup> Continuing this policy, Mehmed constructed his 'new palace' atop the remains of the huge Byzantine imperial compound and, in many significant elements, replicated its forms. In Byzantine days, one entered the palace through the famous Chalke, the Brazen Gate. It showed, on the outside, an image of the Christ and an inscription telling the visitor it was one of the wonders of the world. On the inside, it was covered by a cupola—an architectural form that, traditionally, was interpreted as a symbolic, world-encompassing structure only to be used by royals. On top of the gate, a little chapel again proclaimed this the entrance to the palace of a Christian monarch. Now, the Topkapı Saray was entered through the 'imperial gate', which, on the outside, showed an inscription stating this was the entrance to a world like the original Garden of Eden. Another inscription stated:

By the Grace of God, and by His approval, the foundations of this auspicious castle were laid, and its parts were solidly joined together to strengthen peace and tranquillity. This blessed castle, with the aim of ensuring safety of Allah's support and the consent of the son of Sultan Mehmed, son of Sultan Murad, sultan of the land, and ruler of the seas, the shadow of Allah on the people and demons, God's deputy in the east and west, the hero of water and soil, the conqueror of Constantinople and the father of its conquest, Sultan Mehmed Khan. May Allah make eternal his empire, and exalt his residence above the most lucid stars of the firmament.

On the inside, a cupola resembled heaven. And it was topped by a little mosque. Beyond the second gate, the 'Gate of Salutation', the palace's ceremonial layout mirrored essential elements of the former Byzantine complex as well. Last but not least, Mehmed also used the Byzantine model when he built a new mosque on the site where the church of the Apostles had once stood. The choice certainly was deliberate and, indeed, hugely symbolic: his mausoleum was to be attached to this 'mosque of victory', just like the mausoleum of the city's founder, Constantine 'the Great', had been attached to the church.

By the early sixteenth century, during the reign of Süleyman 'the Lawgiver' (1494–1520–1566), liberal imperial religious attitudes had changed. Süleyman called himself *Padishah-i Islam* and argued that God had given him the caliphate.<sup>107</sup> Both he and subsequent emperors subscribed more strictly to Hanafite

106 T. ÖZ, ed., *Zwei Stiftungsurkunden des Sultans Mehmed II. Fatih* (Istanbul, 1935).

107 B. Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire* (Norman, 1963) 145; cfr.

rules, at least publicly. This may have been caused by several factors, including the threat posed by the Shia state of the Safavids but also, I assume, the very fact that, from their base in Anatolia, a variety of Sufist sects had gained great influence in the capital, both amongst the populace and amongst parts of the elite. In view of Sufist tendencies towards mystical insight into God's will and the great reverence Sufis held for all kinds of saints, there always was the possibility of some politically vocal leader rising from these groups. Significantly, the grand complex of religious-civic buildings surrounding the Süleymaniye mosque—built by Sinan, a former Christian—had no hostels for Sufi scholars, but, on the other hand, did accommodate the four branches of traditional Sunni legal scholarship.<sup>108</sup> According to the original *waqf*-document, these were meant 'to elevate matters of religion and religious sciences *in order to strengthen the mechanism of world sovereignty ...*' (italics added).<sup>109</sup> Precisely because the sultans did not want to antagonize the more rigid but widely influential groups amongst the '*ulama*', they could not yield overmuch to the various Sufi Orders such as the Bektasi, the Halveti, and the Naqshbandi—the latter coming from India—that were popular amongst certain strata of Ottoman society, especially in Anatolia but, also, in the big towns.<sup>110</sup> Basically, both in the late fifteenth and, again, from the late sixteenth century onwards, they tried to steer a middle course—with the exception of, perhaps strangely, Süleyman. He was the first who, though he did not formally persecute the varied, partly heterodox leanings of his Islamic subjects, was fully aware of the tendencies in Sufism that could prove dangerous to centralized authority. Maybe, he also felt forced to give in to the constant pressure of the more orthodox Sunni '*ulama*'. For the Ottomans, too, faced the power of the clergy. To control the empire's learned hierarchy, the *mufti* of the capital was given precedence over all others, as well as the honorific title *shaykh ul-Islam*, embodying, as it were, religious authority alongside secular rule. Interestingly, though mistakenly in many respects, a Burgundian visitor and other European observers equalled him to the pope. His main task was to reconcile the requirements of the shari'a with those of government and civil administration. By the sixteenth century,

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C. Fleischer, 'The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleyman', in: G. Veinstein, ed., *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps* (Paris, 1992) 159–177; and: H. Inalcik and C. Kafadar, eds., *Süleyman the Second and his Time* (Istanbul, 1993).

108 G. Necipoglu, 'The Süleymaniye Complex in Istanbul: An Interpretation', *Muqarnas* 3 (1985) 92–117; cfr. Idem, 'Challenging the Past. Sinan and the Competitive Discourse of Early Modern Islamic Architecture', *Muqarnas* 10 (1997) 172–173.

109 The document is given in: Necipoglu, 'The Süleymaniye Complex', 96.

110 A. Ocak, ed., *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society* (Ankara, 2005).

the *sadr* definitely was one of the high officers of state, appointed by the sultan<sup>111</sup> and second in rank, only, after the grand vizier.

Certainly, the Ottoman conquest of the Arabian Peninsula in the early years of the sixteenth century made a difference as well: it gave Süleyman and his successors added prestige precisely because, as guardians of the two holy cities, the sultans now controlled places revered by the entire Sunni world, places moreover that, because of the annual hajj, were of great economic importance to the Near and Middle East. But with it came, also, a closer alliance with the Sunni strand of Islam. Quite symbolically, it can be seen from the progressive 'Islamization' of the Hagia Sophia during the seventeenth century: the remaining Christian elements—mostly the enormous mosaics—were covered with plaster, and the mosaic of the Pantokrator was replaced with a Qur'anic verse praising Allah as the light of creation. Other Islamic symbols were introduced as well, such as the roundels surrounding the *mihrab* inscribed with the names of Allah, Muhammad, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and, interestingly, the Shia ancestors Hasan and Husayn. Also, in the eighteenth century the entirely apocryphal story was spread that, actually, it was the place where the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil had handed the Prophet's mantle to the Ottoman emperor Selim I, in 1517—thus transferring to him the caliphate.<sup>112</sup>

Shadow of God on Earth, *Padishah-i Islam*, and, also, Caliph: for, certainly by the eighteenth century, the Ottoman rulers did officially claim the caliphate and, indeed, even more. When, in 1774, Sultan 'Abdul Hamid I concluded a treaty with Catherine of Russia, he had himself signed 'the imam of the believers and the caliph of those who profess the divine unity'. Though one might argue that this was rhetoric directed at the Muslims remaining in Russia—and at their non-Muslim rulers—rather than at his own subjects, it nevertheless again indicated a change in the perception and use of the titles involved. It is difficult to gauge the exact political effect of the Ottoman emperors' self-descriptions. Perhaps these titles did not carry the original, almost caesaro-papist weight but only wanted to convey the notion that the sultans ruled by Divine Right, as lieutenants of God.

Undeniably, the sultans set great store on a number of sacred objects that supposedly had belonged to the first caliph, Muhammad. Thus, in 1517 they

111 R. Repp, 'Shaykh al-islam', in: P. Bearman, et al., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden, 2012) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_1052](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1052).

112 Necipoglu, 'The Life of an Imperial Monument', 213, 218–220. Cfr. however, also: G. Veinstein, 'Les origines du Califat ottoman', *La Question du Califat, Les Annales de l'Autre Islam* 2 (1994) 25–36.

transferred the major relics of the Prophet—the *Khirkā-yi Sherif* and the *Lihya-yi Sherif*, his mantle and the hair of his head—to the Topkapı Saray.<sup>113</sup> There, they were kept in a special room, or chapel, in the *Khass Oda*, or private quarters of the sultan, and highly venerated. If the monarch had to leave the capital, he often took the holy mantle with him, especially on military campaigns, where it was deemed a very effective charm—a custom similar to the carrying of the holy banner in France, which, however, precisely in those centuries was discontinued.<sup>114</sup> The ‘mantle of happiness’ also was used to sanctify water, drops of which were then distributed by the sultan to persons meriting this special favour.<sup>115</sup>

The Prophet’s sword had even greater importance: it was essential in the initiation of a new emperor,<sup>116</sup> during the *taklid-i seyf*—or ‘girding of the sword’-ceremony, performed at the Eyüp mosque, built by Mehmed, ‘the Conqueror’, on a site where, according to legend, a devoted disciple of the Prophet had died taking part in the first Islamic assault on Constantinople. Actually, this ceremony followed what might be termed a coronation and had taken place in, precisely, the *Khass Oda*: there, the new sultan had donned the cap of the prophet Joseph, and the grand vizier and the *shaykh ul-Islam*—the heads of the civil and religious arms of sultanic power—had taken the oath. On the subsequent Friday, the sultan, accompanied by the entire court, went to Eyüp by boat, over the Golden Horn, and, after the girding ritual, returned to the Topkapı Saray in a sumptuous cortege that proceeded along the ancient—Byzantine-imperial!—processional route through town. To honour the deceased Ottoman emperors, it stopped at all major mosques—eventually including the great funerary complexes of Mehmed II, of Selim I, and of Süleyman.

But whereas this was, of course, a unique occasion, one of the annually recurring major religious-political ceremonies in the imperial capital was the

113 The function(s) of the ‘Khass Oda’ are contradictorily described in the articles in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* devoted to the organization of the Topkapı Saray and the Prophet’s mantle.

114 A. Lombard-Jourdan, *Fleur-de-Lys et oriflamme: signes celestas du royaume de France* (Paris, 1991).

115 N. Atasoy, ‘Khirkā-yi Sherif’ and ‘Lihya-yi Sherif’, in: P. Bearman, et al., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden, 2012) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_4294](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4294) and [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_4667](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4667). On the earliest history of these and other relics: J. Meri, ‘Relics of Piety and Power in Medieval Islam’, *Past & Present* 206, no. 5 (2010) 97–120.

116 B. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics, and Territory in Islam* (Chicago, 2006) gives a, not altogether convincing analysis of the earliest stages of Mohammed-relic veneration and its various meanings.

so-called *Surre* cavalcade, in which a purse, filled with gold by the sultan, and accompanied by other costly gifts contributed by the entire court, including the ladies of the harem, was carried through the streets on the first leg of a journey that would bring it, on camelback, to the Hejaz, thus to symbolize the sultan's legitimizing role as hereditary keeper of Mecca and Medina.<sup>117</sup>

As to religious policy *largo sensu*, of course, the Ottoman Empire always has been described as relatively tolerant towards its minorities: the Jews, first and foremost, and the various Christian denominations, including the Maronites and, in a way, the Druze and the Alawites. Both Jews and Christians were important mainly for economic reasons. Living in the port cities of Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt, they did not threaten to destabilize the vast, agrarian, and, hence, more traditional interior of the empire. Specifically the foreign, i.e. European-Christian communities—but also the Lebanese Christians—sought the protection of the rulers of the trading nations whence they came. Given their importance, the Ottoman authorities accorded them a series of privileges, 'capitulations', that regulated these peoples' lives. Consequently, these communities were allowed to have their own jurisdiction in cases not involving other religious groups, capital offences, or threats to public order. Moreover, the Greek Orthodox Church, which retained its patriarch in Constantinople, was largely left alone, although closely scrutinized by the sultanic government.

Part of the explanation for this 'liberal' policy is that, except for the mainly Orthodox Christians in the Balkans—who, however, often converted voluntarily or, if rebellious, were compelled to do so—and the Armenians on the eastern frontier, these very diverse Christian communities did not constitute a large part of the empire's population. Also, precisely their diversity precluded the genesis of a unified movement that might have threatened to overthrow the regime in Istanbul. In short, the Ottoman government did not feel any necessity to grant these minority groups a place amongst the empire's elite, and, thus, a voice in state matters.

Nevertheless, the so-called *devshirme*, which forcibly recruited young boys from, mainly, Christian households to serve the sultan, sometimes did propel them to leading positions both in the military elite corps of the empire, the Janissaries, and in the imperial administration. Actually, out of the seventy-eight grand viziers who governed the empire between the mid-fifteenth and the late seventeenth century, only eleven were Turkish. The great majority of the

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117 S. Wasti, 'The Ottoman Ceremony of the Royal Purse', *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 2 (2005) 193–200.

others were of some Christian background, having been introduced into the imperial bureaucracy via, precisely, the *devshirme*-system.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, many women in the imperial harem who mothered a sultan were of non-Turkish and, indeed, probably of Christian origin, too. Recent computations set their number at almost three-quarters of all nineteen *valide-sultans* between ca. 1400 and 1700.<sup>119</sup> Whether, as has been suggested, their cultural-religious origins influenced their sons, e.g. in deciding not to engage in military conflicts with neighbouring Christian regions and states is, I feel, debatable, but deserves further research.<sup>120</sup>

### 1.3.3 The Realm of the Mughals

Inheriting traditions forged by earlier Muslim rulers of Northern India, in whose name Sunni, Shia, and Sufi notions already had been welded together,<sup>121</sup> the Mughals, especially the first real Indian Mughal, Akbar (1542–1556–1605), and his successors, claimed to be both sultan and caliph. But the question is whether, and to what extent, these titles were really factors of cohesion. It has been argued that their vast empire that, by the end of the seventeenth century, comprised some sixty to seventy million people, actually was governed by a military aristocracy of *mansabdars*, whose number is estimated between some one thousand and seven thousand ‘nobles’, only; they were the emperor’s first and, indeed sole direct layer of loyalty.<sup>122</sup> They themselves were the top of an immense pyramid of patron-client relations that in the end reached down to the local level where many of the emperor’s subjects were Hindu, living in villages and organized in (sub-) castes.

Since the fourteenth century, the Muslim rulers had started incorporating members of the Hindu aristocracy into the state apparatus. Soon, these men, commonly referred to as *zamindar*, adopted parts of and otherwise adapted

118 Emrah Safa Gürkan, ‘Christian Allies of the Ottoman Empire’, *European History Online (EGO)* (12 march 2010) <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/gurkane-2010-en>, 4 and note 7.

119 The data can be culled from: L. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem. Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1993).

120 M. Iyigun, ‘Lessons from the Ottoman Harem (on Ethnicity, Religion and War)’, *IZA Discussion Papers*, No. 3556, <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/34957>.

121 B. Auer, *Symbols of Authority in Medieval Islam: Religion and Muslim Legitimacy in the Delhi Sultanate* (London, 2012) esp. ch. 3–6.

122 M. Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire: Awards of Ranks, Offices and Titles to the Mughal Nobility (1574–1658)* (Oxford, 1985) and his: *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (New Delhi, 1997); M. Pearson, ‘Shivaji and the Decline of the Mughal Empire’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (1976) 221–235.

themselves to the Perso-Islamic culture of the conquerors. Consequently, the 'ethnic', or in a wider sense cultural and certainly religious, make-up of the ruling elite was highly variegated—foreign and native, Muslim and Hindu, et cetera. E.g. when Shah Jahan (1594–1627–1666) became the fifth Mughal emperor, to be followed by Aurangzeb (1618–1658–1707), the situation was one in which Hindu nobles as well as Shia Persians served a Sunni ruler.

It has been said that though the third and fourth Mughal emperors, Akbar and Jahangir (1569–1605–1629) had been overtly liberal both in their own beliefs and in their policy regarding the various religions in their empire, their successors returned to Sunni orthodoxy. Yet, the situation seems to have been far more complex. Certainly, they continued the vision that the royalty of kings was a light emanating directly from God, without any intermediate assistance, as Akbar's court chronicler had already noted.<sup>123</sup> As another sign of this, many Mughal emperors had themselves depicted with a halo around their head. And precisely Jahan, who allegedly inaugurated the reversal to Islamic orthodoxy, seems to have held decidedly specific, not to say heterodox notions about his position as the 'perfect man', the instrument of God's creation, the embodiment of the Divine Pen, as part of his role as caliph, vice-regent of God. Indeed, amongst his titles he named himself not only 'Shadow of God' but, also 'august representative on earth of the divinity.'<sup>124</sup>

Admittedly, by the second half of the seventeenth century, a different wind was blowing at court. Domestic political motives may have played a part here. The heir to Shah Jahan's throne, Prince Dara Shikoh, very much wanted to continue his grandfather Akbar's policy. His rival half-brother, Aurangzeb, in order to gain the throne, needed to differentiate himself from his sibling. It seems that, soon, the tolerant and syncretic views of Akbar were replaced by another, more orthodox Sunni form of Sufi thought, mainly preached by the leaders of the Naqshbandi brotherhood, to which Aurangzeb belonged. But religion was an argument in foreign policy as well. Aurangzeb's attacks on the southern kingdom of Bijapur, though meant to satisfy the economic needs of the Mughal nobility, were presented as necessary to stamp out heterodoxy, there—the Bijapur-rulers were, to a large extent, adherents of Shi'ism. Since these men, as well as other Deccan princes, also were influenced by the more aggressive policy pursued on the subcontinent by Iran's Shia rulers, Aurangzeb may well have modified his own religious stance accordingly.

123 Abu l-Fazl, *The A-in-I Akbari*, D. Phillott and J. Sarkar, eds., 3 vols. (New Delhi, 1989) I, 163.

124 About the 'perfect man'-idea: R. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1967 [1921]) esp. 77–142. About Shah Jahan's views: W. Begley, 'The Myth of the Taj Mahal and a New Theory of its Symbolic Meaning', *The Art Bulletin* 61, no. 1 (1979) 7–37, esp. 30 sqq.

The interesting fact remains that both the sultan of Bijapur and the Mughal emperor were Sufis. And the role of Sufism in Mughal rule is both fascinating and complex. Its influence has become more obvious since, recently, attention has been drawn to a factor that at least partly explains the surprising fusion between various elements that characterized Mughal politico-religious culture but has long been overlooked: the significance of Chinggisid-Timurid, i.e. Central-Asian, traditions in Mughal state building.<sup>125</sup>

Given the multi-religious nature of the polities they created, already in pre-Mughal times the Muslim dynasties of India tried to combine the tenets of true Islam, which did not allow worldly rule, with the necessities of empire. According to the influential treatise *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, the 'Ethics of Nasir', written in 1235 by the Shia-Sufi scholar Khwaja—or Nasir—, Tusi, a 'philosopher king' should achieve a balance between the constituent parts of his variegated state.<sup>126</sup> In short, a non-sectarian approach would promote the wellbeing also of subjects other than Muslims. Since it—as well as a strong belief in saints and shrines—was considered part of Timur's legacy, these notions entered India and became an important element in the ideology ascribed to and, indeed, practised by the first Mughal emperors, Babur and Humayun.<sup>127</sup> Both Babur and Humayun converted from Sunnism to Shi'ism at certain stages of their (political) life and showed definite Sufi-tendencies. The mixture they created tended to show them almost as saints, who, through their God-given dreams, were called upon to realize their empire in the way dictated by Allah.<sup>128</sup> The third Mughal, Akbar, followed in their wake. Being, apparently, illiterate, he had the *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* recited to him regularly and ordered his officials to study it as well. Only by being just rulers and administrators would they ensure cooperation amongst the empire's peoples, whether Muslim or infidel—Hindu, Jain, Zoroastrian, Christian even. Apparently, this also meant that, though the shari'a remained part of state law, it needed to be interpreted in a general rather than a narrow legalistic sense. It also meant that, at least during Akbar's reign, the state's charity to its subjects was extended to non-Muslims as well.

All this was in a way reinforced by the influence, throughout the empire, of the slow merging of devotionalist tendencies in Hinduism with elements

125 E.g. M. Alam and S. Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Mughal State* (New Delhi, 1997) introduction, and: M. Alam, 'State Building under the Mughals: Religion, Culture and Politics', *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 3/4 (1997) 105–128.

126 Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, *The Nasirean Ethics*, trans. G. Wickens (London, 1964).

127 Alam, 'State Building', *passim*.

128 A. Afzar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York, 2012).

of Vedantic philosophy and with the ideas of Sufi saints and their followers, many of whom stressed the individual's road to divinity rather than adherence to a specific and often formalistic creed.<sup>129</sup> A line in the famous *Masnavi* of the Persian poet Jalal al-Din Rumi became a favourite of Akbar: 'Thou hast come to unite, not to separate. For the people of Hind, the idiom of Hindi is praiseworthy, for the people of Sind, their own is to be praised.' Thus, too, Islamic mysticism could, at least in the view of some, be reconciled with similar notions in Hinduism. And, conversely, the first Muslim emperors introduced Hindu rituals at court. Last but not least, they identified with Vishnu, with the Sun, the major deity of the Rajput rulers of Northern India.<sup>130</sup>

Analysing these trends in Mughal policy, it is interesting to note that the emperors themselves only infrequently publicized their power by building mosques. Rather, huge tombs were built by or for them—Humayun, Akbar, Jahan, Jahangir—, as if to say that not their piety but their greatness as sovereign proved their right to rule.<sup>131</sup> Insofar as they spent money on religious institutions, they did so—on a fairly large scale—to endow the shrines of saints, both living and dead. Interestingly again, they did not favour traditional holy men but, rather, Sufis.<sup>132</sup> Thus, the Mughals ensured the loyalty of these men and their often very large following.

The extent to which the non-sectarianism of the first Mughal emperors was practised beyond the court and the ruling elite is difficult to gauge. Indeed, even at court this policy had its adversaries. It was, for example, deplored by Akbar's adviser Badauni. But when he wrote: 'Hindustan is a wide place, where there is an open field for all licentiousness and no one interferes with another's business, so that everyone can do as he pleases',<sup>133</sup> he obviously suggested that the various creeds actually did co-exist. A few decades later, the French traveller François Bernier visited India during Aurangzeb's reign, and noted: 'their policy (is) to leave the idolatrous population, which is so much more numerous than

129 Cfr. also: K. Nizami, 'Early Indo-Muslim Mystics and Their Attitude Toward the State', *Islamic Culture* 22 (1948) 387–398; 23 (1949) 13–21, 162–170, 312–324; 24 (1950) 60–71.

130 J. Richards, 'The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir', in: J. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (Madison, 1978) 215–251.

131 Cfr. C. Asher, 'Legacy and Legitimacy', in: K. Ewing, ed., *Shariat and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley, 1988) 79–97.

132 C. Troll, *Muslim Shrines in India* (New Delhi, 1989) 48sq.; also: Kozłowski, 'Imperial Authority', 363–365.

133 Quoted by: Alam, 'State Building', note 55.

their own, in the free exercise of its religion; but the practice is checked by indirect means ...'<sup>134</sup>

In short, though the later Mughals did not profess their Sufi variant of Islam as publicly as Akbar, giving preference to a more obviously traditional, Sunni Islamic regime,<sup>135</sup> they did not revert to the kind of (Sunni) Islamic fanaticism they usually are credited with. Admittedly, on the one hand, some Hindu temples were destroyed—but others were given grants by the *sadr*. And yes, the Islamic religious tax was re-imposed on the Hindu population, but Hindu nobles seem to have entered imperial service at an increasing rate.<sup>136</sup> Maybe, the Mughals' complex, Timurid-Persian inheritance continued to determine their policy: without the cohesion it created, their empire would have collapsed. To put it another way: no single ideological system propagated by the Mughal emperors would ever have bound together the diverse elite that remained essential to their rule. Actually, the emperor's aura of success was defined as a martial mandate of heaven rather than an ethical or religious one. Conversely, if such success and its concrete rewards for the elite failed to materialize, cultural differences might disrupt imperial cohesion after all.

#### 1.4 *Emperors Who Wanted to be the Word of God on Earth*

##### 1.4.1 Shah-in-Shah Ismail I (1487–1501–1524)<sup>137</sup>

In Europe, where his rise to power was followed with keen interest—though for a variety of reasons and with varied, often contradictory interpretations—Shah Ismail I was known as 'the Grand Sophy', probably referring to *safi*, or, indeed, *safavi*, the name of the Sufi-order of the Safaviyya, the brotherhood he

134 Fr. Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire* (New Delhi 1972 [Paris, 1670]) 306.

135 Cfr. G. Graham, 'Akbar and Aurangzeb—Syncretism and Separatism in Mughal India. A Re-examination', *The Muslim World* 59 (1969) 106–126.

136 Graham, 'Akbar and Aurangzeb', 119sq.

137 This section is based on: Abisaab, *Converting Persia*; S. Babaie, *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran* (London, 2004); S. Babaie, *Isfahan and its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh, 2008); K. Babayan, 'The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi'ism', *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994) 135–161; Idem, *Monarchs, Mystics and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, 2002); W. Floor and E. Herzig, eds., *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age* (London, 2012); C. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (London, 2009); R. Gleave, 'Imamate', in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam and the Muslim World* (London, 2004) 1; M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (Yale, 1985); A. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London, 2009); B. Rahimi, 'Between Chieftaincy and Knighthood: A Comparative Study of Ottoman and Safavid Origins', *Thesis Eleven* 76, no. 1 (2004) 85–102;

belonged to that also was given to the dynasty he founded. However, as one sixteenth-century European observer noted, one should not thus address him in Persian, since in that language *sophy* meant ‘dog’. Of course, his subjects would have called Ismail ‘shah’, or *padishah(-i Iran)*, ‘great king (of Persia)’, or even *shah-in-shah*, ‘king of kings’—the title he used when, in 1501, he was crowned in Tabriz, after his conquest of Azerbaijan—or, as it seems, crowned himself, like his latter-day ‘successor’ Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi did, in 1967, which does, of course, make a huge difference. Yet, Ismail thought of himself as a being even more unique and, therefore, more powerful.

Over the past decades, scholars have been studying the surviving—manuscript—poems written by, attributed to, or (later) associated with Ismail. They reveal an astonishing world of religious-mythical images with clear political implications. Indeed, no other Eurasian monarch ever seems to have written a corpus of ‘autobiographical’ texts even remotely comparable to this in both extent and ideological significance. However, since I have been unable to find any answer to the paramount question to what extent this poetry functioned within a wider circle—even of the shah’s family, or of his courtiers—it is hard to link an analysis of the self-image and the pretensions contained therein with Ismail’s actual politics, which, obviously, were dictated by a great many other, external issues and, moreover, changed with the incorporation of ever greater territories in his polity.

Undeniably, Ismail’s sense of uniqueness stemmed from his family background. He was born the son of, and, eventually, heir to the hereditary leader of the Safaviyya. This Sufi-brotherhood had been founded in the fourteenth century in Ardabil, then the capital of the Iranian province of Azerbaijan, by his ancestor Safi al-Din (1252–1334), he himself the heir and son-in-law of a famous Sufi teacher. Ismail’s mother was the daughter of the leader of the Turkmen tribe of the Ac Quyunlu—a Sunni federation<sup>138</sup>—and a princess from the Christian, imperial Comnenos family who ruled Trabzon. Being caught up in the turmoil of leadership struggles within the Ac Quyunlu, which resulted in

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C. Turner, *Islam without Allah? The Rise of Religious Externalism in Safavid Iran* (Richmond, 2000); S.M. Sabzavari, *Islamic Political and Juristic Thought in Safavid Iran* (Tehran, 1989); R. Savory, ‘Esmail I Safawi’, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2012) <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/esmail-i-safawi>; P. Sayas, *Die religiöse Entwicklung der Safawiden von Scheich Safi bis Shah Ismail* (Munich, 2002); J. Allan, S. Canby, and J. Thompson, *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran (1501–1576)* (New York, 2003); E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City, 1999).

138 Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, cfr. also: J. Smith, ‘Turanian Nomadism and Iranian Politics’, *Iranian Studies* 11 (1978) 57–81.

the death of his father and brother—who, shortly before he died, ‘crowned’ Ismail with the turban of the Sufi-Safavid order, thus making him its leader<sup>139</sup>—Ismail spent much of his youth in hiding or on the run until, in 1499, he managed to regroup the Qizilbash, or ‘Red Hats’, the Turkmen warriors traditionally allied to his family’s brotherhood. With their help, or, more precisely, using their Sufist devotion to him as their master, he defeated the then ruler of the Ac Quyunlu. Ismail soon conquered parts of modern Iraq, and felt he now had re-established the ancient Iranian Empire, after centuries of foreign dominion—by Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. Indeed, he considered himself the heir of the Achaemenid and Sassanid emperors: ‘I am Faridun’, he claimed, referring to a legendary Persian king, thus setting out to create a new Persophone world.<sup>140</sup>

Obviously, Ismail had to overcome the major obstacle to kingship in a Muslim state, i.e. that, ultimately, only the Church could rule an Islamic community. The seventeenth-century French traveller Jean Chardin identified the problem: ‘Les gens d’Église et tous les dévots de la Perse tiennent que la domination de laïques est un établissement violent et usurpé, et que le gouvernement civil appartient de droit au Sedre [the *sadr*] et à l’Eglise.’<sup>141</sup> Therefore, to really cement his authority, Ismail concocted a brew consisting of a variety of religious and other cultural elements.

On the one hand, he exploited the so-called *murshid-murid* relationship that, within Sufi brotherhoods, existed between a (saintly) master and his disciple: the *murshid* was supposed to be perfect, and, hence, the *murid* had to obey his every command. This notion was interwoven with, and extended to, the master-servant relationship between the Qizilbash and Ismail’s family, a concept originally founded on Turco-Mongol kinship ties of authority and allegiance. This religious-spiritual ideology and the rhetoric that went with it was combined very effectively with the prestige and power or, one might also say: the absolute authority, Ismail gained from his genealogically fabricated descent—through Hamza, the son of the seventh infallible imam, Musa—from the Prophet’s son-in-law, ‘Ali. Thus, he created a fundamental identity: he presented himself and the dynasty as the *al-i Muhammad*, the ‘family of Muhammad’. In the still largely Sunni world that was then ‘Greater Iran’, it also meant veering towards Shi’ism, which always had given greater importance to Alid imperial pretences. In the intitulation of his firmans, Ismail consistently noted

139 S. Quinn, ‘Coronation Narratives’, in: J. Pfeiffer and S.A. Quinn, eds., *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods* (Wiesbaden, 2006) 311–331.

140 Newman, *Safavid Iran*.

141 For this and the following quotes: J. Chardin, *Voyages* (Amsterdam, 1711) vol. VI, 249–250.

his relationship with 'Ali, and on his official seals, the names of Muhammad, Fatima, and the twelve imams were given as proof of his direct line of descent and, hence, authority. Indeed, this construction enabled Ismail to use the Shia concept of the imamate, wherein the imam, though perhaps not the beneficiary of divine revelation—after all, Muhammad had said he was the last one to be so blessed, the 'seal of the prophets'—, yet was the closest person to God in his day and age and, hence, the man chosen by God to guide the people in every field of life.<sup>142</sup> It gave Ismail power and prestige far beyond his own realm: even with the peoples of Central Asia and the sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda in the Indian Deccan. Finally, as self-proclaimed *padishah-i Iran*, he also used the pre-Islamic, ancient Persian notion of the divine right of kings.

All this needed the re-writing of Iran's political and religious history, even to the extent that the Iranians were told that Husayn, 'Ali's second son and the ancestor of the imamate line, had married a daughter of the last Sassanid king. Moreover, the ancient Persian poetical tradition now was geared to the needs of the new theocracy as well: ever more poets felt forced to expend all their creativity in writing long epics about the twelve Shia imams, the Sufi shaykhs, and the major religious events of Islamic Iran.<sup>143</sup>

Yet, rhetoric alone—however powerfully worded—does not create cohesion and compliance. Obviously, Ismail's background and, indeed, his entire cultural make-up was Shia, with a definite leaning towards the mystic universalist ideas developed by Sufi sects. This, of course, posed a problem since his conquest of Iran and what is now Iraq made these mostly Sunni regions the heartland of his empire.

Historians disagree about the policy he actually pursued and the ruthlessness with which he did so. How many Persians were forced to convert and with what means is, even now, debated since the sources and, also, modern literature tend to be propagandistic, given the continuing opposition between authors not only within Shi'ism but, also, between (Sunni) Muslims writing about the past of these regions. Yet, despite all problems relating to a proper evaluation of Ismail's policies, it does seem true that, in order to overcome the resistance of a largely Sunni population, the shah did order the destruction of many Sunni mosques; evidence is provided by the narrative of a Portuguese traveller as well as by the urgent request of Ismail's Ottoman colleague, Bayezid II, to refrain

142 This position is taken by Savory and also Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran*, esp. 71sqq.

143 E. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge, 1928) vol. IV, holds a very negative view of the value of Persian poetry in the Safavid age and blames the religious policy of the early Safavids.

from harrowing his Sunni subjects that way. Ismail also attracted Shia clergymen from neighbouring regions—the Lebanon, the Arabian Peninsula—to his empire who, eventually, did succeed in slowly altering the common people's religious make-up. Of course, the policy was not without its dangers. In doing so, Ismail created a new clerical estate, a new, Shi'ite hierarchy. Inevitably, however, the group developed its own power dynamics, which Ismail and his successors then sought to control by appointing the successive *sadr* from—in the end—three families closely related to the imperial dynasty.<sup>144</sup> They oversaw both the economy of the country's *awqaf* and all related institutions, including the madrasas which, of course, were a powerful instrument in the education and re-conversion of the populace. Yet the clergy at large tended towards an Islamic, Shi'ite orthodoxy not always pleasing to the emperor himself.

Judging the complex process of Safavid state building, it also is difficult to measure the effect of the apparently large-scale introduction of (hundreds of) thousands of families from the various regions of the Caucasus who, originally Christian, either had converted to Islam in the past or were now induced to do so with the promise of military and other jobs and, inevitably, became loyal to the shah and his faith.

During his first years, Ismail had set up a polity and created a society that were divided along ethnic lines: the 'men of the sword', the Qizilbash, were of Turkic descent, the 'men of the pen' mostly were of Persian background. Organized in artificial tribes, the former became the political-military and, through the rewards they gained, also socio-economic elite of the early Safavid state.

However, soon Ismail himself, as well as his son and successor, Tahmasp, decided that the Qizilbash tended to become an over-mighty group. They started gradually replacing them with a 'third force', neither Turkic nor Persian: the descendants of the captives taken from the subjugated Caucasian states. Part of this group, the so-called 'slaves of the royal household', soon became an important element of the military and the civil bureaucracy, just like the Janissaries in the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the Caucasus states seem to have been a 'reservoir' that infused both the Safavid and the Ottoman Empires with new blood, through the many men and women of Armenian and Circassian background who entered the imperial bureaucracy and harem.

The ideological instruments used by Ismail as well as the actual policies he and his successors pursued led Chardin to note: 'le gouvernement de Perse

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144 S. Arjomand, 'The Clerical Estate and the Emergence of a Shi'ite Hierocracy in Safavid Iran', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 28, no. 2 (1985) 169–219.

est monarchique, despotique et absolu, tant pour le spirituel, que pour le temporel.' Such was the emperor's power, especially over the nobility and the court but also over the clergy, the 'mujtaheed', that in Iran the condition of the common people '... est beaucoup plus assurée et plus douce qu'en divers Etats Chrétiens.' Last, but not least, Chardin concluded that in Iran 'le spirituel est aujourd' hui tout-à-fait soumis au temporel.' Actually, however, in the end, Ismail apotheosed himself. In one of his poems he exclaims: 'I am very God, very God, very God! Come now, o blind man who has lost the path: behold the truth.'<sup>145</sup> The shah-in-shah had become God's word.

Yet, in the long run Ismail's successors chose no longer to stress their divinity: continuing this policy probably would have embarrassed or, even, angered less mystically fervent, more orthodox Shi'ites and, certainly, have alienated those who, though they had (been forcefully) converted, still held Sunni views. They may also have chosen to alter their course since, as early as the last years of Ismail's reign, the Ottoman sultans had started a series of wars that Iran had not been able to win. Obviously, the rulers in Istanbul in this were guided by religious preoccupations as well: not only were they afraid their own Shi'ite subjects would become rebellious if the Safavids were successful, they also wanted to show themselves the defenders of Sunni orthodoxy. Consequently, Iran's rulers were forced to adopt a more moderate stance.

1.4.2 Abu l-Fath Jalal Al-Din Muhammad, Commonly Named:  
Akbar 'the Great' (1542–1556–1605)<sup>146</sup>

Present-day India, although the largest democracy in the world is, of course, not a society without its problems, some of them created by religious differences and, given the huge economic inequality, the ensuing religious intoler-

145 Minorsky, 'The Poetry of Shāh Ismā'il I', 1047a.

146 This section is based on: Abu l-Fazl, *Akbar-nama* and *A-in-I Akbari*; C. Asher, 'The Age of Akbar', in: *Architecture of Mughal India*. The New Cambridge History of India, vol. 1.4 (Cambridge, 1992) 39–98; R. Choudhury, *The Din-i-Ilahi, or, the Religion of Akbar* (New Delhi, 1997); H. Franke, *Akbar und Gahangir. Untersuchungen zur politischen und religiösen Legitimation in Wort und Bild* (Schnefeld, 2007); G. Grobbel, *Der Dichter Faidi und die Religion Akbars* (Berlin, 2001); N. Hasan, *Religion, State and Society in Medieval India* (New Delhi, 2007); A. Hottinger, *Akbar der Grosse (1542–1605). Herrscher über Indien durch Ver-söhnung der Religionen* (Munich, 1998); S. Mehta, 'Akbar as Reflected in the Contemporary Jain Literature in Gujarat', *Social Scientist* 20, no. 9/10 (1992) 54–60; A. Rezavi, 'Religious Disputations and Imperial Ideology: The Purpose and Location of Akbar's *Ibadatkhana*', *Studies in History* 24, no. 2 (2008) 195–209; R. Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors* (New Delhi, 1988).

ance and, even persecution. No wonder that Amartya Sen, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize for economics, tried to find a major Indian historical figure to serve as his country's symbol of tolerance and unity. He found him in the person of Emperor Akbar.<sup>147</sup> Alas, Sen is, essentially, a man in need of a hero. Therefore, he chose not to acknowledge the vast historiography that has grown around Akbar to explain—or, at least, describe—the complexity and time-specificity of the emperor's actions and thoughts. Nor does Sen acknowledge that what we know of Akbar is, by and large, the idealized version created by his biographer and trusted adviser, Abu l-Fazl! Precisely the intentions and effects of Akbar's religious ideas, which became manifest in the inter-faith debates he organized and, later, in what has been called his 'new religion' and the ceremonies surrounding it, continue to be hotly debated. The problem is compounded since it seems that neither Indo-Islamic texts nor Hindu ones offer us all the information we seek; actually, it is the European sources that allow us to narrow our interpretations. Using all these, I propose the following analysis.

First of all, we have to consider that Akbar, on gaining the throne, immediately realized he needed to re-conquer the better part of what he considered his father's and grandfather's rightful inheritance: Hindustan and the Punjab, the heartlands of the Mughal's Turco-Afghan power. Secondly, he also wanted to further extend what formerly had been the Mughal Empire not only on the Indian subcontinent, especially in the Gangetic plains and the states of the Rajputs, even down to the Arab Sea in Gujarat, but also to the north-west, in the region of Kandahar—which led to disputes with the Safavid rulers of Iran—and the north where, beyond Kabul, the Uzbek tribes challenged him. Thirdly, he therefore was a man much on the move—which not only gave him a better idea of the variegated peoples and cultures he ruled over but also may have convinced him that cohesion and stability could be had only through some sort of cultural accommodation, of syncretism, even.

Introducing military reforms—both organizational and technological—he created what has been called a 'gunpowder empire'. By the 1570s and 1580s, his far-flung state was inhabited by Muslims both of the Shia and the Sunni persuasion as well as by a vast majority of Hindus. Indeed, with the conquest of large parts of Rajasthan—that in the early 1570s led Akbar to found a new capital, Fatehabad, or Fatehpur, the 'City of Victory'—, he faced the necessity to pacify his Hindu subjects and turn them into loyal allies.

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147 A. Sen, *The Argumentative Indian* (London, 2005) xiii and *passim*.

Marrying daughters of the Rajput royal houses was a known expedient amongst the Mughals, and Akbar took a Rajput wife, too. However, to overcome the continuing political and religious-cultural animosity, he decided that rather than insist on their conversion, both the ladies and their families should be allowed to keep their faith and, moreover, were to be treated on an equal footing with the Muslim members of his harem and court. Akbar thus finalized the policy of his ancestors that had Hindus introduced also into the higher echelons of Mughal bureaucracy, which, of course, tied them to the interests of the new state. Moreover, one may assume that Akbar also hoped to somehow counterbalance the until then overwhelming influence of the Mughal nobility that in a sense always was a threat to his own supremacy: favouring the Hindu Rajputs, he ensured their personal allegiance as well.

Thus, by the late sixteenth century, Muslim and Hindu culture started merging on the highest level, and Hindu princes now were able to articulate the opinions and needs of their part of the population vis-à-vis the Mughal government. Already, Akbar had abolished the traditional Islamic *jizya*, the poll tax that burdened all non-Islamic subjects of an Islamic ruler—in Akbar's case mostly Hindus—and, consequently, had created much ill-will. He now allowed Hindus who had been forced to convert to Islam—if only to avoid paying this tax—to return to their own faith as well. He even forbade the slaughter of cows, which not only endeared him to the Hindus, but also to the smaller but economically influential group of the Jain, in whose views of god and creation Akbar showed great interest, too. To even more openly show his intentions, Akbar asked Brahmin priests to conduct their ceremonies at court, and he personally participated in the major Hindu feast of Divali. At least publicly he renounced the consumption of beef, allowed solely vegetarian dishes on certain weekdays, and drank water from the holy Ganges, only.

Obviously, we cannot judge the extent to which these actions were meant for the public eye or reflected new-found convictions. Much of what we do know about Akbar's life, life-style, and supposed thoughts is, actually, what he himself wanted the public to know, through the words of his biography. Indeed, if anything this *Akbar-nama* was a piece of splendid propaganda.

Accommodating the Hindu population did not mean Akbar forgot his own, Muslim, background. However, this part of his cultural make-up was complex, to say the least. Though his family is believed to have been Sunni, amongst his childhood tutors were two Irani Shia scholars, for his mother had been the daughter of a Persian shaykh.

Precisely because he was fully aware of the dangers of Muslim sectarian dissension in an empire as complex as his, Akbar declared he would no longer tolerate sectarian disputes disrupting the public order. In 1578 he proclaimed

himself to be ‘Emperor of Islam, Emir of the Faithful, Shadow of God on Earth’, indicating that at least for him there was one Islam, only. But it was a rather specific form of Islam that said goodbye to the *taqlid*, which urged the believers always to follow a scholar competent in interpreting the shari‘a, and, instead, promoted *ijtihad*, the independent reasoning about religious and religion-related issues. Aided by a liberal Shia-Sufi scholar—Shaykh Mubarak, the father of Abu l-Fazl—in 1579 Akbar forced all major ‘*ulama*’ to sign a *mahzar*, in this case a declaration that he alone was the caliph and that, consequently, his opinion in religious matters prevailed. Since religion was an element in almost all legislation, in this way Akbar made sure that state legislation took precedence over or at least never was contravened by Islamic law as interpreted by the ‘*ulama*’—if only because he may well have felt that religious tradition simply did not suffice to solve contemporary problems, especially in a multi-religious state. Obviously, this piece of legislation—also termed an infallibility decree<sup>148</sup>—greatly diminished the power of the religious-legal establishment in favour of secular government and, indeed, Akbar himself. While this policy certainly helped to somewhat stabilize the (religious) situation in the empire, the more traditional Sunni circles inevitably argued that the emperor veered towards heresy.

Meanwhile, Akbar’s caliphal pretension also set him up against the Ottoman sultan, who claimed that role as well. As part of this policy, between 1576 and 1580 Akbar annually sent large contingents of pilgrims to Mecca and Medina, headed by members of the imperial family carrying sumptuous gifts—a policy continued by his successors. In order to do so, he needed the help of the Portuguese who, though the Mughals now dominated inland Gujarat, had captured its major seaports. His financial support of the *sheriff*, the ‘guardian of the holy cities’, was, of course, much appreciated, because it made that dignitary less dependent on Ottoman goodwill. Akbar, on the other hand, thus could increase his standing among the wider Muslim community, both in India and abroad.

It is not easy to evaluate what one might term Akbar’s ‘religious’ policy *stricto sensu*, especially if one wants to determine the real reasons underlying it. The emperor certainly made an effort not only to defuse the tensions in the Muslim community but also to reduce inter-religious strife—between Muslims and Hindus. He certainly felt that, specifically amongst his Hindu subjects, grave social and emotional issues were at stake, too: consequently, he prohibited sut-

148 Cfr. also: F. Buckler, ‘A New Interpretation of Akbar’s Infallibility Decree of 1579’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 4, no. 4 (1924) 591–608.

tee, legalized the remarriage of widows, and raised the age at which boys and girls could marry. Akbar definitely also wanted to diminish religious influences in politics, as shown, for example, in the suppression of Mahdavidism—a militant and at times millennialist movement whose leaders claimed caliphal and imamate status—in the 1570s.

Yet, Akbar seems to have had a genuine interest in the pretensions put forward by various religions: Sunni and Shia Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, and, also, Sikhism that, precisely in these decades, was gaining influence. He even wanted to know what Christianity had to offer. Thus, not only did the emperor order one of his—orthodox!—Muslim courtiers, Badauni, to translate the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* into Persian, the court language, but also asked him to translate the Christian gospels; whether Akbar knew that his trusted collaborator secretly wrote a frank and sometimes, especially about religious matters, extremely critical history of his master's reign and beliefs we do not know.

Famously, Akbar's religious curiosity resulted in his staging debates between 1578 and 1580, mostly in his new capital where, it is said, a special building, the Ibadatkhana—called by Abu l-Fazl the 'Mansion founded upon Truth'—was erected to allow the emperor and his guests to listen to the harangues of the spokesmen of the various creeds. Quite perceptively, Badauni wrote about his master as follows:

From his earliest childhood to his manhood, and from his manhood to old age, his Majesty passed through the most diverse phases and through all sorts of religious practices and sectarian beliefs, and collected everything which people can find in books, with a talent of selection peculiar to him and *a spirit of inquiry opposed to every Islamic principle* [italics added].

Whereas modern observers may applaud Akbar's attitude, obviously believers at that time did and indeed could not. Interestingly, many contemporary texts indicate that the men representing the different faiths during the, sometimes weekly, gatherings really thought Akbar was leaning towards their specific interpretation of the Divine, or God, and of its/his laws. Consequently, for example the pious Jains—mostly based in Gujarat—eulogized Akbar's virtues in numerous poems; reading them, I conclude that they did their utmost to tickle the emperor's vanity. On the other hand, I suggest that pandering to the Jain leaders did help Akbar to improve his hold over their economically important part of his empire.

Though sources do not agree about the actual statements made during the debates, it yet seems that the bitter words and, indeed, invectives the various

priests and scholars used against each other soon convinced Akbar that no easy reconciliation was possible. On the other hand, these discourses may have given him a better idea of his own religious preferences. From the late 1570s onwards, Akbar proclaimed the so-called *Din-i Ilahi*, or 'Religion of God', over which controversy, starting in his own time, continues up to today. The two basic positions seem to be that it either was a genuinely new religion or a re-working of notions available in the many traditions of Islam, both orthodox and heterodox. Obviously, this is a false opposition. No religion ever is really 'new'. What seems new is, mostly, the result of a process of conscious or subconscious syncretism and of the changed political or propagandistic use of old elements. To be sure, it is not clear whether Akbar held a deistic view—of Allah as a 'personal' god—, or, rather, pan-theistic notion of the cosmos as the ultimately divine. He certainly incorporated the celebration of the Sun into the *Din-i Ilahi*—a very old element also in Hinduism and, even, partly pre-Vedic—, and told his courtiers that its light was the emanation and, indeed, beginning of everything that existed, of creation. Badauni significantly writes that the emperor sometimes wore a veil, to hide his 'light'. When he lifted it, the courtiers exclaimed: 'light has shined forth'. As part of that notion, Akbar re-established the old Iranian feast of Nowruz that celebrated the evening of night and day in Spring, and was held in high regard as perhaps the most venerable moment in the relationship between the Divine and Man—by Shia Muslims and, specifically, Sufis.

However, the far more interesting and, indeed, most important question obviously is what role Akbar saw for himself in this complex of older religious ideas and metaphors? I suggest a clue is given in his use of the old Hindu custom of *darshan*, 'auspicious sight(ing)', as experienced in the morning appearance of the ruler on a palace balcony, to be greeted by his assembled subjects. Significantly, the origin of the ritual lay in the showing of divine images to the believers during temple ceremonies.<sup>149</sup> Yet, it is difficult to decide whether in this complex mixture of theophany and hierophany Akbar meant to present himself as, and be seen as, a priest-king—which seems to have been his role in the ceremonies he organized to venerate the Sun—or, even, as divine or at least as an emanation of the Divine himself. Maybe we will never know: the details of these ceremonies and of the *Din-i Ilahi* in general are presented in the sources—mostly the texts written by Abu l-Fazl and, but with a critical

149 Cfr. R. Inden, 'Ritual, Authority and Cyclical Time in Hindu kingship', in: J. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (Madison, 1978) 28–73; also: D. Eck, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Chambersburg, 1985).

undertone, by Badauni—in flowery, but not very clear words. Meanwhile it is, of course, quite significant that Akbar never seems to have contemplated making the *Din-i Ilahi* into a public, let alone a preferred or even compulsory cult. Only a handful of noblemen, courtiers seem to have participated in the rituals. This also explains why, on his death, the cult seems to have lost any import it may have had. Maybe interpreting the set-up of the *Din-i Ilahi* as a Sufi brotherhood comes nearest to what Akbar had in mind. Yet, as always in this culturally mixed world, one also thinks about the Hindu concept of a teacher and his *chela*, his devoted disciple: it was a terminology actually employed by Akbar as well.<sup>150</sup>

At least publicly, Islam remained Akbar's religion, as is shown in a piece of propaganda of a rather spectacular visual nature: the building of Fatehabad. Tradition has it that Akbar founded the city because on its site used to live the Sufi saint Salim Chishti, who had foretold the emperor that he yet would have a son; indeed, soon after, the much-longed for heir was born and named Salim—the later emperor Jahangir. The town, which stands on a high ridge overlooking the plain of the Gambhir River, presents itself as a beacon of faith: of Islamic faith, to be sure, for every visitor first sees the stupendous archway of the huge Jama Masjid, i.e. the 'mosque of assembly' or Friday Mosque, that towers at the top of the grand flight of stairs that connects the plain with the plateau. Its architecture, though, is a decided mixture of Islamic and indigenous Indian elements. In the mosque's grand quadrangle sits the mausoleum that Akbar built to enshrine the remains of his venerated Sufi master. The adjoining palace pavilions, too, show an eclectic use of Persian-Islamic and Hindu architectural elements—as did, later, Akbar's palace in Agra's Red Fort. The message that seems to emanate from the entire complex surprisingly mirrors that which one sees in Rome's St Peter's basilica and the Vatican Palace, and in Lhasa's Jokhang temple and Potala Palace: in the imperial capital and, indeed, the imperial residence, Church and State go hand in hand.

Last but not least, combining what we do seem to know about the emperor's more 'private' actions with his public policies, especially the proclamation of the *mahzar*, suggests that whatever Akbar may have believed, or felt about himself, he certainly did arrogate the right to be his state's supreme lawgiver and judge both in matters temporal and spiritual. This extreme stance, however, was not continued by his successors, who seem to have taken a more moderate position, though they certainly did try to retain the centralized political power Akbar had helped create for the Mughal imperial institution.

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150 Abu l-Fazl, *The A-in-I Akbari*, I, 263.

### 1.5 *The 'Sinosphere'<sup>151</sup> or the Confucian and Buddhist Worlds of East Asia*

The role of the ideology commonly called Confucianism in China, Korea, Japan, and, indeed, also parts of South-East Asia has been both long and, to some extent, lasting. However, it is all too easy to conflate these worlds with the culture of Confucianism, alone. It became intertwined with a religion and, moreover, one originally alien to the Sinosphere: Buddhism, which was introduced from India. Though the two came to constitute a complex whole, for the sake of analysis I will have to present them separately, though this will cause some overlap.

Current historiography seems divided over the question whether, during the Ming and the Qing eras, China's three 'official' religions—Confucianism, Buddhism, and, to complicate matters, Qing shamanism; I am leaving out Daoism—actually co-existed without much political trouble and, indeed, merged into a somewhat syncretic religious culture, or whether the situation was more complicated than this idealized vision suggests. The same question should be asked about the situation in medieval and early modern Japan, where Buddhism merged with older—indigenous—notions of holistic, or animistic sacrality that go under the name of Shinto and were partly embodied in the emperor's person.

#### 1.5.1 China, Mongolia, and Tibet

Though up till the present 'Master Kong', known in the West as Confucius (551–479 BCE), was and is revered throughout the Sinic world—even, again, in the People's Republic—, many scholars argue that he did not preach a religion, certainly not one in the deistic-fideistic sense. Yet, one might feel that the 'order' he defended implied a 'civic' or a 'political religion'.

Actually, we know as little about Confucius as we do about Jesus of Nazareth and Muhammad: his life is almost as legendary as theirs. Nor can we be sure that (all) the words attributed to him were, in fact, ever spoken by him.<sup>152</sup> As with the New Testament and the Qur'an, what Confucian texts there are—primarily the *Lunyu*, the 'collected conversations', called the *Analects* in Europe—, have been assembled in later times, specifically by order of rulers who felt that reference to a collection of semi-sacred books would help them create legitimacy as well as stability.

151 For the concept, see: J. Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009).

152 For a survey of old and new opinions, see: Brooks and Brooks, *The Original Analects*.

Basically, 'Confucianism' is not a creed, and does not promise any mundane, individual, concrete rewards to be gained by prayer and sacrifice; nor does it hold out hope for salvation in an eternally blissful afterlife to be obtained with the help of divine grace—nor, indeed, does it give reassuring, faith-based answers to the great existential questions. Reading the words Confucius allegedly spoke, we do know that the Chinese sage who, certainly, did revive and reassemble a number of older moral and political notions partly going back to the first millennium BCE., did not primarily stress the search for self-awareness through self-reflection, but, rather, concentrated on man's responsibility to his family, his community, and to society at large.

But though, essentially, the core ideas of Confucius constitute an intellectually and, indeed, sociologically interesting, but also rather abstract, though non-metaphysical, ethical vision, yet, within this context, the Chinese emperor's first and foremost public role was as sacrificer. For while, admittedly, the Master's teachings did not centre around a god, or the gods, those who codified his sayings did introduce references to the world's divine order, summarized as 'Heaven': the model, cosmic order that should be implemented on earth by man's virtue, embodied, first and foremost, by the ruler. While he was not an 'ordained priest' in any Judaeo-Christian sense, by his ideal purity and by the rituals he was able, indeed chosen to perform, he could balance the forces of heaven and earth. This central function of the emperor definitely dated to a pre-Confucian, indigenous shamanist culture wherein the ruler himself had been a shaman.<sup>153</sup> Performing the rites properly was of the essence; what the emperor or, in this vision of world and cosmos, anyone else believed, e.g. about life, death, salvation, afterlife, and so on, was quite another matter and basically unimportant.<sup>154</sup> This primeval role—another part of the ideas attributed to Confucius that long predate the sixth/fifth century BCE—later was integrated into the Confucian-imperial ideology. Moreover, the corpus of his teachings was heavily reworked and, subsequently, canonized by 'scholars', i.e. educated bureaucrats only during the first decades of the Han dynasty and constantly elaborated throughout the first millennium CE, until, finally, during the Sung era, it resulted in what now is termed neo-Confucianism,<sup>155</sup> a complex

153 J. Ching, 'Son of Heaven: Sacral Kingship in Ancient China', *T'oung Pao* 83, no. 1 (1997) 3–41. Also: K. Chang, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983).

154 Cfr. S. Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China: The Imperial Metaphor* (Richmond, 2001) 1–66.

155 A. Wood, *Limits to Autocracy. From Sung Neo-Confucianism to a Doctrine of Political Rights* (Honolulu, 1995) esp. 25 sqq., and 81 sqq.

of notions and practices that, by some, has been compared to the Humanist renaissance and Protestantism in Europe.

By that time, it had amongst other things, been more specifically geared to the needs of political, imperial power: it was used to strengthen any dynasty's position by stressing the fact that the cosmic order of society and of the state—a hierarchical and, also, strongly paternalistic order—had to be respected and that, hence, not only should children honour their parents but also, ultimately, any subject should obey the prince, the 'Son of Heaven'. Civility, duty, human-relatedness were still part of this form of Confucianism, but all these were to be guaranteed by the imperial government and, of course, the emperor. However, this re-working of earlier ideas did help give the elite who actually upheld the state, recruited through the rigorous system of state examinations, a tighter grip on society and, indeed, even on imperial power.<sup>156</sup>

After the Ming dynasty had captured the 'dragon throne', this complex world-view was reflected in the lay-out of Beijing. In the early fifteenth century, just beyond the walls of the Forbidden City with its multitude of palace halls and pavilions, on both sides of the town's central axis the imperial ancestral temple and the altar of soil and grain were constructed, as well as the temple of heaven, with its outside altar.<sup>157</sup> Some hundred years later, this ceremonial/ritual complex was expanded by the construction, also beyond the palace walls, of an even greater number of altars, sometimes with temples, where the classic imperial rituals had to be performed as well: the altars of the heaven spirits, the earth spirits—to celebrate the summer solstice—the sun, the moon, and of the first farmer, also named the god of agriculture.<sup>158</sup>

As to the other major influence on Chinese life and culture, like Confucianism Buddhism, too, at least in its earliest stages, was not a religion. It did not stipulate a trans-human reality and a divine grace people might invoke to achieve salvation—if their own efforts, too, were geared to that end. The life and ideas of the man whose name is attached to Buddhism, Siddharta Gautama (563–483 BCE),<sup>159</sup> are as shrouded in mystery and controversy as, again, those

156 See also: J. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China* (New York, 1985) and: P. Bol, 'The Sung Examination System and the Shih', *Asia Major* 3, no. 2 (1990) 149–171.

157 J. Zhu, *Chinese Spatial Strategies: Imperial Beijing, 1420–1911* (London, 2004). Also: N. Steinhart, *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (Honolulu, 1999) esp. 17 sqq.; J. Meyer, *The Dragons of Tiananmen: Beijing as a Sacred City* (Charlotte, 1991); P. Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City* (Chicago, 1971).

158 E. Armstrong, 'The Ritual of the Plough', *Folklore* 54, no. 1 (1943) 250–257.

159 Recently, the chronology of Siddharta Gautama's life has been discussed, and his death is

of Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad. What seems certain is that he warned his disciples that a deistic-fideistic view of the supernatural powers that were supposed to rule the world—and, hence, a belief in the words of the Brahmin priests who pretended they could interpret the will of these powers—detracted from their prime responsibility as human beings towards themselves and that world. But whereas, consequently, Buddhism is not a metaphysics, it yet is both a philosophy of life and a technology to achieve liberation from life's misery. Following the path suggested by the Buddha without believing in him as a, or the, saviour, will lead to salvation, though not as an existence to be lived in an otherworldly afterlife, such as the Christian and Islamic heavens; in that sense, Buddhism is a soteriology, too.

However, that is certainly not the way most of the Buddha's followers interpreted either him or his teachings. Perhaps because the latter were far too difficult to practise for the common man and, also, because of the continued power of the Brahmin clergy, Buddhism largely disappeared from the Indian subcontinent. It continued to flourish both beyond the Himalayas and beyond the Indian Ocean, but in most cultures was received, or re-interpreted as, precisely, a religion, wherein the 'historical' Buddha, the Buddha Sakyamuni, was considered a god. Soon, in most cultures where Buddhism was introduced, he merged with, or became part of a pantheon of earlier gods and, indeed, goddesses—the goddess of mercy prominent among them.

This situation also has influenced the ways rulers of Buddhist states have used him to legitimize their own power, resulting in a great many varieties of Buddhist political ideas. Soon, Buddhist thinkers did develop a decided 'theory' of kingship. It did not emphasize the ruler's role as a sacrificer, an intermediary between humankind and the gods—that being one of the Vedic concepts Buddhism abhorred. Rather, it stressed the monarch's high morality that should be the guiding spirit behind the state and, indeed, was the one reason for the creation of the state: as the answer to man's need for a moral social order, to combat anarchy. This ruler, the *c(h)akk(r)avati*, took care of the temporal realm, while a *bodhisattva*, a person who, through his general compassion, had attained buddhahood in his own lifetime, would be the leader in matters spiritual. Ideally, the two should reinforce one another.<sup>160</sup> Interestingly, in some ways this notion mirrors the tenet of the 'two swords' created in Christian Europe to both explain and uphold the duality of pope and emperor.

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now dated between ca. 411 and 400 BCE; obviously this significantly alters ideas about the year of his birth as well.

160 B. Gokhale, 'Early Buddhist Kingship', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 1 (1966) 15–22.

Inevitably, of course, this notion caused rivalry between men who claimed to be the one or the other. Often, a ruler or a bodhisattva—self-proclaimed or revered as such by his followers—might argue that he combined the two powers in his one person, a situation that did not develop in Europe—although it was the basis of the pope's position as ruler of the Papal States—, nor, with rare exceptions, in the Islamic world.

Probably in the first century BCE, Buddhism came to China, preached by monks travelling along the Silk Road that linked China and Central Asia to Northern India, the heartland of Buddhism. It soon became a religion that was practised widely by the general population. Given the rather abstract, highly moral, and in many ways aristocratic tone of Confucianism, it was not at all surprising that many of its (nominal) followers also needed a belief in a god, or, rather, multiple gods—and, indeed, goddesses and were willing to accept priests who would intercede for them. Thus, peoples in East Asia began adopting the deistic views of the historical Buddha, and of bodhisattvas already developed elsewhere, too. Alternatively, many held on to certain older, popular notions of man, nature, and cosmos such as, in China, the one dubbed Daoism<sup>161</sup> or, in Japan, Shintoism.

In China, members of the imperial court were attracted to it as well. The spread of Buddhism actually was fostered both for reasons of power and prestige and because the various imperial governments felt that the Buddha's teachings positively impacted on the morality of the common people. However, the imperial authorities also adopted it for another reason: they wished to regulate and contain this new and influential creed.<sup>162</sup> Soon, Buddhist monasteries proliferated. Thousands of temples dotted the country, tens of thousands of men and, to a lesser extent, women sought ordination. Though many may have done so to express their piety, it is quite obvious most professed a vocation because entering a monastery gave them a secure existence: during many periods of China's history, the extensive landholdings of the Buddhist Church were tax-exempted, and food for monks and nuns was free; nor could the men be called up for military service! Consequently, by the eighth and early ninth centuries, some of the Tang emperors decided the power of Buddhism had grown too great—also economically—and needed to be curbed. Though they did not extirpate it, they definitely reduced its might. Yet it grew again, especially during the Mongol—and Buddhist—Yuan dynasty. Indeed, Buddhism had come to

161 For brevity's sake and because of its complex relation/fusion with Chinese Buddhism I have chosen not to deal with Daoism.

162 E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden, 1972) a.o. 104, sqq., 147 sqq.

stay. Over the centuries, it merged with or at least took over elements from both Confucianism and from folk religion, which has led many scholars to speak of a tripartite religious situation.<sup>163</sup> Even part of the staunch Confucian bureaucratic elite began to practise Buddhism, mostly of the Chan (in Japan: Zen) variety.<sup>164</sup>

Obviously, a ruler always fears the competition of other charismatic men who will use the religious power they claim and which their followers attribute to them to challenge the authority of government, of the Crown. In this, China was no different from any other Eurasian state. One might argue that precisely to contain and, perhaps, even prevent this from happening, the political and societal notions that go by the name of Confucianism had been first developed. Nevertheless, the emperor was not divine, nor did he rule unconditionally. Whenever, in thought and deed, he showed that, in his own person, he did not exemplify the virtue and hence harmony that constituted the cosmic order, his subjects might rebel. Although this notion never was stated in so many, unequivocal words, it yet can be culled from the *Lunyu*. Combined with strongly legalistic notions of government, this vision of rightful rule has proven an abiding element in Chinese society and politics. However, on another level imperial power could be strengthened beyond the sacrality given to it by 'pure', Confucian concepts also by the more obviously religious systems of Buddhism and Daoism. The resulting mixture both served and was made to serve the imperial position.

However, since this syncretism occurred on all levels of society, it led to a proliferation of religious sects, mostly with Buddhist overtones; especially in times of economic and political problems, this process always threatened the existing order by presenting alternative solutions. Actually, Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–1368–1398), the founder of the Ming dynasty, himself had risen to power as the leader of the so-called Red Turban organization, which opposed the Yuan. The son of a poor farmer, he learned to read and write only when he entered a Buddhist monastery. Later, he joined and subsequently led a rebel group who associated with the Buddhist-heterodox movement of the White Lotus. The Red Turban soldiers provided it with a military arm and, by capitalizing on anti-foreign feelings among wider strata of Han Chinese society, eventually helped him to gain power in 1368 CE. Not surprisingly, however, once he had ascended the throne as Emperor Hongwu, he shed his heterodox ideas

163 T. Brook, 'Rethinking Syncretism: The Unity of the Three Teachings and Their Joint Worship in Late-Imperial China', *Journal of Chinese Religions* 21, no. 1 (1993) 13–44.

164 A. Welter, *Monks, Rulers and Literati: The Political Ascendancy of Chan Buddhism* (Oxford, 2006).

for the (neo-) Confucian notions that promised societal and political stability and tried to forbid all (potentially) dissident sects.<sup>165</sup> Interestingly, the first Ming emperor sought to control the rampant growth of the Buddhist Church, specifically by ordering the amalgamation of smaller monasteries with larger ones and allowing ordination only after proper examination.

However, this policy failed. By the end of the fifteenth century, the number of monks, which he had set at some 37,000, had grown to ca. 400,000. Largely, this unwanted development was of the government's own making: to finance its military policy, and to provide for the population during a series of climatic-economic disasters, Beijing had started selling certificates of ordination.<sup>166</sup> For the above-mentioned reasons, these were highly sought after, especially in times of economic need. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of people—men and women—had contrived to be 'privately' ordained, i.e. by men who had no real authority to do so, also to enjoy the benefits of monkhood. Beijing's efforts to have them demoted either to pressed labourers or to guardians of the empire's frontiers were to no avail.<sup>167</sup>

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, a group of senior level bureaucrats convinced the Ming emperor Jiajing (1507–1521–1567) there could be but one 'state religion': 'When Monks [i.e. Buddhists] and Daoists flourish, the government will decline', they argued and, significantly, added: 'Monks and Daoists are not agriculturalists; they are good at magical arts and cheat ignorant people.' Particularly, they singled out Buddhist nuns and female Daoists as persons who injured public morality. In a nutshell, these reproofs seem to reflect the traditional views of society held by staunch Confucianists.<sup>168</sup> I would argue that besides a number of ideological and political issues, this episode also suggests that, at various times, the imperial court, or groups within it, sought to re-appropriate the riches that over the centuries had accrued to Buddhist establishments, as well as, of course, ending their very problematic tax-exempt status.

Interestingly, however, in the specific case of the nunneries, the dowager-empress and other members of the inner court were able to withstand the

165 J. Dardess, 'The Transformation of Messianic Revolt and the Founding of the Ming dynasty', *Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (1970) 539–558.

166 T. Brook, *The Chinese State in Ming Society* (London, 2005) 152; Y. He, 'Buddhism in the Economic History of China' (MA-thesis, McMaster University, 2011) esp. 69sq.

167 Cfr. K. Ch'en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton, 1974) 86sq., and *passim*.

168 T. Li and S. Naquin, 'The Baoming Temple: Religion and the Throne in Ming and Qing China', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48, no. 1 (1988) 131–188, esp. 136–137.

clique who opposed their continuation. During the very long reign of the last powerful Ming emperor, Wanli (1563–1572–1620), the then empress-dowager actively sponsored Buddhism too, financing the reprint of the Buddhist canon and the (re-) building, both in Beijing and in the region surrounding it, of many temples—aided therein by her son.<sup>169</sup> Even Matteo Ricci, the Jesuit who visited Beijing in the first years of the seventeenth century, was surprised to see the Emperor's female relatives supporting these Buddhist institutions<sup>170</sup> where, of course, besides the historical Buddha himself, his female counterpart, the Goddess Guanyin would be revered, sometimes alongside other goddesses or saints who came from older religious traditions.<sup>171</sup> But whereas these mostly represented orthodox, albeit Chinese Buddhism, some of the temples protected by the ladies of the imperial family also were or became associated with new sects that, from the late fifteenth century onwards, gained influence amongst people low and high. Specifically a revival of sectarianism under the old label of the White Lotus,<sup>172</sup> which promised enlightenment and salvation to all those who followed the 'Venerable' or 'Eternal Mother', became very popular—not surprisingly also amongst women.<sup>173</sup>

This created a complex discrepancy, for the Ming government increasingly grew concerned about the power of such groups,<sup>174</sup> especially if there were any prophesies of the 'future Buddha', the Buddha Maitreya's rebirth in a particular person or family, which, of course, might pose a real threat to the emperor's authority and to state security. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the presence of Buddhism in Chinese society reached a peak, the more so because by then all over the empire local aristocratic families started building or rebuilding monasteries to convert their own status into

169 Cfr. R. Huang, *1587: A Year of No Significance: The Ming Dynasty in Decline* (New Haven, 1981) esp. chapters 1 and 2.

170 See: L. Gallagher, ed., *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matteo Ricci* (New York, 1953) 105.

171 Cfr. also: J. Paper, 'The Persistence of Female Deities in Patriarchal China', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 6, no. 1 (1990) 25–40.

172 B. ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Leiden, 1992).

173 D. Overmeyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976); cfr. also: J. Dardess, 'The Late Ming Rebellions: Peasants and Problems of Interpretation', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3 (1972) 103–117.

174 Li and Naquin, 'The Baoming Temple', 166 sqq.; cfr. also: R. Weller, 'Ideology, Organisation and Rebellion in Chinese Sectarian Religion', in: J. Bak and G. Benecke, eds., *Religion and Rural Revolt* (Manchester, 1984) 390 sqq.

(even more) power vis-à-vis a weakening central government.<sup>175</sup> No wonder, the Ming emperors themselves wanted their ancestors to be revered as reincarnations of the Bodhisattva Manjusri.

From the 1630s and 1640s onwards, the Qing amalgamation of China and its northern and western neighbours—all to some extent and in their own way Buddhist societies—once more increased the power of Buddhism. The Qing not only felt Buddhism to be part of their own legacy, they definitely saw its cultural-political importance, its potential for creating cohesion, within the wider, Mongol world. Consequently, they presented themselves as heirs to the long-standing policy of Mongol patronage of Lamaist Buddhism that had started with the relationship between Chinggis's grandson Kublai and the monk Phagpa. It seems that both at court—but in restricted circles, only—and in the Buddhist worlds of Mongolia and Tibet, the emperors of the (non-Han) Yuan dynasty and, much later, of the (equally non-Han) Qing not only were portrayed—in texts as well as visually—but also revered as mortals in whom bodhisattva metempsychosis had occurred. Already Abahai, or Hong Taiji (1592–1626–1636), the first Manchu ruler to conquer parts of China, started constructing Buddhist temple complexes and, moreover, like Kublai, was identified as a reincarnation of the bodhisattva Manjusri—thus, in a sense, setting himself up as an equal of the major Lamaist-Buddhist monk in Tibet, who was considered a reincarnation of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.<sup>176</sup> A few decades later, for political reasons of his own, this widely revered leader of Tibetan, Gelugpa- or Yellow Hat-Buddhism was anxious formally to bestow bodhisattvahood on the Manchu emperor. His influence allowed this image to be widely spread both in Tibet and Mongolia.

This, of course, was precisely what the Qing rulers wanted: to impress the Mongols. Thus, they could counter the increasing number of potentially rebellious monk reincarnations in Buddhist Mongolia, for an emperor-bodhisattva was, indeed, almost unbeatable. They endowed monasteries, sometimes on a grand scale,<sup>177</sup> and subsidized the printing of Buddhist texts, also on a grand scale. They frequently visited the huge complex of—largely Tibetan—Buddhist

175 T. Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993).

176 S. Grupper, 'The Manchu Imperial Cult of the Early Ch'ing Dynasty' (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1980) and D. Farquhar, 'Emperor as Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Qing Empire', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 38, no. 1 (1978) 5–34.

177 W. Eberhard, 'Temple-Building Activities in Medieval and Modern China', *Monumenta Serica* 23 (1964) 264–318.

sanctuaries on holy Mount Wu.<sup>178</sup> Yet, they did not fully exploit this more-than-human position, if only because at least in China it did not sit very well with the Confucian elite. Moreover, they were very critical of certain aspects of the Lamaist Buddhist clergy, who they felt to be worldly, avaricious, and, even, a danger to their military power, viz. when large groups of, especially, Mongols became monks and were no longer available for the military. Thus, while almost surreptitiously spreading the idea of their bodhisattva state, the early Qing emperors still developed a decidedly anti-clerical policy towards institutionalized Buddhism.<sup>179</sup>

It is necessary to understand that precisely the advent of the Manchu created a world that differed from the traditional 'sinosphere'.<sup>180</sup> For the Qing, Han or Confucian China was not the centre of their empire, but part of a far greater and complex dominion that, beginning in their home territory, Manchuria, in addition to the state of the Han also included Inner Asia, i.e. Tibet, and the worlds of Mongolia and Eastern Turkestan, now called Xinjiang—'new territories'.<sup>181</sup> Indeed, eight years before entering Beijing, Hong Taiji made clear he wanted to create an empire that would encompass far more than his homelands. China was only part of his prospective conquests. Nearly four centuries later, the leaders of the present People's Republic of China are the heirs of the state created by the Manchu, who doubled the territory of Han China. Battling against disruptive ethnic-political tendencies, they are obviously doing their very best to undo again this 'de-centring' of Han, Confucian China, despite their propagandistic promises of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural state.

The Manchu felt their heritage—I deliberately do not go into the question whether originally they were an ethnic group or a conglomerate of tribes, or whether their 'ethnic' identity was a later, imperial construction<sup>182</sup>—to be Chinggisid-Mongolian. Their conquests resulted in a Qing Empire that was

178 R. Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia* (Wiesbaden, 1959) 82–84.

179 Farquhar, 'Emperor as Bodhisattva', 29–34.

180 The debate is ongoing. Cfr. Ho Ping-ti, 'The Significance of the Ch'ing Period in Chinese history', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 2 (1967) 189–195, and: E. Rawski, 'Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (1996) 829–850.

181 P. Crossley, H. Siu, and Donald Sutton, eds., *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China* (Berkeley, 2006); cfr. M. Tamanoi, ed., *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire* (Honolulu, 2005).

182 M. Elliott, *The Manchu Way. The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 2001); see, however, also: P. Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley, 1999).

multicultural and, indeed, multi-lingual. While Manchu and Chinese were the preferred languages and a necessary skill for any person who wanted to serve the emperor, Mongol, Tibetan, Uighur, and even Arabic were spoken as well by, sometimes, very large groups indeed.<sup>183</sup> Manchu awareness of the complexity of empire, combined, perhaps, with their background in an albeit perhaps partly invented nomadic culture, may explain why the new emperors moved around far more than their Ming predecessors had done, travelling the length and the breadth of their realm.<sup>184</sup> By the early eighteenth century, the Qing understood 'China'—*Zhongguo*—as something different from 'the state of the Han', China 'proper': it was the empire they had created, as a territory, a state, and a dynasty. It no longer could be equated with a Confucian *oikoumenè* and with the Han language, only. Moreover, it would continue to grow as long as the Eight Banners—the core of the Manchu's socio-military system—were victorious. Last, but not least, those who were conquered and entered the empire no longer were barbarians, but Qing subjects.<sup>185</sup> This was perhaps most forcefully expressed by the establishment, in 1638, of the 'ministry ruling the outer provinces', by the new Manchu government and the introduction of the annual *chaojin*, or 'pilgrimage'—apparently a translation of the Arabic term *hajj* and, indeed, carrying religious as well as political connotations: it ordered the empire's new, Inner Asian peoples to come to Beijing and pay their respect to their sovereign.<sup>186</sup>

In short, the Qing drew upon and combined two traditions, Confucian-Han and Buddhist Inner Asian Mongol, each with their own cosmological notions. From a religious point of view, the latter also included the fiction that the Imperial House, the Aisin Gioro-clan, descended from a virgin deity.<sup>187</sup> On the other hand, it also included the notion that religion should be subordinate to political power. However, the imperial family's specific Manchu background did complicate the situation, for they retained their traditional, shamanistic,

183 J. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759–1864* (Stanford, 1997).

184 M. Chang, *A Court on Horseback: Imperial Touring & the Construction of Qing Rule, 1680–1785* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007).

185 G. Zhao, 'Reinventing China: Imperial Qing Ideology and the Rise of Modern Chinese National Identity in the Early Twentieth Century', *Modern China* 32, no. 1 (2006) 3–30.

186 N. Chia, 'The Lifanyuan and the Inner Asian Rituals in the Early Qing (1644–1795)', *Late Imperial China* 14, no. 1 (1993) 60–92, esp. 64 sqq., and note 17.

187 P. Crossley, 'An Introduction to the Qing Foundation Myth', *Late Imperial China* 6, no. 2 (1985) 13–24; cfr. also: Idem, *The Manchus* (Cambridge, 1997).

largely non-deistic practices.<sup>188</sup> Shamanism can be understood as a complex of inspirational rituals, performed to influence the divine forces—the earth and sky spirits—that control agriculture and fertility; they include divination, sacrifice, and prayer.<sup>189</sup> Not only had it, long ago, become incorporated into Tibetan, Lamaist Buddhism, it also was part of the Manchu's nomadic heritage. Converting to Buddhism, later, they created a complex amalgam of the two cosmologies.<sup>190</sup>

When the Qing conquered China proper and took up residence in Beijing's Forbidden City, the so-called Palace of Earthly Harmony was converted for use as a shamanist temple by members of the imperial family and their Manchu courtiers. Of course, it was located in the palace's 'private', inner court: the rites conducted there could not be reconciled with official and, hence, public state Confucianism. Thus, this oldest part of the Qing tripartite ideological make-up remained hidden to the public eye, which accepted only Buddhism and Confucianism. Yet, persist it did, though in intricate, ever changing forms. Partly, the nomads' sky spirits were deified, partly they were infused with references to the Buddha, partly, they merged with the cult of the ancestral spirits of the imperial clan, celebrated by shamans during the sumptuous Spring and Autumn ceremonies.<sup>191</sup>

In short, forms of syncretism developed, fusing Confucian, Buddhist, and shamanist rituals. At times, each of these was performed within its own, cultural context, a separate element of the threefold Qing identity. Yet, they also began permeating one another, resulting in a more complex, unitary form, the more powerful because of its multiple meanings.<sup>192</sup> Soon, these rituals filled a space that, at least up and until Kangxi's reign (1661–1722) was not centred on Beijing, only. The early Qing court was peripatetic and incorporated, far more than under the Ming, not only the sacred sites of the Confucian world but also those holy to the other traditions the emperors wanted to embody. Indeed, ritual and space/territory merged in a synthesis that represented both a Han/Confucian cosmology and the realities of imperial conquest when Kangxi

188 E. Rawski, *The Last Emperors* (Berkeley, 1998) esp. chapters 7 and 8.

189 See: N. Thomas and C. Humphrey, eds., *Shamanism, History and the State* (Michigan, 1996).

190 F. Yuguang, 'The Worldview of the Manchu Shamanism', in: M. Hoppal and K. Howard, eds., *Shamans and Cultures* (Budapest, 1993) 240–248.

191 N. di Cosmo, 'Manchu Shamanic Ceremonies at the Qing Court', in: J. McDermott, ed., *State and Ritual in China* (Cambridge, 1998) 351–396.

192 A. Zito, *Of Body and Brush: Grand Sacrifice as Text/Performance in Early Modern China* (Chicago, 1997); also: Rawski, *The Last Emperors*.

proudly proclaimed he had travelled seven hundred miles in each of the cardinal directions.<sup>193</sup>

Arguably, this complex religious-political nexus was made visible in the construction of the imperial residence in Jehol/Chengde, which took almost the entire eighteenth century. The vast 'mountain resort for enjoying the summer' contained a number of palaces where the emperors received their courtiers, their highest officers of state, and the envoys sent by the empire's minority peoples. That all this splendour was contained in a net of 'outlying temples' cannot be a coincidence. They all were Buddhist, and they all mirrored famous shrines from all over the empire. Even more interesting, all these structures had been subtly altered to denote Qing supremacy: whatever their style, the entrance buildings always were 'Chinese'.<sup>194</sup> With the various landscapes they were embedded in—including a plain resembling the Manchus' ancestral, sacred grasslands—the entire ensemble metaphorically expressed Qing domination over the conquered territories, over the empire they had created. Indeed, precisely the 'steppe' laid out at Jehol was the scene of an important Qing rather than Han ritual: the annual imperial hunt. From the late 1680s onwards, the leaders of the newly-subdued tribes of Mongolia were ordered to assemble there: no longer as tribute-bearing foreigners, barbarians, but as subjects.<sup>195</sup> What better way to show everyone present that the Qing preserved not only the Han-Chinese, Confucian culture that was rooted in the agricultural tradition, but, also, their nomadic heritage. They finally had married the steppe to the sown. Moreover, they had created a 'microcosm' of their vast and variegated empire that, as far as I know, has no parallel in world history—unless one would want to liken it to Emperor Hadrian's villa at Tivoli; constructed between 118 and 131AD, it does not seem to have had the specifically imperial-religious connotation that made the Chinese summer capital such a powerful symbol.

### 1.5.2 Japan

In Japan, the position of the emperor was different from the conditional one accorded by the Mandate of Heaven concept to the Sons of Heaven. The origins of the Japanese rulers lie in their role, probably originating in the first centuries of the Christian Era, as political leaders who also were magico-religious shamans: their power depended on their ability to perform the rituals that solicited the forces of the supernatural to ensure a good rice crop. But the

193 J. Spence, *Emperor of China* (New York, 1988) xiii.

194 Ph. Foret, *Mapping Chengde: The Qing Landscape Enterprise* (Honolulu, 2000).

195 Chia, 'The Lifanyuan', 66–68.

emperors also are deemed to be the descendants of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu omikami—interestingly, in Japan the Sun, that brings growth, is female, unlike in many other cultures. All this is considered part of the way of thinking inherent in Shinto—‘the way(s) of the gods’—that is considered, though also debated, as being peculiar to Japan: its so-called ‘animistic’ religion before the arrival of Buddhism and, indeed, in many ways its religion alongside and in connection with Buddhism ever since.<sup>196</sup> Shinto seems to have exalted the role of woman as the embodiment of the sacred and, hence, also as shamaness, until a more definite separation of religion and secular government occurred in the seventh and eighth centuries CE<sup>197</sup>—concluding a period in which a number of empresses actually or nominally had ruled the country and, also, functioned as high priestess of Amaterasu’s chief sanctuary at Ise.

Much of this is reflected in the *Daijosai*, the age-old imperial accession ceremony which, due to its sacrality and the secrecy surrounding it, even now is not scholarly analysed. As far as we know, the present emperor, too, may have lain down, as did his forebears, on a sacred bed and, in one way or another, have communed with the Sun Goddess. Originally, he may have done so using a court lady as his vessel, to effectuate the transfer of the previous emperor’s soul into his own body.<sup>198</sup> Following the ‘rejuvenation’ ritual, the new emperor offered the deity cooked rice and sake, rice wine, harvested from two fields, southeast and northwest of the capital, Heian-kyo, Kyoto, and then consumed these offerings with the goddess. Last, but symbolically not least, a banquet followed, during which the new emperor and his guests ate together.

In a sense, the Japanese emperors did supremely embody the Divine that according to traditional belief permeated every form of creation on earth or, at least, in the land created by the gods, Japan.<sup>199</sup> Formally, therefore, they could

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196 Over the past decades, the originality and uniqueness of Shinto have been questioned, and it has been argued that both Daoism and Buddhism, coming from China, were, really, Japan’s main religions, with Shinto a manifestation of both that only in the nineteenth century was constituted as a separate and, moreover, indigenous religion. See: T. Breen and M. Teeuwen, eds., *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami* (Abingdon, 2000) esp. 1–8. Also: T. Barrett, ‘Shinto and Daoism in Early Japan’, in: Idem, Idem, eds., o.c., 13–31.

197 M. Yusa, ‘Women in Shinto: Images Remembered’, in: A. Shamar, ed., *Religion and Women* (New York, 1994) 93sq., esp. 95. Cfr. also: K. Smyers, ‘Women and Shinto’, *Japanese Religions* 12, no. 4 (1983).

198 E. Ohnuki-Tierney, ‘Japanese Monarchy in Historical and Comparative Perspective’, in: D. Quigley, ed., *The Character of Kingship* (Oxford, 2005) 209–231, is a bit verbose but nevertheless illuminating.

199 M. Waida, ‘Conceptions of State and Kingship in Early Japan’, *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 28, no. 1 (1976) 97–112.

never not be perfect. Consequently—and again: formally—their subjects could not rebel against them. This does not mean that the Japanese people believed the emperor to be a god in the Western sense of possessing powers of control over natural phenomena or, even, superior human qualities.<sup>200</sup> Indeed, as an individual the emperor obviously was a mortal man. He was not, therefore, worshipped. However, in his official capacity as emperor-priest/sacrificer he was the ultimate symbol of authority, spiritual as well as temporal. Therefore, he was uniquely sacred, and more of a god than any other man.<sup>201</sup>

In short, though Japan was hugely indebted to Chinese culture, this did not influence the traditional roles of the Son of Heaven. While Heian-kyo followed the urbanistic-cosmological design of Chinese imperial capitals,<sup>202</sup> it was not encased in a grid of temples of heaven and earth, or altars for the sun, the moon, and the harvest, nor did the emperors engage in the attendant ceremonies and rituals such as the imperial ploughing that, throughout the year, played such a dominant part in the lives of their Chinese counterparts—though, admittedly, even nowadays the Japanese emperor does plant as well as harvest rice, but within the confines of Tokyo's imperial palace. Both the mysterious union, or, if one wants, sacramental communion with the Sun Goddess that constituted the central element in the imperial initiation<sup>203</sup> and included remnants of a shamanistic fertility ritual, and the periodic food and renewal ceremonies at Ise were conducted beyond the public eye.<sup>204</sup> So were the *mi-kagura*: performances of sacred dance and song that repeated the mythical moment Amaterasu, answering the pleas of the lesser gods, had come out of her cave to give light to the earth, a ritual wherein, originally, the emperor himself would participate.<sup>205</sup>

200 E. Ohnuki-Tierney, 'The Emperor of Japan as Deity (*Kami*). An Anthropology of the Imperial System in Historical Perspective', *Ethnology* 30, no. 3 (1991) 1–17.

201 Though going beyond the scope of this essay, it needs to be said that the cult of the emperor did change during the second half of the nineteenth century, when, during the so-called Meiji 'restoration', the shogunate that for nearly a thousand years had ruled Japan was abolished. It was then that the emperor's divinity was much more stressed than it used to be.

202 N. Fiévé and P. Waley, eds., *Japanese Capitals in Historical Perspective: Place, Power and Memory in Kyoto, Edo and Tokyo* (London, 2013).

203 R. Ellwood, *The Feast of Kingship: Accession Ceremonies in Ancient Japan*. Monumenta Nipponica Monographs 50 (Tokyo, 1973).

204 Cfr. N. Naumann, 'The State Cult of the Nara and Early Heian Periods', in: Breen and Teeuwen, eds., *Shinto in History*, 47–67.

205 R. Garfias, 'The Sacred Mi-Kagura Ritual of the Japanese Imperial Court', *Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology* 1, no. 2 (1968) 149–178.

In the following centuries, the link between Ise, Japan's central 'food shrine', and the imperial family was strengthened. Virginal daughters of the emperor would be appointed to the position of *saigu*, or 'consecrated imperial princess', with the title of *saio*, 'sacred queen', and preside over the ceremonies to honour both the Sun Goddess, to whom one of the two main sanctuaries was dedicated, and the Food Goddess, who commanded the second shrine.<sup>206</sup> However, and quite strangely, this relationship between the ruling house and the country's most holy sanctum was discontinued in the fourteenth century, only to be taken up again after the Meiji restoration of the nineteenth century, when the divinity of the imperial house was stressed even more than in the preceding centuries.<sup>207</sup> None of the literature I have consulted gives an explanation for this situation, though I assume the gradual impoverishment of the imperial house may be one of the reasons: these rituals were very expensive. However, the imperial family even now continues to provide a *saio* to Ise.

At the end of the seventh century, the powerful noble family of the Fujiwara cleverly started marrying into the imperial family, launching a tradition that lasted into the early twentieth century. For a long time, they dominated the imperial house, and Japan, as 'regents', until their power waned, and actual rule fell to successive dynasties of military dictators or shoguns. The imperial role increasingly became a ceremonial and ritual one, only. The emperor symbolized what we would now term the cultural identity of Japan—which inevitably meant: what was constructed as such—, and by that very token could confer legitimacy on the (secular) power of the elites who ruled the country. Few emperors actually tried to rule themselves. Arguably, it was precisely the strange combination of sanctity and (relative) passivity that explains the continuity of the imperial house.<sup>208</sup> But also, precisely because of the country's fundamental dependence on rice—both real and symbolic—, the shoguns, though they took military and political control, could not take over the emperor's role as officiant in the sacred rituals that ensured abundance.

Japanese culture owed much to China, not least through the introduction, from the mid-sixth century onwards, of at least some elements of the complex ideology of Confucianism.<sup>209</sup> Buddhism, however, seems to have come by way

206 R. Ellwood, 'The Saigu: Princess and Priestess', *History of Religions* 7, no. 1 (1967) 35–60.

207 F. Bock, 'The Rites of Renewal at Ise', *Monumenta Nipponica* 29, no. 1 (1974) 55–68.

208 B.-A. Shillony, *Enigma of the Emperors: Sacred Subservience in Japanese History* (Folkestone, 2005) esp. 17; 19; also 273.

209 S. Eisenstadt, 'The Transformation of Confucianism and Buddhism in Japan', in his *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View* (Chicago, 1996) 219–262, is a muddled, largely useless contribution.

of Korea. One of the peninsula's three kings, newly converted himself, did send Buddhist monks to the island empire to spread the new faith there. During the reign of the first female emperor, Suiko (554–593–628)—who, significantly, had become a Buddhist nun before she ascended the throne—and her nephew, the strong regent Shotoku, Buddhism began to flourish.<sup>210</sup> Interestingly, though, at the very same time the rulers of Japan, indeed, Suiko herself, began to style themselves, specifically in their correspondence with China, as the 'emperor—*tenno*, *tianhuang*—of the East' vis-à-vis the 'emperor of the West'. Moreover, the direct genealogical descent of the imperial line from the heavenly domain was increasingly stressed, as well as the name of the state as 'Nihon'—in Chinese *Riben*, hence Japan—as 'the Source of the Sun'.<sup>211</sup>

Despite their divine status and inviolability, the emperors of Japan—mostly though not exclusively male since the eighth century—, realized that their position was not uncontested. The aristocratic clans who possessed the land always posed a real and constant threat. If only for that reason, during the eighth century developments set in which in many ways mirrored what happened in Europe at the same time. Though, obviously, coevality is irrelevant to explain the similarities between Europe and Japan, the conditions yet were comparable. Just as in Europe the Pippinids began to use the papacy and the servants of the Church to deal with the exigencies and the problems attendant on the formation of their state, so the imperial house in Japan started using the dominant religious institution in their realm.

The Yamato emperors decided that what by then had become the Buddhist Church, with its many temples and monasteries, might be turned into a very useful ally, since, assumedly, the priests would not harbour imperial aspirations. Shinto could not fulfil this function because, essentially, it was not a Church, not an organization easily harnessed to imperial needs.

Soon, Buddhist clerics came to counterbalance power-seeking aristocrats. Indeed, the warriors, samurai, who served the empire's magnates, the *daimyo*, or 'great names', were in a sense mirrored by the *sohei*, the 'warrior-monks', who served the abbots of the great monasteries and temples—complexes that often resembled the feudal castles.<sup>212</sup> At the imperial court, factions and, even, the emperors themselves used the *sohei* whenever it politically suited them.

210 K. Carr, *Plotting the Prince: Shotoku Cults and the Mapping of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu, 2012).

211 See, e.g., M. Waida, 'Sacred Kingship in Early Japan: A Historical Introduction', *History of Religions* 15, no. 4 (1976) 329–331.

212 M. Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers and Warriors in Premodern Japan* (Honolulu, 2000).

Again as in Europe, the Buddhist priesthood provided the imperial government with the educated men it needed to create an effective bureaucracy. Last, but not least, in Japan, too, the Buddhist Church was seen as an instrument of cultural and, hence, political cohesion.

Thus, given all its potential uses, no wonder the Church was economically favoured, by the imperial family as well as by many other believers. Consequently, it acquired great riches.

Buddhism remained in favour all through Japan's 'middle ages'. Moreover, it became an instrument in the hands of the country's actual rulers as well. For precisely in these centuries, the emperors, gradually losing their power to rule, appointed shoguns to do so in their stead. When, in 1603 CE, the Tokugawa family took shogunal power, they, too, began using Buddhism—or, rather, the Buddhist Church, with its many sects or schools, including those of the Zen variety—to bring or restore cohesion to Japan, but only after they had finally curbed the power of the warrior-monks. Since the seventeenth century, every Japanese family had to belong to the Buddhist Church, and its clergy presided over—and were paid for—every funeral up to the nineteenth century. Also, the Tokugawa shoguns and their advisers and clients developed an eclectic cultural context to strengthen their rule to an extent no previous shogunal dynasty ever had. It fused their military might, which had brought them dominion, with the sacred—culling elements from both Buddhism and Shinto—as well as with more general ideas from neo-Confucianism, also introduced from China, to achieve political authority with religious characteristics.<sup>213</sup> Indeed, the deification of the first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, was both a significant and a determined step towards the creation of a new kind of shogunal religious-political identity;<sup>214</sup> inevitably, at the same time the cult of previously deified military leaders—e.g. Toyotomi Hideyoshi—was, to say the least, discouraged. One of the more 'visible' activities of the Tokugawa political ritual henceforth became the 'Nikko Pilgrimage' to honour Ieyasu's shrine there. I would argue that, in a certain sense, this meant that the shogun created an ideology alongside the notions that still upheld the authority of the emperor—thus mirroring the situation in Europe, where papal and imperial ideologies existed side by side as well, with the one 'borrowing' persuasive identity markers from the other, and vice versa.

<sup>213</sup> H. Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology* (Princeton, 1985) esp. ch. 2.

<sup>214</sup> Cfr. W. Boot, 'The Religious Background of the Deification of Tokugawa Ieyasu', in: A. Boscaro, et al., eds., *Rethinking Japan. Vol. 2: Social Sciences, Ideology and Thought* (Sandgate, 1990) 331–337.

Meanwhile, those emperors who tried to break out of the 'gilded cage' of their secluded court in Kyoto, continued to look to Buddhism, too, to regain some power, though they might continue to suspect the Buddhist Church precisely because it also was favoured by the shogun. They certainly did use the monastic system to provide for their offspring. As far as I have been able to ascertain, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries often as many as a third of the imperial sons in a given generation became monks or priests. This policy may also have been dictated by the fact that the gilding of their cage had worn off: the economic situation of the imperial house deteriorated, specifically from the sixteenth century onwards. Trying to gain access to monastic wealth by making their sons and daughters abbots and abbesses of the country's richer abbeys may have been one way to ease their financial difficulties. Buddhist monasteries, especially the ones attached to the Zen and the Pure Land groups, had become amongst the greatest and also most innovative landowners and, hence, traders of Japan, in the process creating an economic ethic and a concept of property law that were more universally applied.<sup>215</sup> During the Tokugawa period, this monastic economy was one of the motors that drove a more general economic growth and gave the state added strength.

## 1.6 'Sons of Heaven'

### 1.6.1 Emperor Qianlong (1711–1735–1796 CE)

The man born Hongli Aisin Gioro, who in 1735 acceded to the Chinese throne as Emperor Qianlong, has received a varied press, if only because he cannot escape the comparison with his grandfather, Kangxi, whose favourite grandson he had been. Kangxi, of course, both in his own time and later has been judged the greatest of Qing emperors. The two of them were part of, and largely shaped, what has been termed China's 'long eighteenth century', stretching from 1683 to 1820.<sup>216</sup>

Some feel that Qianlong was, by many standards, a ruthless as well as a hypocritical despot.<sup>217</sup> These, of course, are characteristics many political theorists—Machiavelli for one—would have thought necessary to simply be an

<sup>215</sup> R. Collins, 'An Asian Route to Capitalism: Religious Economy and the Origins of Self-Transforming Growth in Japan', *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 6 (1997) 843–865, esp. 847 sqq.; 851, and *passim*.

<sup>216</sup> S. Mann, *Precious Records. Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford, 1997).

<sup>217</sup> For a 'biography': H. Kahn, *Monarchy in the Emperor's Eyes: Image and Reality in the Ch'ien-lung Reign* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971) as well as: M. Elliott, *Emperor Qianlong. Son of Heaven, Man of the World* (New York, 2009).

effective ruler. He definitely tried to weld together the various parts of his empire and, hence, the various roles he felt he needed to fulfil.

To start with, he consistently publicized himself as a prime example of the prime Confucian and, hence, imperial duty, that of filial piety: all his life, he revered his mother, to the extent that one might almost argue he used her to present himself to the court and, indeed, the country in this most virtuous and hence affirmative of imperial guises. He showered poems on her, which, of course, were publicly read in the Forbidden City. He built her whatever pleasure palaces she wanted. Most significantly, he took her on his numerous and lengthy trips to the south of China, the rich Yangtze region, at immense extra cost to the treasury and, also, the local population. Thus, he flaunted his filiality amongst a wider audience and, hence, constantly re-established his right to rule.<sup>218</sup>

However, unlike his revered grandfather, Qianlong never travelled as much as he did, and certainly did not venture out, as Kangxi had, to lead a Manchu army against the rebels of the south or the tribal barbarians of the west. Yet, the military situation was not perfect. Admittedly, by the time of Qianlong's accession, the Qing regime had achieved relative stability in China proper—certainly after Kangxi's successful campaigns against the remaining Ming loyalists and, as part of those, the suppression of the so-called 'rebellion of the three feudatories'. However, the frontier towards the steppe remained, as always, a weak point, not only in the empire's defence policy but, also, in its internal cohesion, since the century-long interaction with the Mongol tribes also affected Confucian Chinese society and culture as such and, indeed, presented a threat because, as shown by the above rebellion, they sometimes united with Han Chinese anti-Qing groups.

From the beginning, the Manchu dynasty—starting with emperor Shunzhi (1638–1644–1661 CE)—had tried to control the Mongols by courting Tibetan Buddhism. To turn the various, competing Mongol groups into obedient Qing subjects seemed the most important Manchu project, both for Kangxi and for his successors, Yongzheng (1678–1722–1735 CE) and, from the start of his reign, for Qianlong.

Yongzheng famously had written: 'Since our dynasty began to rule China, the Mongols and other tribes living in extremely remote regions have been integrated into our territory. This is the expansion of China's territory.'<sup>219</sup> Yet, he

218 H. Kahn, 'The Politics of Filiality: Justification for Imperial Action in Eighteenth Century China', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 2 (1967) 197–203.

219 Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 347.

wanted to retain Manchu culture as much as respect Confucianism. Moreover, he seems to have acknowledged that his empire was, in a sense, multi-religious when he wrote:

The Lord of Heaven is Heaven itself ... In the empire we have a temple for honouring Heaven and sacrificing to Him. We Manchus have Tiao Tchin. The first day of every year we burn incense and paper to honour Heaven. We Manchus have our own particular rites for honouring Heaven. The Mongols, Chinese, Russians, and Europeans also have their own particular rites for honouring Heaven ... everyone has his way of doing it.<sup>220</sup>

These conciliatory messages did not convince the Mongols. The civil war that erupted amongst the various tribal federations in 'Mongolia' in the late seventeenth century again posed a danger to the empire's stability. Specifically, it was disturbed by two groups of tribes: the Khalkha, on the one hand, and the Dzungarians, on the other. They both wanted to again unite the Mongolian polity and, hence, threatened the Manchu government in China that needed peace on and power over its western frontier.<sup>221</sup> Moreover, the Khalkha recreated the religious-political link with Buddhism that had existed in previous times and, in a way, had been usurped by the Manchu themselves since the mid-seventeenth century, when they sought an alliance with the *dalai lama*, 'the ocean of wisdom', the major Lamaist-Buddhist leader of Tibet. The situation shows the fluidity of Buddhist identities both amongst the Manchu and the Mongols.<sup>222</sup>

Searching for a solution, Qianlong continued a policy adopted by earlier Qing rulers, viz. trying to foster the notion that the Mongols belonged to a pan-Qing Empire, ruled by a Buddhist emperor.<sup>223</sup> As unrest increased, the Qing court decided to instil Gelugpa, or Yellow Hat, orthodoxy, which functioned under their protective umbrella, into the syncretic Mongol religion and, in a wider sense, culture, more specifically to replace older, local and regional varieties of Mongol Buddhism. The dalai lamas went along with this policy, not only to strengthen their own position amongst the Mongols but also because

220 Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 241.

221 P. Perdue, *China Marches West. The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (New Haven, 2009).

222 The situation is detailed in: J. Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism and the State in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu, 2008).

223 Elverskog, *Our Great Qing*; cf. D. Wright, 'The Weaving of a Buddhist Empire: Mandalas and Manjusri in the Reign of Qianlong' (PhD dissertation, the University of Colorado, Boulder, 2008).

they needed Qing support to extend their influence over those parts of Tibet that were dominated by their only serious competitors, the monks of the Red Hat Order.<sup>224</sup> The reigning dalai lama was invited to Beijing and a former imperial palace was reconstructed to be the most important Lamaist-Buddhist sanctuary of the empire.<sup>225</sup> What, however, it actually expressed was Qing hegemony over Tibetan Buddhism and, as soon appeared, Qianlong's wish to nominate any future dalai lama—his grandfather had done so already in 1717. However, the Khalkha found a reincarnation of a famous Tibetan scholar in, perhaps not surprisingly, the son of their khan. This first Jebtsundamba as well as his successor, another descendant of Chinggis, legitimized the Khalkha bid for power against the Qing. Only in the 1750s did Qianlong finally defeat both tribal federations, massively slaughtering their people.<sup>226</sup> Perhaps wisely, he sought to defuse this dangerous combination of religious and political power and decreed that a new Jebtsundamba could be searched for only in Tibetan Gelugpa circles where the government in Beijing might control the finding of a reincarnation. Interestingly, in 1911 the eighth Jebtsundamba became the theocratic ruler of newly independent Mongolia, governing till 1924, when the Communists took power.<sup>227</sup>

Meanwhile, the ideological implications of Qianlong's Tibetan-Mongolian policy had been represented on a magnificent scale in the lay-out of the imperial summer residence at Jehol/Chengde.<sup>228</sup> Significantly, the grandest structure, dominating the entire complex, was a temple-palace closely modelled on and almost equalling the size of the Potala palace at Lhasa; indeed, it, too, was coloured red, as was the palace where the dalai lama himself held court, that other reincarnation of a bodhisattva. Admittedly, the dalai lamas continued the notion that they were, at least spiritually, the superior of the emperor, since they were, in all matters Buddhist, his teachers. In short, both sides tried to repeat the pattern that once had been instituted between Kublai Khan and his revered 'teacher' Phagpa—a system however that Kublai Khan himself had abandoned after his friend's death because he did not favour such a pope-emperor construction. Actually, he had wanted to be seen as the supreme bodhisattva, Manjusri, and as such to dominate even the dalai lama. Now, Qianlong,

224 S. Grupper, 'Manchu Patronage and Tibetan Buddhism during the First Half of the Ch'ing Dynasty', *Journal of the Tibet Society* 4 (1984) 47–75.

225 Cfr. F. Lessing, *Yung-Ho-Kung: An Iconography of the Lamaist Cathedral in Peking* (Göteborg, 1942) as well as; Wright, 'The Weaving'.

226 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 287.

227 C. Bawden, *The Modern History of Mongolia* (New York, 1968) 261–263.

228 A. Chayet, *Les temples de Jehol et leurs modèles tibétaines* (New Delhi, 1985).

too, claimed precisely that bodhisattvahood. After all, Manjusri was the wise and kingly bodhisattva, whereas Avalokitesvara, claimed to be reincarnated in the dalai lamas, was only the compassionate one. Summing up, the Qing simply did not tolerate a powerful religion that had its centre outside their immediate sphere of influence.

This conclusion is reinforced by another element in Qianlong's imperial make-up: he set out to appropriate tantric, i.e. Lamaist-Buddhist magical power, wanting to monopolize contacts with the supernatural world, both to control potentially dangerous sects in China—where they did create a lot of unrest, also through inter-sect competition<sup>229</sup>—and to fight other enemies, such as those Tibetans who did not accept Qing suzerainty. Thus, one of his tantric teachers<sup>230</sup> helped his armies to confound their adversaries with magical fireballs and dust clouds.<sup>231</sup> At the same time, the emperor used the knowledge of the Jesuits at his court to gain better knowledge of battlefields and found better canons.<sup>232</sup> All this, rather than being contradictory, shows the clever ways in which specifically Qianlong managed to manipulate a varied religious repertoire, hoping that this flexible pluralism would stabilize China proper and also bring the Mongols under his sway. Thus, he continued the tolerant policy that the Qing emperors had pursued regarding the various religious views in their polity.<sup>233</sup>

However, in the course of Qianlong's reign, with economic problems increasing, the imperial government started clamping down on sectarian movements again; the combination of religious fervour and economic dissatisfaction simply was too dangerous. He put into force again the statutes outlawing heterodox religious groups that, after the collapse of the Ming dynasty in the 1640s, had been incorporated into the laws of the new, Manchu rulers, but that his grandfather had allowed to lapse. Indeed, a certain return to orthodoxy does seem to have set in. Qianlong had to show he was not only a devout son in the Confucian

229 B. Gaustad, 'Prophets and Pretenders: Inter-sect Competition in Qianlong China', *Late Imperial China* 21, no. 1 (2000) 1–40.

230 X. Wang, 'The Qing Court's Tibetan Connection: Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje and the Qianlong Emperor', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 60, no. 1 (2000) 125–163.

231 J. Waley-Cohen, 'Religion, War and Empire-Building in Eighteenth-Century China', *The International History Review* 20, no. 2 (1998) 336–352, esp. 345 sqq.

232 J. Waley-Cohen, 'God and Guns in Eighteenth-Century China: Jesuit Missionaries and the Military Campaigns of the Qianlong Emperor', *Contacts Between Cultures: Eastern Asia: History and Social Sciences. Proceedings of the 33rd International Congress of Asian and North African Studies* 4 (Lewiston, 1992) 94–99.

233 J. de Groot, *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China* (Taipei, 1963) 153, 250.

sense, but, as should be all his servants, also a devout student of the Confucian classics that were the foundation and backbone of that part of Qing imperial ideology. Therefore, the emperor presented himself as the ultimate collector—and, hence, arbiter and censor—of the entire corpus of traditional Chinese texts when, from the 1770s onwards, he ordered the preservation and, indeed, codification of this literary heritage. This resulted in the ‘complete library of the four treasures.’<sup>234</sup> The scholar-censors involved were admonished to destroy all texts that somehow showed enmity to the peoples from the steppe, negatively compared the Qing to the Ming, and, generally, detracted from the achievements of the ruling dynasty. Precisely the vanquished Ming should be negatively portrayed, to impress all readers with the fact that the mandate of heaven had been legitimately transferred to the Qing, in order to counterbalance prevailing and potentially destabilizing notions that, unlike the Ming, the Qing were, after all, non-Han, foreign.

This return to tradition also showed when Qianlong reversed another of his grandfather’s policies. Whereas Kangxi had ‘modernized’ the age-old music so important to the proper execution of imperial sacrificial rites, interestingly accommodating Manchu ‘modes’ into these compositions, his grandson ordered the restoration of the ancient, Chinese forms.<sup>235</sup> Qianlong also felt that the influence of Christian missionaries at court and of Christianity across China at large had, perhaps, waxed too great. Thus, when the orthodox, non-accommodation policy towards the interactions between missionary Christendom and its non-Christian contexts adopted by Pope Benedict XIV in the 1740s was felt in China, too, Qianlong started to expel the Christian priests. Chinese Christians went underground.

Notwithstanding this tendency towards increasing religious-cultural conservatism, which also expressed itself in the numerous temples Qianlong built,<sup>236</sup> precisely during his reign several partly religiously motivated or at least charismatically led rebellions broke out again. In the 1770s, the Wang Lun revolt in Shandong represented the complex reactions of both dispossessed farmers and poor townspeople against the problems caused by population growth, tax increase, and food shortage. Against the Shandong rebels, too, the emperor let his generals use magic, in the form of magically endowed prostitutes. At the same time, he stated that, of course, a proper Chinese would not believe such

234 R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor’s Four Treasures: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch’ien-Lung Era* (Harvard, 1987).

235 L. Chiu, ‘From 1746 to 1786: The Continued Revision of the Imperial Music Treatise’, *Fontes Artis Musicae* 56, no. 3 (2009) 272–281.

236 S. Naquin, *Peking. Temples and City Life, 1400–1900* (Berkeley, 2000).

arts.<sup>237</sup> In the 1780s, on Tayouan the Tiandi group questioned Qing legitimacy, and Islamic minorities in the south-west mainland rebelled, too. Last, but not least, in the 1790s the White Lotus sect arose again as it had under the Ming, promising its adherents a messianic age, wherein the 'Eternal Mother' would rule and bring them salvation. Thus, the last years of Qianlong's reign seemed to announce new threats to the complex polity the Qing had been building since the 1640s. As always, religion played a significant part in the opposition against them, as much, perhaps, as they themselves had used religion to prevent or overcome such opposition.

#### 1.6.2 Emperor Go-Mizuno-O (1596–1611–1629–1680 CE) and His Successors

Whereas most Eurasian rulers have been given shorter or longer biographies, the majority of Japan's emperors have not, not even in Japanese. For a variety of reasons, Japanese and foreign scholars have felt that the role of the individual emperors, certainly after the thirteenth century, was unimportant: they still were sacred but otherwise were forced to remain *fainéants*.<sup>238</sup> Both the shogunal system, even before the rise of the Tokugawa, and the ways the imperial line was constructed within the imperial house seem to have precluded the emergence of strong men in the Goshō who might have tried to regain the power of their ancestors. Indeed, even the so-called Meiji restoration of the 1860s and 1870s was not orchestrated by the emperor himself, but by circles around him, mostly samurai and daimyo who were dissatisfied with the shogunal regime. Unable to counterbalance my sketches of individual Eurasian rulers with a single Japanese case, instead I analyse the actions of a small 'group' of successive emperors who all operated in the late seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries, at least seemingly pursuing the same policy.

By and large, the sixteenth century had been a period of civil war, in which the emperors did not play a significant role. Indeed, the imperial court was so impoverished that funds were lacking even for the traditional enthronement ceremonies. Nevertheless, Generalissimo Oda Nobunaga, who, at the end of the century, seemed successful in re-uniting the country, did ask the reigning emperor Go-Yōzei (1571–1586–1611–1617) to address the feuding parties; yet, he definitely wanted the imperial system to work for his own power, rather than the other way round.<sup>239</sup> His death and the ensuing succession war leave

<sup>237</sup> S. Naquin, *Shantung Rebellion: The Wang Lun Uprising of 1774* (New Haven, 1981) 100–101.

<sup>238</sup> B. Wakabayashi, 'In Name Only: Imperial Sovereignty in Early Modern Japan', *Journal of Japanese Studies* 17, no. 1 (1991) 25; cfr. also: Shillony, *Enigma of the Emperors*.

<sup>239</sup> Cfr. E. Lillehoj, *Art and Palace Politics in Early Modern Japan, 1580s–1680s* (Leiden, 2011).

unanswered the question what might have been the future role of the imperial house under Nobunaga's aegis. Order, in fact, was restored only with the establishment of Tokugawa-rule. As tradition dictated, Tokugawa Ieyasu was formally appointed shogun by the reigning emperor; however, he took up residence in Edo, the capital of his own heartland.

This first Tokugawa, too, wanted somehow to dominate the imperial institution.<sup>240</sup> There were, of course, various ways to do so. Marriages always cement relations, and, not surprisingly, the Tokugawa used the instrument quite often. However, they did not force the imperial family to accept their daughters as brides.<sup>241</sup> What (early modern) European 'monarchy watchers' certainly would have expected to become a custom, occurred only once, in 1620, when Emperor Go-Mizuno-o had to marry Tokugawa Masako, who became *chugo*, empress-consort. The importance attached by the Tokugawa to the union with the divine dynasty may be gleaned from the fact that the costs were said to equal the amount of rice necessary to feed 700,000 people for a year. Masako's massive dowry helped the imperial family to uphold its sacred and ritual status for a number of years, e.g. through the building of new or restoration of old temples.<sup>242</sup> Yet, whether it was distasteful to the imperial family, or for other reasons, this marital policy did not continue, though this specific couple seems to have been 'happy'. On the other hand, the Tokugawa did 'ask' the imperial family to wed imperial (grand-) daughters to the ruling shogun, to become the *midaidokoro*.<sup>243</sup> Nevertheless, as far as I have been able to ascertain, none of the six or seven princesses who came to Edo during the seventeenth and early eighteenth century gave birth to a son who then became the next Tokugawa. And though Meisho, the daughter born to Go-Mizuno-o and Masako Tokugawa, became empress in her own right, she did not marry and bear any sons or daughters herself.<sup>244</sup> In short, it seems to have been impossible, or, rather,

240 Cfr. H. Webb, *The Japanese Imperial Institution in the Tokugawa Period* (New York, 1968); H. Watanabe, *A History of Japanese Political Thought, 1600–1901* (Tokyo, 2012) esp. chs. 2 and 3.

241 Suggestions to the contrary are not substantiated by the empirical data.

242 E. Lillehoj, 'Tofukumon'in: Empress, Patron and Artist', *Woman's Art Journal*, 17, no. 1 (1996) 28–34.

243 The 4th shogun married an imperial princess, and so did the 7th, the 8th, the 9th, the 12th, and the 13th. The 6th married an imperial granddaughter. Cfr. C. Seigle, 'The Shogun's Consort: Konoe Hiroko and Tokugawa Ienobu', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59, no. 2 (1999) 485–522; cfr. also her: *Ooku. The Secret World of the Shogun's Women* (Amherst, 2014).

244 I have culled the data from the lists in: R. Ponsoyby-Fane, *The Imperial House of Japan* (Kyoto, 1959) 111 sqq.

unthinkable, that the holiness of the imperial line should be diluted by the infusion of other than, as tradition had it, Fujiwara blood. Nor, apparently, did the Tokugawa envisage a situation wherein the son of an imperial princess would rule the country as shogun. Despite the complex intermarriage system, a unified religious-military dynasty that combined authority with power—and could then have dispensed with the shogunal office altogether<sup>245</sup>—was not created until the second half of the nineteenth century.

While the two spheres remained apart, the Tokugawa definitely kept a tight watch over the emperor and his entourage. Already in 1615, a year after he had won supremacy in the battle of Sekigahara, Ieyasu proclaimed the *kuge sho-hatto*, a seventeen-article ruling of every detail pertaining to the functions of the emperor, the imperial household, and the court aristocracy, who continued to reside in Kyoto. It seems to me it sought to reduce the possibility of an active political role that Go-Yozei may have envisaged: it insisted on the preservation of or, when necessary, return to the ancient cultural-exemplary role of the court, to the exclusion of other instruments of power, such as granting honorific titles to the military aristocracy. Stressing the emperor's ritual, i.e. religious role, the *bakufu*, the shogunal government separated the imperial house from the political potential embodied in the daimyo class.<sup>246</sup>

The *sho-hatto* were not the only restrictions imposed by Edo on the Kyoto court. In another edict, issued twice, the shogunate took control over the head temples of the main Buddhist sects, establishing a hierarchical, centralized Church that, ultimately, was governed by the state. At the same time—and, given the widespread abuse of the clerical status, certainly defensible—the shogun wanted the Buddhist community to enforce a stricter adherence to the values deemed necessary for a really devout monk and, ultimately, abbot. Actually, many men successfully entered the clergy for its privileged position, 'bribing' the always penurious imperial court where, notably, honorific titles for senior clerics as well as the much-coveted 'purple robes' were bestowed. These also had high economic value: all kinds of Buddhist ritual essential to the people's religious well-being—most of them paid for—could be performed only by men thus distinguished.

The new rules, asking not only for a thorough examination of the candidates but, also, for a prior screening by the shogunate, impinged on imperial power, economically as well. Not surprisingly, infringements occurred that allowed the

<sup>245</sup> Such a policy would have replaced the Fujiwara as bride material with the Tokugawa.

<sup>246</sup> I am not entirely convinced by the somewhat contradictory and also naive content of: L. Butler, 'Tokugawa Ieyasu's Regulations for the Court: A Reappraisal', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54, no. 2 (1994) 509–551.

bakufu to even further strengthen its authority. In 1627, the Edo government decided to strip more than 150 men who had been given the purple of their new dignity. Inevitably, Go-Mizuno-o was greatly offended by what also constituted the loss of imperial prestige. His abdication—which was not in itself unusual since most emperors did so during their lifetime, often to secure an unproblematic succession—was seen as a sign of public protest. Inevitably, the situation now forced all those in search of a purple-robed existence—and one should not forget there were many thousands of Buddhist temples, and many hundreds of monasteries—to apply to the shogunal court at Edo, first, before continuing to Kyoto; there, court nobles, still acting as ‘brokers’, would await them before they were granted the imperial permit. In short, the bakufu did tighten its power over the highest echelons of the Buddhist Church, thus increasing its own authority as well. And though the practice of buying less exalted robes from the imperial court continued,<sup>247</sup> the hold of the imperial house over the Buddhist Church was negatively affected, and, inevitably, its financial situation was considerably weakened.

It is difficult to say what, at this time, were the emperors’ sentiments about the Tokugawa’s wish to divert national religious ritual from the imperial house to their own, deified ancestor, a policy that started in 1615 as well and, from a ‘doctrinal’ point of view, combined Buddhist and Shinto elements.<sup>248</sup> Nor is it easy to determine if this situation finally caused the emperors to embark on a process of ideological re-orientation during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>249</sup>

Despite his early abdication, Go-Mizuno-o reigned for many decades as ‘cloistered emperor’—behind the screens, so to say—, while first his daughter and then three of his sons succeeded each other as titular emperors. The

247 D. Williams, ‘The Purple Robe Incident and the Formation of the Early Modern Sōtō Zen Institution’, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 36, no. 1 (2009) 27–43; cfr. also: L. Butler, ‘Court and Bakufu in Early 17th-Century Japan’ (PhD dissertation, Princeton 1991) 201–206.

248 J. Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology: Discourse, Reform, and Insurrection in Late Tokugawa Japan, 1790–1864* (Berkeley, 1987) 8.

249 P. Nosco, ‘Kokugaku Critiques of Confucianism and Chinese Culture’, in: C. Huang and J. Tucker, eds., *Dao Companion to Japanese Confucian Philosophy* (Amsterdam, 2014) 233–256; P. Nosco, ‘Intellectual Change in Tokugawa Japan’, in: W. Tsutsui, ed., *A Companion to Japanese History* (Oxford, 2007) 101–116; P. Nosco, *Remembering Paradise. Nativism and Nostalgia in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990); F. Miyazaki, ‘The Formation of Emperor Worship in the New Religions’, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 17, no. 2 (1990) 281–314, as well as: H. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration: The Growth of Political Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley, 1970).

last of these, Reigen, who finally became emperor in his own right, apparently was self-willed and little inclined to cooperate with the bakufu. However, the next emperor, Higashiyama (1675–1687–1709–1710), was more pliant, which helped secure him funds from Edo to at least pay for the upkeep of important imperial buildings and thus regain some prestige. Far more interesting is that at his accession, and because the shogunate insisted,<sup>250</sup> the costly *Dajjosai*-ritual, which had not been celebrated for centuries, was revived. It was, significantly, a Shinto ritual, connecting the imperial house to Japan's pre-Buddhist past. It seems that the bakufu had come to recognize the importance of an albeit controlled and mainly ritual role for the emperor in their politics, shown by their willingness to provide the money for the restoration of the imperial mausoleums. Especially during the reign of Sakuramachi (1720–1735–1747) and the parallel shogunate of Tokugawa Yoshimune (1684–1716–1745–1751), relations improved markedly, with the revival of yet other ancient imperial rites again paid for by the shogun. Perhaps the fact that Yoshimune was no direct descendant of the first Tokugawa, as well as, on the other hand, an ambitious ruler, explains his willingness to include the imperial house in his policies.

By the end of the eighteenth century, a definite 'restoration mood' was apparent at the imperial court, especially during the reign of Kokaku (1780–1816–1840). I was intrigued by one of the *waku* he wrote—traditionally a poetic genre the emperor had to excel in. He described the country's three religions as follows:

(Shinto) The winds of heaven dispel the lowering clouds from the blue sky, and lo! The glorious moon shines with an undimmed lustre o'er the earth. (Confucianism) A truly glorious faith. But all its charm comes from our nation's garb wherein 'tis dressed. (Buddhism) A creed of emptiness, a lotus-plant in autumn-time, when flower and fruit are nought.<sup>251</sup>

It seems a clear expression of his idea that Japan needed to (re-)turn to its ancient traditions, obviously the ones thought to be embodied in the emperor. And indeed we do know that at the imperial court—as well as at the court of the learned daimyo of Mito—Japan's past was 'shinto-ized', though its so-called immemorial traditions were, in many ways, invented to serve contemporary politics.<sup>252</sup> While Confucianism and Buddhism might have their uses, they

250 The reigning shogun, Tsunayoshi Tokugawa, was married to an imperial princess.

251 I found the poems in: A. Lloyd, trans., 'Songs of Japan. Poems by Past Emperors', *The Open Court* 12, no. 4 (1911) 749.

252 Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology*.

were seen as less fundamental and, indeed, foreign—and, also, surreptitiously associated with the shogunal court at Edo rather than with the ‘pure’ court at Kyoto, which thus turned itself into the embodiment of old and new notions of Japan-ness—the new ones often presented as, precisely, dating back to time immemorial. In the nineteenth century, this policy, supported and elaborated by a group of nobles around the then emperor, came to fruition in the so-called Meiji restoration.

### 1.7 *Unique in Eurasia?*

Already in the ‘Middle Ages’, more specifically from the thirteenth century onwards, tales about a mythical, powerful ‘priest-king’ living far beyond Christendom’s eastern borders spread all over Europe. They seem to have been fed by all kinds of reports about rulers who in some way combined both religious and secular power, amongst them probably the kings of various Nestorian-Christian peoples in Central Asia, and may even have included rumours about the king-of-kings who ruled Abyssinia since the thirteenth century. These reports, mainly brought home by travellers who had visited the Near East, coagulated in the ‘Tale of Prester John’, that itself then branched out in many variants. Obviously, in Europe the priest-king was both a reality, in the person of the pope, and a concept of great antiquity, harking back to the high priests who, according to the Old Testament, once had led Israel. No wonder that any reference to a ruler who also performed sacred, priestly tasks—as understood in a Christian sense—would elicit comparisons. Thus when, in the sixteenth century, the first Christian missionaries encountered Lamaist Buddhism,<sup>253</sup> they could not but analyse it in terms of their own cultural context, the Church and the papacy.

If history teaches us one thing, it is that either everything is unique, or that few things occur that, somehow, do not have their parallel in other places or other times. Yet, certainly since the sixteenth century, the Papal States and Tibet make a good case for being two manifestations of a truly unique phenomenon that has shown remarkable longevity. Both were ruled by a monarch who was, also, its supreme religious leader. In both, the selection of the ruler was a process directed by the supernatural. During a conclave, the electors, the cardinals, supposedly were—and still are—guided by the ‘Holy Spirit’, though, of course, they simply engage in a power struggle and make their choice accordingly. After the death of a dalai lama, his incarnation is allegedly found by an inspired search party of high-placed monks who then will ‘recognize’ the candidate from

253 Cfr. a.o. T. Pomplun, *Jesuit on the Roof of the World: Ippolito Desideri’s Mission to Eighteenth-Century Tibet* (Oxford, 2010) esp. 4 sqq.

a number of sacred signs, though, of course, the candidate mostly is selected for entirely political reasons by those in power, or seeking it. One even might argue that precisely in this important field of state continuity and cohesion there is yet another phenomenon common to both cultures. In Tibet, from the seventeenth century onwards, the 'state oracle', albeit a physical medium, was one of the primary forces in guiding the selection of the next dalai lama<sup>254</sup>—as was the 'Holy Spirit' in Roman Catholic Christianity. Moreover, he also was consulted in all matters of state policy when the advice of the realm of the spirit(s) was deemed necessary, just as the Holy Spirit was invoked when pope and cardinals convened to discuss pressing matters of Church or, indeed secular politics.

In both polities, the clergy rather than civilians provided the bureaucratic backbone of the state, including its judiciary. Both states also relied on an economy in which the Church, in its monastic guise, possessed (by far) most of the landed wealth. Both states existed within a wider world that did not necessarily leave them their independence because of their pretence of being superior through the semi-divine status of their rulers. The ensuing friction resulted in interstate conflicts, in a way testing the power of the rulers involved. Last, but not least, these priest-kings also claimed headship over a Church—Buddhist, Catholic—that extended far beyond the frontiers of their state because it effectively used its soteriological message for a universal appeal. Yet, one may argue that in both states the situation resulted in a certain traditionalism, manifestly also in the economic field, with few stimuli towards 'modernization', leaving these two states perhaps more backward than ones wherein power was more widely competed and shared between various groups in society.

One also is struck by a number of outward, visual similarities. In both states, the capital was dominated by a palace-temple complex that, through the relics enshrined there, proclaimed the sanctity of its rulers through an 'apostolic succession', claiming descent from the first, holy founder of religion and state. Also, from the seventeenth century onwards, the dalai lamas were embalmed and interred in grand monuments in chapels beside the public part of the Potala Palace, where pilgrims would file past them—just as the Christian visitors of Rome would gawk at the sumptuous tombs erected in St. Peter's for the popes since the late sixteenth century. To put it another way, Lhasa and Rome seem to be the only (spiritual) capitals where the entire sequence of past

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254 H. Sidky, 'The State Oracle of Tibet, Spirit Possession and Shamanism', *Numen* 58 (2011) 71–99; cfr. also: 'Nechung: The State Oracle of Tibet', <http://www.dorjeshugden.com/all-articles/features/nechung-the-state-oracle-of-tibet/>.

(religious) leaders was shown in a manifestly public, ceremonial space, obviously to help strengthen cohesion by visualizing the power of the deceased, and, hence, of the incumbent and, even, of his future successors. Making death and burial into more than a state event, indeed, allowing it to evolve into a popular cult-on-location, the authorities of the Lamaist and the Roman Catholic Church certainly enhanced its use as a tool of concentrated, centralized imperial integrity—as did, though less obviously so, the rulers of Christian Europe. Neither Ming or Qing China, nor pre-Meiji Japan or the Islamic empires availed themselves of this opportunity.

## 1.8 *Priest-Kings*

### 1.8.1 Pope Sixtus v (1521–1580–1585)<sup>255</sup>

It is debatable whether the central institutions of the Chinese government constitute the world's oldest surviving bureaucracy, or whether one should so designate the papal Curia in Rome. Certainly, at least on paper, the two organizations hold sway over more than a billion people. But whereas Beijing rules in China, only, the papacy still hopes it commands the allegiance of Roman Catholic men and women all over the world. It is, truly, both an international and a supranational organization. Moreover, it claims, or at least used to do so, to lead the only true religion, and one whose basic values were universal since God, in His creation, had inculcated them in all men, whether they were aware of it or not. To convert the latter, it was the Church of Rome's most important mission to 'go and teach all peoples'.

From the Church's foundation in the Roman Empire, in the first century CE, the head of this organization was—or so Church history has it—chosen by and mostly also from amongst the religious leaders in Rome: he was their bishop as well as the leader of the 'Universal Church'. Actually, as indicated above, the Roman *pontifex* was able to claim supremacy over—the Latin-speaking

<sup>255</sup> This section is based on: M. Caravale, *Lo Stato pontificio da Martino v a Pio IX* (Turin, 1978) 75–415; I. De Feo, *Sisto v. Un grande papa tra Rinascimento e Barocco* (Milan, 1987); J. von Hübner, *Sixte Quint* (Paris, 1870); I. Gatti, *Sisto v papa "Piceno": Le testimonianze e i documenti autentici* (Ripatransone, 1990); C. Mandel, *Sixtus v and the Lateran Palace* (Rome, 1994); L. von Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste*, x (Freiburg, 1926); P. Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice. Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna* (Bologna, 1982); P. Rietbergen, 'Pausen, prelaten, bureaucraten. Aspecten van de geschiedenis van het pausschap en de pauselijke staat in de zeventiende eeuw' (PhD dissertation, Nijmegen, 1983); Idem, 'A Vision Come True'; Idem, 'Absolutisme en Stadsplanning in pauselijk Rome, ca. 1450–1650', *Spiegel Historiae* xix (1984) 288–293.

part of—Christendom only since the seventh and eighth centuries. Nor would the popes ever have been able to present themselves as the ‘supreme pontiff’, ‘Christ’s Vicar on Earth’, had the rulers of Francia not helped them to establish their religious authority. Meanwhile, largely through the combined efforts of zealous missionary priests and princes all over Europe, Christianity and, with it, papal supremacy finally was acknowledged from Norway to Portugal and from Ireland to Poland.

The Frankish kings also helped the popes to create a papal principality, the *Patrimonium Petri*, which always included Rome but, depending on the political circumstances on the Italian peninsula, large tracts of Central Italy as well. Precisely because, from the ninth century onwards, power over the states of Italy increasingly had been sought by princes from beyond the Alps—most notably the kings of France, of Spain, and the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire—the popes had declared that in order to effectively exercise their spiritual function, they needed the political independence which only a state of their own could give them. Thus, the pope became a monarch in the two senses of the word: both spiritual and temporal.

The situation was complicated since the papacy remained an elective monarchy and, moreover, since the popes, from the eleventh century onwards, often were chosen from amongst the leading (arch-) bishops of the entire Christian Church who bore the cardinal title. Consequently, most conclaves were heavily politicized: the major Christian princes all tried to have their own candidate elevated to the papacy, if only to be able to play a role on the economically and strategically crucial Italian peninsula.

After many vicissitudes, including wars of conquest waged on the popes’ behalf and, indeed, sometimes led by a pope himself, by the early sixteenth century the papal temporality extended from the region north of Naples to the lands south of Tuscany and Venice, straddling the peninsula. However, though by now firmly entrenched in their Papal States, also by the sixteenth century the papacy had to face the fact that it no longer was the supreme power in all Christendom: the Reformations in North-West- and parts of Central Europe greatly reduced the territories where people lived who still accepted Rome’s authority and paid its taxes! However, at the same time the Roman Catholic variant of Christianity had spread far beyond its European borders: in the wake of Portuguese and Spanish expansion politics in the East and West Indies, from the 1520s and 1530s onwards most inhabitants of Central and South America as well as the Philippines had been converted. Meanwhile, missionaries were sent by Rome to sub-Saharan Africa, to the Near and Middle East, to India, to China and to Japan. This was the situation that confronted the man who, in 1585, was elected as the 226th successor of St. Peter.

Born Felice Peretti in 1521, to a poor farming family, at the age of thirteen he became a novice in the Order of the Friars Minor, the Franciscans, and later took his vows. Given his exceptional intellect, he was allowed to study, finally gaining the doctorate in 1548. Meanwhile, he also had become famous as a preacher, pleading for the reform of the Church. His zeal made him many friends, amongst them Philip Neri and Ignatius of Loyola, the leaders of two newly founded reforming Orders, the Oratorians and the Jesuits, as well as some influential cardinals. However, his zeal also made him enemies, as became clear when, after being sent by the Curia to the Republic of Venice to suppress all kinds of, according to Rome, heterodox ideas, the Republic's government asked for his recall, being angered by his stern actions.

In the 1560s and 1570s, Peretti's career took flight. He was made a bishop in 1566 and, more importantly, a cardinal in 1570, which ensured that he would be both an elector of a new pope and a potential candidate himself. Though certainly not all cardinals strove after the papacy, Peretti did: he seems to have felt that the policy pursued by Pope Gregory XIII during whose reign he kept a low profile—studying and, perhaps, making plans—was disastrous, and therefore lobbied for his own election after Gregory's death in 1585. Without the usual acrimonious and long negotiations, he actually was chosen unanimously, in record time. His energy seems to have been unbounded: during the barely five years of his pontificate he reformed both the Papal States and the Church. Soon, he was admired as well as hated. The foreign ambassadors in Rome and his subjects, too, felt he was impulsive and obstinate, harsh and authoritarian even. That he also was vigorous and, even, visionary, fewer people were willing to concede—but posterity has vindicated him.

First, Sixtus decided to redress the lawless situation in Rome and the *Patrimonium Petri*, which, he felt, scandalized the entire Christian world and, moreover, fuelled the anti-papal propaganda still waged in many Protestant countries. The bands of brigands who roamed the countryside and often the city streets as well were persecuted and, when caught, ruthlessly punished. The rights of the feudal nobles who lorded it over the countryside from their strongholds were restricted severely. Almost logically, men wearing arms—which often were used in open combat—were imprisoned, and the custom itself—obviously dangerous for any monarch whose task it was to provide public safety—forbidden. On the other hand, Sixtus sought to remedy the poverty of the landless by engaging in the drainage of the Pontine marshes between Rome and the sea, a project that not only created new farming areas but brought in more revenue as well and, not unimportantly, reduced the diseases formerly caused by the malarial region, also in Rome. In Rome itself he did what each ruler knew to be his first task: ensure an abundant water

supply for the population's daily needs. Sixtus had an old Roman aqueduct restored—renaming it, significantly, *Aqua Felice*. The great fountain where the people living near the papal summer residence could fetch their water was adorned with a huge statue of, again significantly, Moses who, after all, had been the first leader of the faithful and, in their moment of greatest need, with God's help had struck water out of the rock. Sixtus also decided that the Jews, often harshly treated by their fellow men all over Europe, in Rome and the other papal cities should be given the protection he felt they deserved.

Obviously, any policy aimed at normative harmonization is a great instrument for creating societal cohesion and, hence, power. Sixtus decided that public morality should return to the Papal States. He ordered severe punishment—as well as, often, excommunication, which is, of course, punishment of another sort and felt by many to be the more damning—for incest, adultery, homosexuality, and for abortion. In the last case, his stance was particularly severe, certainly when compared with previous, more moderate Church teaching; at least one reason is provided by the proliferation of prostitution in the streets of the Eternal City in the late sixteenth century: more than a third of the population consisted of males who, as monks and priests, were forced to live a celibate life but, by and large, did not heed that condition.

Piety and severity dictated Sixtus's more strictly religious policy as well. He demanded a renewed adherence to the vow of chastity by the members of the religious Orders and the priesthood. Among lay people, too, he tried to incite a new sense of godliness. One of his most iconic measures was the reconstruction, opposite the Lateran Palace, of the so-called *Scala sancta*, purportedly the marble stairs from the Roman headquarters in Jerusalem believed to have been climbed by Jesus of Nazareth on his way to trial before Pontius Pilate and which pilgrims were, and are, allowed to ascend only on their bare knees. The grand frescoes now surrounding it were commissioned by Sixtus, who had himself depicted as Sylvester I—the fourth-century pope to whom Constantine allegedly had given power over the entire Church, and over Rome and its region. Perhaps the project replaced Sixtus's vision of a new crusade—which he planned and propagated but never realized because no Christian prince was prepared to follow him to the Holy Land. Other reasons apart, they surely knew that it would have increased papal prestige in Europe, which was the last thing they wanted, though it obviously was one of the pope's main motives. The *Scala sancta* project also may have replaced the equally grandiose, but equally unrealistic idea of transporting the entire Holy Sepulchre from Jerusalem to Rome. Though nothing came of it, it yet was worthy of a pope and, moreover, made sense, for it would have liberated the most sacred place of Christianity from the

power of Islam and, at the same time, have cemented the supreme position in Christendom of the popes themselves, as guardians of this holiest of holies.

Given the popes' dual position—as monarchs of the Papal States and as rulers of the Church worldwide—one of Sixtus's most innovative decisions was to reorganize the College of Cardinals. Since the eleventh century, the number of its members had been variable. Sixtus decided to fix it at seventy—at which it remained until the late twentieth century. More importantly, he decided that he would staff it with well-trained priests, experienced in Canon and Roman law, in diplomacy, and, preferably, in public finance who, instead of governing a bishopric, would be given the cardinalate to serve as senior administrators both for the Papal States—as provincial governors, et cetera—and for the Church at large. To make the system really efficient, the pope set up fifteen congregations, or ministries, each headed by a cardinal-prefect who was assisted by a board of senior advisors, often cardinals as well, and a host of lower bureaucrats. Being one of the first princes to create such a centralized and, indeed, centralizing bureaucracy, Sixtus greatly increased the integration both of his temporal empire, the 'Lands of St. Peter', and of his spiritual empire, the Holy Roman Church.

Last, but not least, this pope, whom one might almost see as an exemplar of the 'new monarchy' of the sixteenth century, decided to reorganize the finances of the Church—which, in a complex way, also were related to the revenue and expenditure of the Papal States. The huge debt left by Gregory XIII was reduced and, soon, totally repaid by adopting severe financial and fiscal measures. In the end, instead of saddling his state with an almost insurmountable deficit, Sixtus filled the papal coffers, kept in the Castel Sant'Angelo, with a treasure of gold that made him one of Europe's wealthiest monarchs. The downside of this policy was, of course, that hoarding such a great store of bullion was not conducive to economic growth. If only therefore, Sixtus's advice to use it only in times of real calamity was not heeded by his successors.

Though he favoured a strict financial policy, Sixtus spent enormous amounts on the aggrandizement of Rome. Despite a number of urbanistic interventions by the popes of the Renaissance, the town retained its basically medieval, haphazard structure. This Sixtus sought to change. First of all, in 1586 he ordered that the new basilica of St. Peter should be finished—its huge cupola, designed by Michelangelo, had long remained a shell, only. He also decided that the square in front of the new, and indeed gigantic main church of Christendom should be worthy of it. Consequently, his court architect re-organized the space, focusing it on an ancient Egyptian obelisk that for nearly a thousand years had lain buried in the sand of the Vatican hill. In a triumphantly successful technical operation, the twenty-five-meter-high stone needle was

excavated, transferred to its new position, and re-erected, to be crowned with a bronze cross. The entire idea was part of a much grander scheme. Sixtus and his advisers imposed a grid-pattern of new streets on the old town, creating a network that allowed, or, rather, forced pilgrims and other visitors to follow a processional route that brought them to the seven main basilicas, culminating, of course, in St. Peter's. Wherever possible, the pope ordered ancient obelisks to be re-erected in front of these churches, all of them topped with a cross. The first one visitors saw when entering the city coming from the north—as most did—was the obelisk on the Piazza del Popolo. It carried the message: 'Behold the Cross of the Lord—flee, old enemies: the lion of the tribe of Juda [= the Christ] has vanquished you.' Thus, Rome was constructed as a triumph over paganism, as a heavenly city on earth. In another way, too, the Pope wanted to impress the world with the idea that Christianity had, finally, triumphed: the great columns of the Roman emperors Diocletian and Trajan now were used as pedestals for huge statues of the two most important apostles, Peter and Paul. The fact that both the obelisks and the columns once had been used by secular rulers, whilst now they were, visually, subjugated to the religious power of the Church obviously was not accidental.

Both the Vatican and the Lateran palace, the first the seat of the pope as head of the Church, the second of the pope as bishop of Rome, were rebuilt or in a grandiose manner added to. Indeed, the Vatican became the biggest palace of Europe. Moreover, the pope ordered that the main public rooms of the Lateran, too, be decorated with huge frescoes that, in a variety of ways, all reflected his policies outlined above—and the wishes he never came to realize. They exalted the supremacy of the Roman pontiff, both in matters spiritual and, more strikingly, in matters temporal. In a series of episodes, the history of the popes is presented as a struggle that, rightly, resulted in their 'dual monarchy' in the Papal States, but, even more importantly, also as a struggle between the popes and the secular rulers of Christendom—first and foremost the emperors.

Interestingly, upon Sixtus's death in 1590, the Count of Olivares wrote to his master, Philip III of Spain, about Cardinal Bellarmine, a possible candidate for the papal throne. It clearly shows what the Roman Catholic monarchs did not like about a future pope and what, implicitly, they had not liked about the late Pope: 'Bellarmine ... will not do for a pope, for he is mindful only of the interests of the Church and is unresponsive to the reasons of princes ... He will scruple to accept gifts ... I suggest that we exert no action in his favour.' Given the Spanish opposition, almost inevitably Bellarmine did not become pope; he did become a saint, though. Meanwhile, the three popes who did succeed Sixtus all died within slightly more than year. When, in 1592, Clement VIII ascended the papal throne, he chose to continue the vigorous policies first undertaken by Sixtus.

### 1.8.2 Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617–1622–1682)<sup>256</sup>

The present-day plight of Tibet has blinded many—mostly Western—observers to the fact that, far from being a peaceful Buddhist community, for most of its history it has been a violent society not unlike pre-modern Europe, dominated, on the one hand, by landowning noble families ruling from their castellated strongholds—some of who might, temporarily, become kings of part of the vast Tibetan plateau—and, on the other, by monasteries great and small. The latter often were presided over by abbots believed to be reincarnations of the Buddha or of one of the many bodhisattvas. Though they were either elected or, else, ‘found’ by a search party who would travel around the country in search of likely candidates—mostly young boys—and then select the new abbot through a complex process of religious divination, they often stemmed from or were otherwise related to the regional aristocracy. But not only did the noble houses war amongst themselves, so did the monasteries. Indeed, Buddhism, far from being a unifying force, was disrupting Tibet, certainly up to the mid-seventeenth century.

Of course, Buddhism was not original to the country. It had come from India and soon split up into numerous branches that held opposing views of the

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256 This section is based on: Z. Amad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Rome, 1970); Z. Amad, *Life of the Fifth Dalai lama* (New Delhi, 1999); C. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* (Princeton, 1987); P. Bishop, ‘Reading the Potala’, in: T. Huber, ed., *Sacred Spaces and Powerful Places In Tibetan Culture* (Dharamsala, 1999) 367–388; A. Chayet, ‘Architectural Wonderland: An Empire of Fictions’, in: J. Millward, et al., eds., *New Qing Imperial History* (London, 2004) 33–52; I. Desideri, *Account of Tibet* (London, 1932) 205–206; S.G. Karmay, *Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The Gold Manuscript in the Fournier Collection* (London, 1988); S.G. Karmay, ‘The Fifth Dalai Lama and his Reunification of Tibet’, in: idem, *The Arrow and the Spindle. Studies in History, Myth, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet* (Kathmandu, 1998) 504–517; S.G. Karmay, *Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama* (London, 2014); Y. Ishihama, ‘On the Dissemination of the Belief in the Dalai Lama as a Manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara’, *Acta Asiatica* 64 (1993) 38–56; A. Kircher, *China Illustrata* (Amsterdam, 1667) 64; W. Rockhill, ‘The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa and their Relations with the Manchu Emperors of China, 1644–1908’, *T’oung Pao* 11 (1910) 1–104; K. Schaeffer, ‘The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso’, in: M. Brauen, ed., *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual history* (London, 2005) 65–91; G. Tuttle, ‘A Tibetan Buddhist Mission to the East: the Fifth Dalai Lama’s Journey to Beijing, 1652–1653’, in: B. Cuevas and K. Schaeffer, eds., *Power, Politics and the Reinvention of Tradition* (Leiden, 2006) 65–87; R. Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* (London, 1990); Z. Yamaguchi, ‘The Sovereign Power of the Fifth Dalai Lama’, *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 53 (1995) 1–28.

way to salvation. The resulting sects, or schools, each commanding a number of monasteries, vied for sole power, allying themselves with, but also being actively courted by, the landowning families who thus sought to strengthen their own position and, in a more complex way, to avoid civil unrest, for the monasteries functioned as redistributive organizations in the sense that part of the produce of their estates was daily meted out to the poor of the region.

However, historiography has not yet produced an integral story about the ways in which, during the seventeenth century, spiritual and temporal power came to be united in a system that was both unified and monarchic. The following is an effort to do so.

Two of the major Tibetan-Buddhist sects were the Gelugpa, who belonged to the Yellow Hat group, and the older Kagyu, who were part of the Red Hat group; the first were allied with the kings of U, the second with the rulers of Tsang. The Gelugpa had been founded as a reform Order, by men who felt that because of its prevailing laxity the moral life of monastic Buddhism left much to be desired. This probably explains the Gelugpa's popularity: in Christian Europe, too, reform Orders at least initially always gained great support both amongst the common people and amongst the elite.

After the Tsang kings had conquered central Tibet, the Gelugpa were not allowed to choose a reincarnation for their deceased head, the (fourth) dalai lama—maybe because, quite exceptionally, he had been a foreigner, a Mongolian to be precise and, indeed, a great-grandson of Altan Khan (1507–1583), which, of course, should not really surprise us, given the Mongol khans' traditional interest in Tibet, which had started with Kublai. Actually, it was during Altan's reign that the ties between Tibet and the Mongolian leaders were re-established and that most Mongolians became Buddhists, following the Gelugpa line and its dalai lama leaders.

In 1622, Künga Nyingpo, a young boy born in 1617 into a noble family who had opposed the power of the Tsang, was identified as the fifth Dalai Lama—interestingly by the advisor/teacher of the previous one. In view of Tibet's internal troubles, he could not assume power immediately. To complicate matters, he also had been a candidate for the reincarnation of a high Kagyu-priest—which, I suggest, perhaps indicates the efforts of the two sects to secure the support of a powerful family? However this may be, when he was ten years old Künga was installed at Drepung Monastery, assuming the name of Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso. In his secret autobiography—which, of course, was in manuscript, and has not even been edited or published in its entirety up to now—the fifth Dalai Lama openly admits that in his case the selection, normally through a candidate's recognition of 'sacred' objects that had belonged to his predecessor, had been a sham, orchestrated by the man who wanted him

to succeed as head of the Gelugpa. It is a revealing statement, which may serve to warn those who even nowadays believe in the spiritual purity of the system.

Commencing his studies—in Buddhist philosophy and related tantric practices, but also in astrology, medicine, and poetry—Lobsang Gyatso soon emerged as an intellectually gifted man. His moment of real power, however, only came in 1637, when Gushri Khan (1582–1655), leader of the tribe of the Koshut Mongols who were part of the Dzungarian federation, appeared in Tibet with a retinue of several hundred soldiers. Ostensibly he came on pilgrimage but, of course, wanted to extend his authority by incorporating the native land of Mongolian Buddhism into his sphere of influence. Meeting with him, the Dalai Lama, now twenty years old, accepted his ‘patronage’ and cleverly bestowed upon him the honorific title Dharma King—upholder of the Buddhist teachings—which even more increased Gushri’s stature amongst his own, Buddhist subjects. Indeed, it may well be that Gushri sought to revive the tradition established by Kublai and Phagpa, during the thirteenth century, of a king-priest alliance that would strengthen the power of both, but, mostly, would help him combat the Manchu who precisely at this time had started their conquest of China.

Obviously, the newly forged bond had to work for both sides. Thus, in 1639, Gushri acted on the young Dalai Lama’s wish—others feel that Lobsang Gyatso still was guided by older advisers—to move his troops to the region of Kham, in eastern Tibet, to subjugate a local ruler who did not recognize the power of the Gelugpa monasteries but instead advocated a return to Tibet’s native Bon religion. Since this region also sided with Mongol tribes who rivalled Gushri’s power in Mongolia, this move made sense from Gushri’s perspective as well. Subsequently, Gushri also subjugated the ruling Tsang king. When the Khan and the High Priest met again, in 1642, the latter was proclaimed both religious and political leader of Tibet—or so the fifth Dalai Lama wrote in his autobiography, many years later. In reality, Gushri claimed kingship in Tibet, and allowed the Dalai Lama only his role as supreme religious leader. To finalize at least his spiritual power, Lobsang Gyatso, once more aided by Mongol troops, advanced on the stronghold of the Kagyu sect, slaughtering many monks. Not surprisingly, various revolts followed these brutal campaigns. In the end the king of Tsang was killed, and the Kagyu monasteries were forced to ‘convert’ to the Gelugpa doctrine of Buddhism, accepting the dalai lama’s authority.

Soon, Lobsang Gyatso set out to aggrandize and centralize his power. Naming himself an emanation, or even incarnation of, the bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokitesjvara, or, in Tibetan, Chenrezi—considered the patron saint of Lamaist Buddhism—he moved his government to the old capital, Lhasa: a powerfully symbolic gesture for, in the seventh century, the famous founder of Tibet

as an independent kingdom, Songtsan Gampo, had ruled there. In 1645, the Dalai Lama started building a huge palace complex on the Red Hill, which towers over the city. That choice too, I feel, indicates a clear grasp of the power of symbols. For the hill was the site of the remains of a temple dedicated to the bodhisattva and also housed the cavern where Songtsan Gampo used to meditate. To create an even stronger link between kingship and the sacred, the Dalai Lama proclaimed the founder-king a reincarnation of Avalokitesvara as well. Thus, unwittingly, of course, Lobsang Gyatso replicated papal policy in Rome, where the popes had built their palace next to the tomb of St. Peter's to stress their apostolic succession. Interestingly, the construction of the palace itself is shown in great detail in a series of frescoes on the walls of the first gallery—as if to impress visitors with the magnitude of this enterprise and the power of the man who willed it. Interestingly, too, this mirrors Sixtus's policy, for he used frescoes to visualize his 'grand works' as well. In the North Chapel, the Dalai Lama himself is depicted on a throne—with, on the other wall, the Buddha Amitabha: not only of equal height, they also face each other as aureoled equals. Not incidentally, either, the palace dominates the square where Tibet's most venerated shrine, the Jokhang temple attracts pilgrims from all over the country as the Vatican on its hill dominates St. Peter's. Obviously aware of the power of public ritual, the Dalai Lama also revived the traditional celebration of the *mönlam*, the New Year Festival, at Lhasa. The gigantic banners that, embroidered with religious symbols, would then be hung on the palace's outer walls are still preserved there.

In the 1650s and 1660s, Lobsang Gyatso initiated a policy to eliminate all rivals of the prevailing Gelugpa teachings, banning the study of texts now condemned as heterodox and prohibiting their printing. Sixtus, too, had thus streamlined Catholic orthodoxy. The Dalai Lama re-interpreted the history of his predecessors as having been, also, reincarnations of Avalokitesvara. Moreover, he travelled the entire country to conduct rituals and give sermons, always presenting himself as the incarnation of the deity, bringing this message to sometimes huge audiences. Interestingly, however, he did not completely succumb to the pressure, which, apparently, the older Gelugpa leaders brought upon him. He continued to support the Red Hat sect of Nyingma, who favoured tantric rituals and the power of secret visions—but used that part of Buddhist culture for his own ends: he 'institutionalized' the role of the oracle that resided in Nechung monastery, making it the 'state oracle' of Tibet,<sup>257</sup> and, thus,

257 R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 'Das tibetische Staatsorakel', *Archiv für Völkerkunde* 3 (1948) 136–155.

ensuring that it would not predict anything that contravened the orthodoxy now established by the dalai lama. He himself enriched Tibetan Buddhism with two volumes of scripture that were the result of visions he had received and, therefore, were presented as divine revelations. Thus, he put his own seal on the development of his country's religion. Maybe this allowed him, in later years, to show some signs of reconciliation towards the Kagyu sect: in 1674 he welcomed the then Karmapa, the sect's reincarnated head, to Lhasa.

Meanwhile, by the 1650s, Gushri Khan's power over Tibet had waned somewhat. Consequently, the Dalai Lama was able to appropriate ever more secular functions. Since he changed and improved both the administration and the fiscal system, Tibet flourished—again as Pope Sixtus had done in his state. This policy attracted the attention of the Chinese emperor Shunzhi (1638–1650–1661), the first of the Qing family actually to rule the Heavenly Kingdom. Having, recently, taken the reins of government in his own hands, in 1651 he invited the Dalai Lama to come to Beijing—certainly also because the Manchu rulers realized that their power in Central Asia partly depended on the ways other Mongol tribes like the Dzungarians tried to use Tibet, and Buddhism, to their own ends.

Interpretations of what happened when, in 1653, Lobsang Gyatso arrived in the imperial capital even now play an important role in the discussions over the status of Tibet as, either, a long-time protectorate of China or, alternatively, as a state that has been sovereign since times immemorial.<sup>258</sup> Sources vary as to the modus of the Dalai Lama's reception. He himself writes that, on his request, the emperor left Beijing to greet him, thus accepting him on equal terms as ruler of an independent state. This scene, actually, is represented on the series of frescoes commemorating the entire visit in the great hall of the White Palace of the Potala complex—obviously as an important element in the intricate visual propaganda shown throughout the public parts of the dalai lama's residence. In Rome's Lateran Palace, too, Pope Sixtus had himself and his predecessors depicted as the equal of emperors and other princes. Other sources indicate that no such reception was organized but, rather, that the visitor from Tibet came to the imperial palace, as behoved someone who accepted Chinese suzerainty. Though a temple was built to honour the Dalai

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258 I have chosen not to go into the huge and, also, controversial literature on this topic. It seems to me that the sources for what happened in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries are too meagre and contradictory to allow for a historically reliable analysis. Moreover, many people, some scholars included, indulge in dangerous, anachronistic interpretations by reasoning backward from their twentieth- and twenty-first-century political and religious convictions.

Lama as a living Buddha, and though he was housed in a specially constructed palace, on actually meeting with Shunzhi, the ruler of Tibet did, in fact, accept a lower throne.

During subsequent years Lobsang Gyatso tried, at least in his correspondence with Beijing, constantly to impress upon China the notion that he, in fact, was king of Tibet—a status that the Manchus, given their fear of their Dzungarian opponents in Central Asia, perhaps were willing to tacitly accept, without in any way formally acknowledging these claims. Interestingly, the seal given by the Chinese emperor to the fifth dalai lama describes him only as ‘the lord of Buddhist teachings in the world.’

This, in a way, corresponds to the way the dalai lama was seen in the West. Though it is not clear whether the two Jesuits who travelled from Beijing to Agra in 1661 and passed through Lhasa actually met Lobsang Gyatso, in a published report of their journey an illustration was included that purportedly showed the dalai lama and described him as ‘the Eternal Father’. Soon, however, Westerners, both Catholic missionaries and, later, non-Catholic scholars, started—the first often approvingly and, even, admiringly—comparing the organization of (Tibetan) Buddhism with the Roman Catholic Church—with its monasteries and sects/religious Orders, its ceremonies and rituals—and equalled the office of dalai lama with that of the pope. In 1717, the Jesuit Ippolito Desideri came to Lhasa. His analysis of the land, its history, and its culture is detailed and fascinating. While, rather surreptitiously, he stressed the similarities between the life of the Buddha as told in Tibet and the life of Jesus of Nazareth, he wrote about the dalai lama: ‘He is worshipped and sacrifices are made to him not as an ordinary man, but as Cen-ree-zij ... incarnated and reincarnated for long centuries for their guidance and benefit. He rules not only over religious but over temporal matters, as he is really the absolute master of Tibet.’<sup>259</sup>

Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso who, posthumously, was named ‘The Great Fifth’, died in 1682. However, the man who had acted as his right hand, or regent, decided to conceal the fact. Using substitutes to perform the holy rites, receive visitors et cetera, he actually succeeded in doing so for about fifteen years. Arguably, this shows the distance that must have existed between the Dalai Lama and even his most intimate surroundings. During this time, the regent went on to consolidate the rule of the Gelugpa. When, in 1697, he finally announced the death of Tibet’s divine ruler, he had made sure that he himself had controlled the selection of the deceased’s reincarnation. Meanwhile, in

259 I. Desideri, *An Account of Tibet. The Travels of Ippolito Desideri (1712–1727)*, F. de Filippi, ed. (New Delhi, 1995) especially part three, *passim*; for the quote: 205–206.

the Potala's West Chapel a fifteen-meter-high golden stupa had been erected, studded with some 19,000 pearls and gems: the first in a series of eight tombs that contain the embalmed remains of the dalai lamas, meant to become a focus for pilgrimage and prayer and, of course, a symbol of the power of the man who happened to occupy the god-king's throne.

## 2 Similarities and Differences—Types and Singularities?

### 2.1 Introduction

Obviously, since genus comes before species, differences arise from similarities: differences are specific, similarities generic. In this section, I will generalize elements introduced in the first part, such as: religion and power, the specific relationship between soteriology and economic power, the use of ideological orthodoxy vs. heterodoxy, imperial expansion and religious mission, imperial sacrality, (in-)visibility in life and death, marital policies, et cetera. These perspectives—which, to be seen properly, sometimes will necessitate the repetition of information already given—definitely will help me to show that, actually, similarities did exist between what may at first sight seem instances of power in relation to religion that originated in and were confined to their own cultural system or *oikoumenè*. Looking for similarities and differences in the relationship between religion and power as a combined force creating imperial cohesion in the states of 'pre-modern' Eurasia, and trying to determine whether there are types or, rather, only singularities, I may be able to construct, if not a typology, at least a few cross-Eurasian types. At the same time I hope to indicate which cases truly can be termed unique.

However, one important caveat applies. Speaking of Europe, as I sometimes tend to do, and comparing it to other regions of Eurasia, one has to realize that there was no such thing as a geographically identifiable and politically unified Europe. It was an *oikoumenè* whose borders and frontiers were fluid.<sup>260</sup> It contained an empire, the Holy Roman one, which, however, certainly after 1648, was increasingly a non-empire. It also contained many other princely states, some of them tiny and mostly without any imperial characteristics, some of them fairly large and with obvious imperial pretensions. Also, the forms of Christianity practised in these states varied, and most polities had their own form of Church-State relationship, and, insofar as they remained within the

260 Cfr. Peter Rietbergen, *Europe: A Cultural History* (London, third revised edition, 2014) Introduction.

Catholic fold, their own relationship with Rome. In short, on many levels of analysis, 'Europe' differed greatly from the three huge Islamic empires I have chosen to present here, as well as from China and Japan. By and large the latter were unified, often strongly centralized states of huge territorial size. Against this background, I propose the following observations.

## 2.2 *Church and State, Priest and King*

Due to the preponderance they gave to religion, and the power of religious leaders, from the beginning people both in Christendom and in the House of Islam—and in Buddhist societies at a later stage—have shown disquiet over and even fear of the nature and functions of secular kingship as instruments of—almost naked—power. Yet, in the face of reality, they saw no alternative to it; indeed, they knew that it was essential to prevent society from lapsing into anarchy. Therefore, whenever a theocracy was impossible to realize, people accepted the fact of monarchy and its essential role in ordering human existence while trying, always, to infuse it with a, to them, higher morality.

Conversely, almost from the beginning, two of Eurasia's four major ideological systems, Christianity and Islam, showed characteristics that made them into perfect tools for the (added) enforcement of secular power, as well as for creating state cohesion: they were religions in which a supernatural, all-powerful god could legitimize a ruler, sacralize him. Though neither Buddhism nor Confucianism started as religions, at least Buddhism soon developed in that direction as well, enabling rulers thus to use it, too. Moreover, the clergy of these three systems managed to acquire legal and judicial qualifications, which made them the perfect candidates to fulfil the role of state bureaucrats. Confucianism, China's dominant socio-political ideology even during its last non-Han imperial dynasty, always had been the foundation of state power, and, also, had stimulated the education and ethos of a strong bureaucracy that helped to create the state's institutional and administrative cohesion.

Yet, the interaction between religious and secular power was complex. In China, the Son of Heaven, the real ruler, also functioned as the chief ritualist, thus combining, in a sense, power over the State as well as over its ideological-cosmological foundations. But whereas many Chinese were—also—Buddhists, yet the Buddhist Church never was able to rival the imperial institution in this respect. Nor, actually, did Buddhism in China have a hierarchy that could be easily dominated by the State—except for the Tibetan and Tibetan/Mongolian variants. This, however, did not mean the authorities in Beijing did not often try to clamp down on the economic and hence cultural power of, especially, the Buddhist monasteries. Still, Buddhism's higher ecclesiastical reaches often moved close to the higher echelons of the state, especially the imperial

family and the court, who for reasons both pious and political tended to extend their patronage to these monasteries.

In Japan the links were even closer: on the one hand, because, over time, a number of the—usually many—imperial sons and daughters became Buddhist monks and nuns, often to profit from the accumulated monastic wealth through gaining power over the country's many Buddhist monasteries and temples,<sup>261</sup> on the other, because, from the seventeenth century onwards, the Tokugawa shoguns actually succeeded in making Buddhism into a state organization.

At a time when Christians did not accept papal infallibility, yet, in the world of Islam at times the caliphal or, for that matter, the imamal, role of the secular ruler tended towards an almost infallible position in religious matters—which, of course, greatly enhanced the ruler's position vis-à-vis the mostly non-hierarchized *'ulama'*.

Finally, in Christian Europe, no one person ever exercised such a combination of secular and religious power on an imperial scale. Though the first Christian emperor, Constantine, seems to have wanted to assume the role of governor of the Church as well, later developments enabled the bishops of Rome to acquire—mostly uncontested—religious supremacy but never to gain comparable power in matters secular. Soon, their Church tended towards ecclesiastical hierarchization. Indeed, becoming a Church helped the clergy to take a firm, uniform stance against the State, if necessary. But seemingly paradoxically, this also worked the other way round: wherever a strong, centralized Church was established, governments would more easily dominate the institution, if necessary. Indeed, to help the State gain more power over the Church certainly was one of the main reasons behind the many Reform movements in sixteenth-century Europe.

In the long run, all over Eurasia the relationship between secular and religious power remained uneasy. The two organizations, Church and State, always sought to use, or, rather, manipulate one another to increase their own power over society. This process shows itself particularly well with regard to the basic requirement that people, since time immemorial, have made of either organization: providing them with food. A cyclical notion of life, death, and

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261 S. Weinstein, 'Aristocratic Buddhism', in: D. Sively and W. McCullough, eds., *The Cambridge History of Japan. Volume 2: Heian, Japan* (Cambridge, 1999) 449–516; G. Cogan, 'Serving the Emperor by Serving the Buddha. Imperial Buddhist Monks and Nuns as Abbots, Abbesses and Adoptees in Early Modern Japan', in: L. Wilson, ed., *Family and Buddhism* (Albany, 2013) 21–42.

rebirth/rejuvenation permeates the food rituals that characterize Christianity—the rebirth of the Christ in the consecration during Eucharist, and the following meal, the ‘communion’—as well the imperial ploughing ceremony in China and, even more obviously, the rice sacrifice during the imperial accession in Japan, and the subsequent banquet. Both the Eucharist and the Japanese ritual are an exchange of gifts: the god/goddess offers himself/herself through his/her body—bread, wine, rice, sake—which has been produced by the humans. Thus, they empower each other, through the medium of the priest/shaman.

### 2.3 *Becoming Sacred. Religion and Imperial Accession Rituals in Eurasia*

As indicated above, in Christian Europe any ruler seeking legitimacy—whether after a regular succession or after he had taken the throne by force—had to somehow secure the backing of the Church: the pope himself, or the country’s primate or the episcopacy. In the eyes of the public—elites and masses—this meant the would-be monarch had to be anointed by a representative of the Church. The Holy Roman Emperors originally had to travel to Rome or any other town—in Italy—agreed upon by the pope for this ceremony, and in later times yet had to leave Vienna for Frankfurt, where they would be anointed in St. Bartholomew’s cathedral by the archbishop-elect of Mainz. Many countries had a church specifically sanctioned by tradition as ‘the coronation church’, stressing the importance of the link between the origins of a state and its earliest, Christian foundations, the beginning of the relationship between kingship and religion: Westminster Abbey in London, built from 1042 onwards by England’s last Anglo-Saxon king, Edward the Confessor as his burial mausoleum, and also used, a year after his death, by the first Norman king, William the Conqueror for his coronation by the archbishop of Canterbury; Reims cathedral in France, where the first Christian king, Clovis, had been baptized—which later meant the kings of France had to leave Paris and travel to the east of their country. Meanwhile, in Sweden, a new monarch would journey to Uppsala to be crowned by the Lutheran archbishop-primate; the location was the cathedral that had been built to replace a church that itself had been raised on the site of a pagan temple in what was, then, Sweden’s capital, and used, later, to keep the remains of the country’s patron saint, King Erik. And notwithstanding the transfer of their capital to St. Petersburg, the Russian czars journeyed to their old capital, Moscow, to be blessed by the Church in the Kremlin’s cathedral and, then, to crown themselves there.

Thus, in Europe, the ‘coronation’ or, where this did not apply, the investiture or inauguration, always was heavily laden with religious ritual and symbolism. Also, it was a hugely public moment, witnessed by the royal family, the main

officers of state, the lords spiritual and temporal of the realm, and as many other politically important people as could be packed into the church, while outside thousands of commoners thronged the streets and, indeed, saw their new ruler when he showed himself on a balcony and, usually, in a procession.

The situation was different in most other parts of Eurasia. To start with, in the Islamic empires the imperial accession did not (necessarily) take place in a 'religious' building—the exception being, perhaps, that the Ottoman sultan girded himself with the sword of the Prophet in the mosque of Eyup and put on the turban of the Prophet Joseph in the Pavilion of the Holy Mantle—but, rather, in a palace, as in Safavid Iran. Nor, indeed, was it presided over by a 'priest'—though in Istanbul it was the *shaykh ul-Islam* who administered the oath to the sultan. In those states where 'self-coronation' or, as often was the case, a 'seating on the throne' was the major element of the ritual, the implication was clear: though members of the clergy would be present, there was no Church that successfully claimed to be the necessary—and only—intermediary between the ruler and the Divine. And though there might be a public procession—as in Istanbul—it had no religious overtones, either, as it had in Christendom where the new ruler went through town under a canopy, which always would remind the public of the religious icons that passed through the streets on far more numerous occasions.

As to the Sinosphere, in Japan, the emperor remained entirely invisible to the larger public. The accession ceremonies, in the imperial palace in Kyoto, involved a number of acts—such as the receiving of the three sacred jewels, one of which travelled from the shrine of Ise to the capital, and an actual enthronement; all of these were performed by the emperor himself with, perhaps a few Shinto-priests in attendance, only.<sup>262</sup> Indeed, the most sacred moment, the union of the *tenno* with the Sun Goddess, was conducted without any witness, unless one subscribes to the idea that the new emperor coupled with a court lady, as a 'sacred woman'. In China, however, the enthronement ritual did not entail elements we would denote as 'religious' at all.<sup>263</sup> It took place in the Forbidden City. The actual act of taking the throne and the imperial seal, in the Taihedian, the Hall of Supreme Harmony, was witnessed by a very small group, only, though thousands of 'privileged' men would stand in silence in the vast marble square outside.

262 F. Bock, 'The Great Feast of the Enthronement', *Monumenta Nipponica* 45, no. 1 (1990) 27–38. Cfr. Waida, 'Conceptions', 100 sqq., and Ellwood, *Feast of Kingship, passim*.

263 Ching, 'Son of Heaven', 22.

#### 2.4 *Soteriology, the Economy, and Imperial Power*

Amongst other things, the soteriological character of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism meant that believers were willing to endow the Churches institutionalized within these religions with worldly goods, which gave them huge economic power as well as added authority. Also, the resulting establishments—almshouses, soup kitchens, orphanages, hospitals, schools—were the only social institutions catering to the needs of the indigent part of the population. Comparing the economic policies of Buddhist monasteries in medieval China<sup>264</sup> and Japan with those followed by Christian monasteries in medieval Europe, the similarities are, indeed, striking: the tax-exempted position—which was one of the reasons people were donating land to monastic communities in the first place—was combined with the reclamation and exploitation of poor lands, the marketing of the produce, banking activities et cetera. And though *awqaf* and other institutionalized forms of distribution of wealth through religious channels were not monasteries in the Buddhist/Christian sense of the word—though one might characterize Sufi communities as such—the link between religious piety and large-scale charity hugely influenced the economy of Islamic societies as well.

Precisely the soteriology of these religions may have appealed to ‘imperial women’, which might seem to prove the notion that women generally are considered more religion-conscious, more ‘pious’, than men. It is certainly striking that all over Eurasia the female members of ruling houses engaged in patronage of religious institutions and establishments such as abbeys, convents, and temples but, also, charitable foundations and schools, often endowing them on a large scale which, if anything, ensured huge public visibility and, hence, connotations of royal power. We see it in the states of Roman Catholic Europe, but also in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, as well as in China and, though perhaps to a lesser degree, in Japan.<sup>265</sup>

264 Specifically as studied by: J. Gernet, *Les aspects économiques du bouddhisme dans la société chinoise du ve au xe siècle* (Saigon, 1956).

265 E.g.: C. Lawrence, ed., *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe. Patrons, Collectors and Connoisseurs* (University Park, 1992); L. Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders: The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan* (London, 2007); the various contributions to: D. Fairchild Ruggles, ed., *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies* (Albany, 2000); M. Weidner, ‘Imperial Engagements with Buddhist Art and Architecture’, in: M. Weidner, ed., *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu, 2001) 117–144, as well as: G. Cogan, *The Princess Nun: Bunchi, Buddhist Reform, and Gender in Early Edo Japan* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014).

Sooner or later the combined religious authority and socio-economic might of the Church caused rulers to try to re-possess the wealth, which, they piously argued, should not accrue to institutions whose members professed a sober, virtuous, and thus morally exemplary way of life. There were two ways of accomplishing this goal, designed to (re-) create imperial supremacy.

The one was to nominate members of the ruling family to those positions in the Church that actually controlled ecclesiastical wealth. In imperial Japan, this was done almost consistently from generation to generation. However, in such European states as Habsburg Austria and Spain, and Bourbon France, though the opportunity did exist and younger siblings sometimes did become (arch-) bishops and, even, cardinals, surprisingly this policy does not seem to have been as systematic as one might have thought. Nor did the Romanov dynasty, for example, consider appointing its siblings as patriarchs. Of course, the number of (male) children available for such functions might be limited in a given generation or, indeed, in a succession of dynastic generations—as was, precisely, the case with said Romanovs. Yet, at various times European monarchs, rather than establishing collateral branches of the dynasty, with the always present danger of creating succession problems, did decide to thus ‘emasculate’ their younger sons—certainly a more humane way of doing so than imprisoning imperial princes in the harem, blinding them, or practising outright fratricide as was long prevalent in the Ottoman world. Moreover, whenever younger sons were appointed prince-bishops, they also helped strengthen the grip of their royal relatives on the state’s Church. Yet, in the worlds of Islam, appointing imperial princes to the office of *sadr* was not customary, perhaps, as I suggested above, to avoid dangerous accumulation of religious and secular power.

As far as I know, no comparative study exists of the extent of the other instrument, the forced re-appropriations of Church property during Europe’s Protestant Reformations or of the ways in which these benefitted the increase of royal power. Nor has such a study been made of the obviously comparable policies pursued by the Roman Catholic princes of Spain in the late fifteenth and again in the late sixteenth century, and by the French kings though, as indicated above, perhaps even a third of the estates of the Gallican Church were eventually controlled by, though not in the possession of the State.

The question remains whether the other polities of Eurasia adopted similar measures to resume ownership of Church wealth to enlarge their means of economic-financial patronage and, thus, power. Though less-well studied than the European ‘reductions’, it does seem that the Ming emperors tried to regain the economic capacity of the lands belonging to Buddhist monasteries and so did Oda Nobunaga in Japan. Both in Safavid Iran and, better documented,

in Mughal India comparable developments actually did take place: Ismail and his successors re-distributed the wealth of the *awqaf* to better control these organizations and their role in the wider society. Akbar both reduced the power of his *sadr* to dole out state property and, on the other hand, confiscated what had been donated already during previous reigns. However, since most of the data come from Akbar's court historiographer Abu l-Fazl, and no administrative archives are preserved, it is, I feel, hard to determine the extent to which this policy was pursued. Significantly, though, his successors, while subscribing to greater Islamic piety, did not really reverse his policy.<sup>266</sup>

### 2.5 *Imperial Power between Ideological Idiosyncrasy and Religious Conformity*

Though I do not claim the following to be a universal pattern, it seems that ambitious rulers—from established dynasties but far more often from new ones—often were willing to use religion as a tool: to increase or gain power, and/or to introduce far-reaching reforms in their states. In China, oftentimes political and economic instability led to rebellions that, somehow, were ideologically or religiously motivated as well and, sometimes, resulted in a change of dynasty.

In late Roman Europe, Christianity was chosen for that very purpose by Constantine the Great when he adopted the Cross as his legions' emblem, and a century later Theodosius the Great used a similar form of religious symbolism to empower his troops against Eugenius. One might argue that the Crusading leaders did the same to unite a motley collection of knights and peasants into one slightly more effective army. In China and Japan, Buddhism fulfilled that role. In fourteenth-century China, the first Ming emperor used religious fervour to consolidate the unity of the warband he led in his campaign to conquer the throne.<sup>267</sup> Indeed, oftentimes it was, precisely, a group of religiously motivated warriors who, as Ibn Khaldun remarked, helped an aspiring dynast to gain—or, in the case of insurrection against his rule: keep—the throne.<sup>268</sup> In Iran at the turn of the sixteenth century, the first Safavid shah took advantage of heterodox religious ideas—again presented as a return to a pure, orthodox past—as well as of prevalent economic and social discontent to energize the military Order of the Qizilbash, establish his rule, and create his empire.

<sup>266</sup> Ibn Hasan, *The Central Structure*, 267–288.

<sup>267</sup> Dardess, 'The Transformation of Messianic Revolt'.

<sup>268</sup> See the case(s) presented in Gommans' contribution to this volume.

Though such ideology-driven warbands were not always the means to gain power, from the sixteenth century onwards Europe's 'new' monarchs—the Tudors and the Vasas, but also the Hohenzollerns, in Prussia—used existing religious discontent to establish themselves. They embraced varieties of Protestantism, presented theses as the 'new orthodoxy', and, finally, founded 'reformed', and, moreover, 'national' Churches, obviously to strengthen their hold over their subjects, starting with the powerful and wealthy clergy. In India, Akbar, confronted with unsettling cultural-religious heterogeneity and political adversaries, decided to arrogate a measure of religious power his predecessors had not dared claim; yet, to do so, he had to create his own religion. Last, but not least, in their various ways, both Pope Sixtus v and the fifth Dalai Lama reformed the Church they were leading and, in the process, (re-) built their states as well.

But wherever imperial power was established with an appeal to a more radical, idiosyncratic version of faith than provided by mainstream religion—not only in Safavid Iran and in Mughal India but also, e.g., in Ming China, in Henrician England, et cetera—, subsequent rulers usually tried to find a way back to religious traditions that could accommodate the largest number of their subjects, as well as prevent potential rivals from using heterodox ideologies themselves. To put it another way, sooner or later most rulers realized that allowing a powerful religious organization to nestle in the fabric of their state might endanger their position.

In China, the Tang emperors forcibly tried to reduce the influence of Buddhism, while in Heian Japan, Emperor Kammu did so, too, restricting the number of Buddhist temples in his capital to three. More importantly, rulers who succeeded an ancestor who had unleashed some sort of (new) religious-ideological potential to gain or increase his power, often came to realize they had to control it again; especially if the interpretation of religion newly introduced was seen as too heterodox by the political classes, they needed to change course and colours again. So did the first Ming-emperor. So did the later Safavids and Mughals. Whereas the former were Shia Muslims, the latter were Sunnis. What they had in common was their tendency to Sufism and its possibilities of (heterodox) religious fervour, which gave them a distinct view of their role, both in temporal and in spiritual affairs. However, the visionary, almost prophetic notions of supreme leadership upheld by Ismail I and Akbar that inextricably mixed millenarian religious and political elements into an unorthodox ideological brew do not seem to have been shared by their successors. At least publicly, they did not present themselves in such a way but, rather, reverted to a more traditional version of, in India, Sunnism, and, in Iran, of Shi'ism, albeit with definite Sunni accommodations. And in faraway

England, Elizabeth I, too, thought better of supporting heterodoxy: gladly accepting what advantages, economic and political, the reformist ecclesiastical policy endorsed by her father had brought the Crown, she soon moved back to a doctrinal middle of the road-position to avoid further alienating the majority of her subjects.

Yet, the picture is more complex. For many reasons, in Roman Catholic Christianity as well as in the worlds of Islam and Buddhism, doctrinal orthodoxy was an illusion. For example, precisely the existence of influential and powerful religious Orders nominally subordinate to but effectively acting and, often, thinking independently from the religious centre always threatened the power of the papacy and, in the other two worlds, that of the state-appointed religious authorities. At the same time, this situation enabled rulers or those aspiring to that position to choose from a variety of religious-political interpretations of, also, royal power. Thus, the popes sometimes did support Dominican orthodoxy to combat Jesuit notions. Akbar forged his ideas from a brand of Sufism later abhorred by Aurangzeb who, in his turn, used the stricter Naqshbandi forms to his own ends. In Japan, both the emperors and the shoguns engaged the various Buddhist sects for their political aims while, from the late eighteenth century onwards, the emperors participated in the re-invention of Shinto as a national religion.

## 2.6 *Missionary Fervour and Imperial Expansion*

Elaborating the points presented above, I would like to argue that institutionalized monotheistic religions tend to have a stronger urge to proselytize than polytheistic ones, though the latter do not entirely lack such drive. Obviously, the better, i.e. the more centrally, structured a monotheistic religion is, the more effective its missionary efforts will be. Since neither Buddhism nor Islam were thus organized, they never became strong missionary forces in their own right, nor could they be supported by and, indeed, used by the State to do so. Since, at least until the nineteenth century, the various Protestant Churches, deeply fragmented as they were, did not usually engage in institutional mission, either, on a global scale only Roman Catholicism developed a definite missionary identity, often seeking the assistance of, and allowing their ideologies to be used by, secular rule.

However, looking at the topic from a slightly different angle, we should realize that while there was no Buddhist Church nor an Islamic one, both religions did spawn religious Orders, or sects, that on their own initiative engaged in missionary activities. Individual Buddhist monasteries did send their monks to convert Korea and Japan, and wandering (Sufi) saints did travel far beyond their own worlds to spread Islam. Nor was the Church of Rome only

the papacy ruling over a centralized Church. Already from the sixth century onwards, a variety of Christian religious Orders transcended their world origin in southern, Romanized Europe, and, often operating beyond the control of the Curia proper, sent their missionaries first into the northern, Germanic, 'pagan' or, rather, polytheistic lands and, from the ninth and tenth centuries onwards, to the farthest reaches of Eurasia. Franciscan monks, urged partly by their own superiors, partly by the popes, set out to convert the worlds of the Mongols. Their aim also was to forge an alliance between the empire of the Church and the states of the khans of Central Asia, to combine forces against the world of Islam. In the end, although Tibetan Lamaism was influential outside Tibet proper, to wit amongst the Mongols and in China, the Church of Rome really became the world's only spiritual empire, if we define empire as a centrally led force whose power widely transcends its homeland.

Not only did the papacy undertake its own expansion, it also helped Europe's nascent polities to gain ideological and, hence, political cohesion. But has it been the only religious organization to do so? Maybe the question should be rephrased, and the perspective reversed as well as widened: did secular rulers choose 'Religion', a Church, in whatever form it presented itself in their state, for that role, including to expand their frontiers? Adopting this perspective of a state consciously using a religion to imperially enlarge its territory, one might argue that both the Yuan in the thirteenth and the Qing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries went a long way in their political use of the propagation of Buddhism in frontier Mongolia.

Yet, this form of State-Religion collaboration or, indeed, symbiosis seems to have been strongest in Christendom. Constantine chose Christianity hoping to stall the imminent decline of his empire, and Charlemagne allied himself with Rome to give cohesion to his Francia. Moreover, he also employed the Church to pacify his newly conquered territories, especially in the German lands. This pattern soon became set.

In Iberia, the *reconquista* of what they considered their frontier lands undertaken by the various kings of Castile against their Muslim neighbours was, to a large extent, faith- and, indeed, Church-driven. The *conquista* of Eastern Europe, which started in the ninth and tenth centuries as well, was the work of the Church or of its religious Orders, too. In the fifteenth century, the religious principality on Europe's eastern frontier long ruled by the Teutonic Knights was made into an independent, secular duchy by and for Albert of Prussia, the last grandmaster of that Order of knightly monks.

At approximately the same time, due to the Protestant reformations the power of the papacy all over Europe was greatly reduced. Wisely, it again allied itself with an empire, that of the Austrian-Habsburgs: the re-Catholicization

of Central and Eastern Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries benefitted both the Habsburg rulers and restored and even strengthened some of the power of the papacy.

Also from the late fifteenth century onwards, the Roman Curia supported the Portuguese and the Spanish conquests in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Consequently, these 'seaborne empires' became more coherent and, indeed, far easier to rule than they otherwise would have been. At the same time, the spiritual empire of the Church gained immeasurably from this policy: precisely because Rome claimed and played an integral role in the conquest of the non-European worlds, 'native' Christians from as far as Brazil, Mexico, Congo, India, and Japan came to Rome to honour the man they now considered their supreme pontiff.

### 2.7 *Marital and Non-Marital Policies and Their Consequences: Royal Women in the Mongol-Manchu-Chinese Empire, Japan, and 'the Rest'?*

Marriage choices that, sometimes, became patterns always have been an important indication of the view rulers hold of their family's unique position. They also, of course, are instruments to achieve either internal cohesion or external safety, or both. Last, but not least, the (public) ceremonies surrounding marriage can be used to mobilize the general public and, hence, impress it with princely power. Obviously, here the question is to what extent these factors showed the role and power of religion.

In China, after the first Qing emperors had cast their net more widely, Kangxi and his successors married within their own Manchu clan of the Aisin Gioro. When such unions did not produce the desired offspring, the imperial consorts were forced to adopt as their own sons by lesser women/concubines—who often stemmed from other Manchu 'tribes'. After the ruler's demise, the next emperor, in true Confucian spirit, would always have to publicly revere his 'step-mother' as the empress-dowager, the imperial matriarch. In Japan, the same 'rule' basically was followed: as their formal empress, the emperors married a daughter of one of the many lines of the—originally shogunal—Fujiwara family. If the marriage remained sterile, sons or, even, daughters by court ladies would be adopted by the *chugo* and succeed their imperial father as emperor or empress. Thus, the continuation of the 'mana' of the imperial line was guaranteed. In short, within the cultural-religious unified worlds of the Sinosphere marriages did not involve problems of public faith; since inter-state, inter-dynastic marriages were virtually non-existent, potential religious differences and the ensuing difficulties did not arise, either.

In the Christian and Islamic worlds, the situation was rather different. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Habsburg family, or rather the various Habsburg lines, of which the Austrian one always was associated with the imperial dignity, showed a marked tendency to inbreeding, resulting, it has been said, in the genetic problems inherent in such policy.<sup>269</sup> Yet, the 'Habsburg pattern' really was an exception. In Europe's other states, for domestic political reasons, the heirs of the throne only rarely married daughters of their own noble subjects, since this might endanger the ruling family's position; commoners were, of course, excluded as marriage material altogether, since they would contaminate the royal blood. Rather, for geopolitical reasons, members of royal and other princely families tended to intermarry across state borders, even though this policy, too, might in the long run create a sometimes high degree of consanguinity. The religious factor did complicate as well as limit their choices: after the Reformation, it was less usual for a Roman Catholic prince or princess to marry a Protestant.

Yet, simple power politics might override such considerations. Charles I of England, head of the Anglican Church, married Henrietta of France, a Roman Catholic. In the next generation, trade and colonial commerce dictated the marriage between the Protestant Charles II and the devout Roman Catholic Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza. In both cases, the women were allowed to profess their faith in their private chapels though their children were raised as Protestants.

In the German states, inter-confessional dynastic marriages occasionally occurred as well. Thus, while religion was an important, but not a predominant factor, considerations of power were paramount, even to the extent that 'unequal' unions were concluded as, e.g., when two 'sons of France' wedded two gold- and jewel-laden daughters of the rather upstart Florentine House of Medici: both the political role of the brides' family and their fabulous wealth made them desirable partners after all.

Though one might expect the power struggle between the Ottoman and the Safavid worlds to have resulted in politically motivated inter-dynastic marriages, e.g. to bring about peace between these often warring neighbours, as far as I know they did not happen. The Sunni-Shia rift may have been responsible for this situation. Nor do the Sunni sultans seem to have envisaged linking themselves with the formally Sunni emperors in Delhi though, given the

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269 F. Ceballos and G. Alvarez, 'Royal Dynasties as Human Inbreeding Laboratories: The Habsburgs', *Heredity* 111, no. 2 (2013) 114–121.

sometimes strained relations between the Safavids and the Mughals, this might have made political sense as well. Instead, in Istanbul, the imperial harem was filled with girls from within the Ottoman Empire itself, representing a variety of ethnic and, as indicated above, religious backgrounds; there seems to have been no distinct political and certainly no religious reasons behind their selection.

In Delhi, on the other hand, the first Mughals consciously sought to strengthen internal imperial cohesion by marrying ladies both from Hindu and Muslim princely families. However, Akbar's four successors all married Persian princesses as well—albeit not always daughters of the reigning shah-in-shah. Of course, the Mughals had lesser wives as well. Surprisingly, the Mughal court's policy does not seem to have been reciprocated in Isfahan: the Safavid shahs tended to marry girls from regionally powerful families—including, sometimes, of Christian-Georgian noble background. Arguably, this policy initially did serve to tie newly conquered territories to the old centre. However, over a few generations it also created new elites who, fighting for power with more established groups, destabilized the Safavid polity again.<sup>270</sup>

As to the visibility of imperial marriage, the situation in Europe markedly differed from what was practised elsewhere. To a large extent, the primarily religious ceremonies were public. Not, of course, as public as they have become since the nineteenth century, but yet the arrival of a, nearly always, foreign princess to wed the heir to the throne and, thus, the symbolic linking of two states—the most common form—were witnessed by a great many people in the streets, low and high—as seems to have been the case in the capitals of India's Hindu princes. However, though to a lesser degree, in Europe the liturgy that instituted the sacramental union was public, too, as throngs of people attended it in the capital's cathedral or the palace chapel.

Given the at least formal concepts of monogamy prescribed and of divorce forbidden by the Christian religion, such moments in the royal life cycle were relatively rare but not unique. The frequent death in childbirth of royal spouses often resulted in royal re-marriage, and thus in yet another major religious-dynastic feast.

In Europe, the ceremonies were the more festive too since, obviously, the future of the dynasty depended on the outcome. In China and Japan where, despite a harem system, the official function of empress-consort did exist, the public visibility of her union to the heir of the throne or, sometimes,

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270 Babaie, *Slaves of the Shah passim*.

the reigning emperor was very limited indeed. And since a woman in the Islamic harems became the (future) empress-mother, or *valide-sultan*, only after she had borne a son, her previous union with the reigning emperor was not celebrated, at least not publicly.

Last but not least we may ask what, if any, was the influence of the religious attitudes and preferences of royal wives? As indicated above, many of them engaged in the building of temples, mosques, and churches, and the founding and patronage of monasteries. Obviously, this helped to bind to the throne the many people engaged and employed in the upkeep and running of these institutions—individuals but, often, entire religious communities.<sup>271</sup> But did these women also influence their husband's policies—in the religious and, maybe, in the secular fields as well?

The question is difficult to answer. As far as I know, no systematic study has been made of this topic, not even within the confines of Eurasia's religious sub-worlds. Though I indicated my doubts as to the prominent role of the Ottoman *valide-sultans* in their husbands' and sons' military policies, their case does deserve further study. Two other, European cases, too, suggest the question is an important one. In Paris, in August 1572, queen-mother and regent, Catherine de' Medici definitely was one of the driving forces behind her son's decision to order the massacre, now known as 'the night of St. Bartholomew', of the men she deemed the Crown's most dangerous opponents, the leaders of the French Protestants.<sup>272</sup> It decisively altered the political situation in France for the next hundred years. A century later, Louis XIV revoked the edict of Nantes which, in 1585, at least had granted the Protestants a number of safe havens. It has long been argued that the King's second, secret wife—herself a convert from Protestantism and now a deeply devout Catholic—was partly responsible for the King's decision. Though that accusation is unproven, the Marquise de Maintenon certainly rejoiced in the conversions enforced by Louis's extremely harsh policy. She definitely was influential in yet another way, too. At St. Cyr, she founded a school for the daughters of the French nobility, to raise them as truly pious Roman Catholics, who in their turn would give birth to and educate a generation of truly pious noble sons and daughters.<sup>273</sup> Last, but not

271 E.g. recently: Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders*.

272 A. Jouanna, *La Saint-Barthélemy: les mystères d'un crime d'État, 24 août 1572* (Paris, 2007) offers a good survey of the continuing debates; she tries to exculpate Catherine, but not convincingly.

273 Actually, for over a century more than 3000 noble girls were educated there. Cfr. D. Picco, 'Les demoiselles de Saint-Cyr (1686–1793)' (PhD dissertation, University of Paris, 1999).

least, she also had an often decisive voice in the nomination of new bishops.<sup>274</sup> Thus, she arguably influenced the (religious) culture of the nation's elite in the early eighteenth century—though it is difficult to say to what extent—and, consequently, did contribute to France's cultural and political stability over the next decades.

As to the role(s) of non-married royal women in the exercise of power—whether of their male siblings or of themselves—we know, alas, precious little. I have already referred to the position of the 'saigu', Japan's imperial princesses who served as guardians of the imperial-national shrine at Ise. Nothing comparable ever existed in other parts of Eurasia, but one might point to sometimes royal and always royalty-related noble abbesses who ruled the great monasteries of Spain, or of the German states. Yet, it has to be admitted that in the end both in Europe and Japan a male priesthood did control the religious world.

In Islamic societies, too, unmarried females related to the ruling dynasty, while not taking on any religious function, still contributed to the position of religion in their societies through, e.g., financing the construction of mosques and other Islamic institutions which, obviously, served royal propagandistic aims as well.<sup>275</sup>

## 2.8 *Imperial (In-)Visibility in Eurasia: East vs. West?*

In modern scholarship, the topic of imperial (in-)visibility as an important element in the creation of power draws increasing attention, though mostly implicitly rather than explicitly. Moreover, researchers who do tackle the issues involved often seem to contradict one another. Moreover, most authors I have consulted fail to even marginally address what, surely, is a fundamental problem: how many people—and from which walks of socio-political life—did actually see the monarch, or other important members of the imperial house, and, also, on which occasions and how often did they do so: daily, weekly, annually, or, perhaps, almost never? Also, which elements in their material culture did they associate with the ruler? Surely, all these questions directly relate to the relationship between (in-)visibility and princely power. Given the unsatisfactory state of research, I, too, can address this important topic in general terms, only, concentrating, of course, on the role of religion in the manifold visualizations of power.

<sup>274</sup> J. Bergin, *Crown, Church, and Episcopate under Louis XIV* (New Haven, 2004).

<sup>275</sup> U. Bates, 'Women as Patrons of Architecture in Turkey', in: L. Beck and N. Keddie, eds., *Women in the Muslim World* (Harvard, 1978) 245–260.

Though we may and indeed must see government as a machine that powered a series of complex, interacting bureaucracies, it also was 'performed', as ritual. Obviously, the ruler's normal habitat was 'the palace'. If only in view of the high degree of interaction between secular rule and the religious world in most Eurasian states, arguably the 'imperial centre', irrespective of its actual location, functioned as a 'liturgical community'. A community is, in many ways, a cultural space. Undeniably, visibility is, also, a function of space, of space moreover in which the gaze is framed, both by the space itself and by the ceremonies in which all participants, ruler and ruled, engage: the gaze, indeed, is mutual, and thus enforces power relations. If we combine space with power, we are dealing with the power of space.

As to physical space, in Europe, the technical potential of the gothic arch and, later, of the Renaissance vault and the cupola allowed the creation of ceremonial spaces both religious and, later, secular on a scale not matched anywhere else in post-Roman and post-Sassanid Eurasia. For though cupolas were very popular in later Islamic architecture, and a few of the larger mosques of Cairo and Damascus as well as, of course, Sinan's Süleymaniye in Istanbul were actually huge, yet even in the Ottoman capital secular, princely public spaces were nothing compared to, e.g., the grand rooms of the Lateran and Vatican palaces, the Banqueting House in London, the many enormous galleries and halls of Fontainebleau, and, of course, Versailles' Gallery of Mirrors, et cetera. In the Islamic capitals, palaces, though the compounds might be large, mostly did not have big representational spaces, perhaps with the exception of the Isfahan complex;<sup>276</sup> though part of that is lost, we know it from seventeenth-century European descriptions such as those provided by, e.g., the Italian traveller Pietro della Valle. Nor did the palaces in Beijing and Kyoto or Edo have large gathering rooms except, perhaps, in the Forbidden City the Hall of Supreme Harmony, which measures 64 by 37 meters, compared with the 73 by 10 meters of the Mirror Gallery at Versailles. Indeed, it seems that most non-European Eurasian rulers simply did not seek to impress their court and its foreign visitors with grand interior space.

Does this indicate that these non-European monarchs wanted to limit their visibility? Does it mean the effectiveness of physical space as an instrument of power was not exploited? Yes, and no. To achieve leadership, degrees of separation and (visual) silence always are necessary as well. Some even may

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276 W. Kleiss, *Die Entwicklung von Palästen und palastartigen Wohnbauten in Iran* (Vienna, 1989).

feel that precisely invisibility creates power, too.<sup>277</sup> And, of course, one can frame the gaze also within the confines of a small space, or, conversely, use a sequence of open spaces, both within a palace compound and in its wider, urbanistic context, to direct and manipulate that gaze. All over Eurasia, people acknowledged that grand building projects were, in themselves, necessary to show a ruler's might. Already in the fourteenth century, that famous critic of his own, Islamic world, Ibn Khaldun, stated that 'the monuments of a given dynasty are proportionate to its original power'<sup>278</sup>—though, of course, one might also argue that the weaker the real power, the more pressing the need to make it look strong. Yet, one sixteenth-century Ottoman observer, addressing this issue, conspicuously omitted palace buildings when he cynically noted that:

to build masjids [i.e. mosques], madrasas [and other public buildings] in the ... seat of government ... are not pious deeds performed to acquire merit in god's sight. Every wise and intelligent man knows that these are pious deeds performed in order to accomplish being a leader and to make a good reputation.<sup>279</sup>

This acute observation forces us to analyse a ruler's second 'stage'. For besides the palace, the church—or, for that matter, the mosque, the temple—was, always, the site for, precisely, acts of public piety, acts that would enhance his status and stature in his people's eyes. This topic brings me to what I feel may be a problem in the study of the Christian worlds and the rest of Eurasia.

In Christian Europe, many important, urban churches, especially cathedrals, were built by the Church, viz, by the (leaders of the) local or regional community of believers. Canterbury, Paris, and Uppsala are notable examples. Some were commissioned by kings and other princes, but always in close cooperation with the Church. Vienna and Toledo are cases in point. To be sure, all these sanctuaries were used for royal ceremonies that needed a sacred context, but one must assume that even if—as often was the case—the images of founder-princes, sculpted or painted, adorned the exterior and interior alongside the representations of God and his saints, believers must have felt these sites to be, indeed, sites of the Church rather than of the State if only because of the everyday presence of clergy rather than royalty.

<sup>277</sup> K. Grint, 'The Sacred in Leadership: Separation, Sacrifice and Silence', *Organization Studies* 31, no. 1 (2010) 89–107.

<sup>278</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, I, 356.

<sup>279</sup> Quoted by: G. Necipoglu, 'The Suleymaniye Complex', 99.

Now, recent scholarship has made much of the (political) significance of mosque-building in the Islamic world, stressing that, precisely in the capitals as well as in cities that held major shrines, it was monarchical power and monarchical money that willed their construction,<sup>280</sup> and determined their political, propagandistic use and impact. Indeed, the first argument is obviously true, if only because given the lack of a powerful, centralized Church like the Roman Catholic one, and the vast economic resources it commanded, these mosques could not have been constructed without large-scale princely support. To be sure, for their daily rituals most people, both in Christendom and in Islam, would attend their neighbourhood or 'parish' church. They might visit a cathedral or a Friday Mosque only for special religious-political occasions. But even though the great mosques of Istanbul, Isfahan, and Delhi, as well as of, e.g., Mamluk Cairo,<sup>281</sup> were adorned with large-scaled 'royal' epigraphy, the texts definitely could not be read by the common man. And while, unlike the mosques of the Safavids and the Mughals, the Ottoman imperial temples were 'visibly' linked to their builders by the sultanic tombs in their grounds, these were unassuming chapels compared to the grand funeral monuments that stamped European cathedrals and abbeys as royal sanctuaries as well. In short, we must ask ourselves if contemporaries actually experienced the great mosques of Istanbul, Isfahan, and Delhi as 'imperial', as representations of royal power, rather than as, simply, a grandiose house of public prayer?

It is difficult to answer the above question with regard to the imperial temples of Beijing and the successive capitals of Japan, but we do know that the rituals performed there were, mostly, not witnessed by the majority of the people. Hence, their role in proclaiming royal power would have been limited.

Though the imperial palace and the imperial temple might be separate structures, every palace had at least one chapel, church, mosque, or sanctuary immediately attached to it. Indeed, with its more than thirty chapels and churches, the 'Sacred Palace' in Byzantium exceeded them all. In some cases, these chapels or churches also were the state's most important sacred spaces. On account of its major relics, the Parisian Sainte-Chapelle, part of the medieval royal palace, arguably was France's holiest place,<sup>282</sup> superseding both the

280 We are certainly looking forward to the (eventual?) publication of the 2013 Slade Lectures delivered by G. Necipoglu on the topic of: 'Architecture of Empire. The Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals in Comparative Perspective'.

281 See: W. Flinterman, 'The Cult of Qalāwūn: Waqf, Memoria, and Dynasty in the Early Mamluk Sultanate, ca. 1280–1340' (PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2017).

282 Cfr. Rietbergen, 'Sacralizing the Palace'.

capital's Cathedral of Notre-Dame and the royal funeral basilica at St. Denis. In Poland, the palace and St. Stanislaw's Cathedral sat side by side on Cracow's royal Wawel Hill, while in Bohemia the royal—and, in the times of Charles IV, imperial—palace and St. Vitus Cathedral crowned Prague's Hradcany Hill. Other parts of a palace might have a sacred function, too—the relic-filled rooms of the Topkapı Saray being a case in point.

However, since in Europe even these sanctuaries seem to have been far more public than elsewhere in Eurasia and, moreover, unlike in the Islamic world and in the Sinosphere, were decorated with often larger-than-life but very life-like, naturalistic representations of religious-political power, their impact must have been definitely bigger.

Last, but not least, since most palaces were situated in and, indeed, functioned as politically constituent elements of a (capital) city, urban space, too, often was inscribed with imperial connotations, many of which were closely linked to religion or, in a wider sense, the sacred as well: the 'mandala'-based layout of Beijing or, for that matter, imperial Kyoto,<sup>283</sup> shows this as much as the 'paradise'-concept that governed the construction of Isfahan,<sup>284</sup> the 'holy city', pilgrim-centred reconstruction of Renaissance and Baroque Rome, and the cosmological visions underlying the construction of the palace-cum-town that was Versailles.

Whatever the size of the audiences allowed entry to the theatre that was the palace—and the church—, I now propose to address what one may term the regimes of imperial (in)visibility in ceremony and ritual and their relationship to the religious world by concentrating on the various stages of the ruler's life cycle that, in many cultures, had religious connotations, and, consequently, had to be enacted in the theatre of religion.

Birth, especially the birth of a (male) heir was, of course, fundamental to dynastic continuity. In Byzantium, a special pavilion existed within the palace precinct, called the *porphyra* since its walls were clad in porphyry. There, the empress gave birth to her children who, hence, could be called *porphyrogenetos*, 'born in the purple', to denote they were the legitimate offspring of the emperor.<sup>285</sup> The term spread to Western Europe, but the custom of child-bearing in such a specific and, indeed, public place did not, though at least in

283 Fiévé, and Waley, *Japanese Capitals in Historical Perspective*.

284 H. Walcher, 'Between Paradise and Political Capital: The Semiotics of Safavid Isfahan', *Middle Eastern Natural Environments Journal* 103 (1997) 330–348.

285 Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad* (London, 2003) 196.

the palace of Fontainebleau—the favourite royal residence of the French kings before the construction of Versailles—an apartment seems to have been set aside for, precisely, this most fundamental function of the royal wife.

Immediately following birth, in Europe the christening ceremony was, of course, the major religious feast in a royal child's existence, usually enacted in the palace chapel. Given the fact that this ritual did not ensure survival during the first days, weeks, months, and, indeed, even the early years of a royal youngster, in the Islamic world—where baptism was not necessary for an after-life in heaven—a comparable ceremony took place at a much later and safer date; however, the circumcision ritual was restricted to boys, only, and does not seem to have taken place in a religiously-connoted space. However, the public festivities that, at least in Istanbul, were organized to celebrate this coming-of-age ceremony far outshone anything ever seen in Europe.<sup>286</sup> Actually, one such feast, staged in 1582 by Murad III over fifty consecutive days, definitely was meant to impress the entire known world: invitations were sent westward, to the rulers of Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, Poland, and Russia, as well as of the Papal States and Venice, while the Sultan also hoped to welcome dignitaries sent by the rulers of Morocco, Persia, Uzbekistan, and the Mughal Empire. From his own sphere of influence he expected envoys from Mecca, the Tatar khans, the king of Georgia, the *voivodes* of Moldavia, Transylvania, and Walachia and of the Republic of Ragusa. Usually, these festivities included the circumcision of sometimes as many as five thousand other boys, who were all gifted with gold, and the dispensing of huge amounts of food to the public.

As indicated above, royal marriages might be celebrated either in the palace chapel or in the capital's main church. But whereas at least in Europe this always involved a maximum of public exposure, it does not seem to have been the case in countries where a harem system prevailed and, moreover, the ruler did not formally select an empress though, of course, the harem system did not in itself exclude the appointment of an official consort, as shown by China and Japan. More importantly in this respect, in the Islamic world and in the Sinosphere, imperial marriages were not 'sanctioned' in a religious context.

Finally, given man's fear of death, a person's last moments, and the expectation of life in a world to come always have been surrounded by religious ritual. In the context of imperial power, the question is whether this ritual was used to enhance that power.

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286 E.g. D. Terzioglu, 'The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582: An Interpretation', *Muqarnas* 12 (1995) 84–100.

Indeed, precisely in death all over Europe imperial visibility continued, often even more contextualized religiously than during the ruler's lifetime, with the public lying-in-state of the deceased sovereign, sometimes with a life-like effigy to make his continued presence felt, with a solemn burial mass and with a huge, public procession before the final entombment.<sup>287</sup> Religious considerations aside—such as the notion that the entire community of believers should accompany a person on his last journey to, hopefully, salvation in God's eternal kingdom—the idea behind this ritual obviously was that the visual link between the deceased monarch and his successor symbolized the continuity of the ruler's power, publicly strengthening the complex bond between ruler and ruled one more time.

In some states even the royal graves, always situated in major religious buildings such as cathedrals or abbey churches, were a public sight. Since the eleventh century, Westminster Abbey served as the mausoleum of the monarchs of England while, until its destruction during the French Revolution, the French could go and see the huge royal necropolis of their kings at St. Denis. In Riddarholmskyrkan in Stockholm, and in Roskilde Cathedral in Denmark—surely one of Europe's lesser known but most evocative monuments to dynastic continuity—the churchgoers attended mass surrounded by the grandiose monuments erected to glorify their deceased rulers, while from the fifteenth century onwards the Portuguese saw the tombs of their monarchs in the new Hieronymite church in Belém, proudly supported by elephants, as visible proofs of an overseas empire.<sup>288</sup>

Admittedly, the royal dead were not always this visible, exceptions being, e.g., the new dynastic mausoleums constructed in the Escorial by Philip II of Habsburg Spain and the *Kapuzinergruft* in Vienna by the rulers of Habsburg

287 Cfr. the collection of contributions in: J. Chroscicki, M. Hengerer, and G. Sabatier, eds., *Les funéraires princières en Europe, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle: Le grand théâtre de la mort* (Versailles, 2012).

288 B. Johannsen, 'Ars moriendi more regio: Royal Death in Sixteenth-Century Denmark', *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 1, no. 1 (2014) 51–90; H. Johannsen, 'Dignity and Dynasty. On the History and Meaning of the Royal Funeral Monuments for Christian III, Frederik II and Christian IV in the Cathedral of Roskilde', in: H. Johannsen, et al., *Masters, Meanings and Models. Studies in the Art and Architecture of the Renaissance in Denmark* (Copenhagen, 2010) 117–149; A. Kruse, *Roskilde domkirke* (Roskilde, 2006); J. Le Gall, 'La nécropole dynastique des Bourbons à Saint-Denis ou l'impossible simple corps du roi', *Revue Historique* 637, no. 1 (2006) 61–80; P. Gómez, *La casa perpetua del rey de España o las tumbas reales de El Escorial* (Madrid, 1987); M. Hawlik-van de Water, *Die Kapuzinergruft: Begräbnisstätte der Habsburger in Wien* (Vienna, 1987).

Austria. In those places where the general public could contemplate their royal dead, it often saw them sculpted in a kneeling, praying attitude or otherwise devoutly expecting an eternally peaceful afterlife: certainly in death, the high and mighty were humble before Heaven.

In the (Sunni) Islamic world, imperial death, at least as far as I know, did not occasion grand public spectacles. Nor did central, dynastic, and monumental burial grounds exist—there were hadith that explicitly quoted Muhammad as saying that grand tombs smacked of self-divinization. Consequently, a number of Ottoman sultans chose to be interred near Constantinople's venerable Aya Sofya, now turned into the capital's main mosque. However, most sultans built their own mosque—usually multi-functional complexes also containing schools, libraries, a hospital, and a public kitchen—and often, though not always, were buried alongside it, as, e.g., Süleyman and his family in their very modest *türbe* in the garden of the Süleymaniye complex.

However, neither the Safavids—perhaps because of their imamic preferences—nor the Mughals, with their Timurid background, seem to have heeded the Prophet's precept. Though there exists a building recently described as 'the Safavid dynastic shrine',<sup>289</sup> this is somewhat misleading because the Ardabil complex houses the tomb of only the dynasty's reputed founder, Shaykh Safi, and of the first shah, Ismail; subsequent Safavids were buried elsewhere. While the complex was an important sanctuary, it never became the empire's main political-religious pilgrim site. Meanwhile, the mausoleum of the alleged founder of the imamic line, Imam Reza, at Mashhad, was reconstructed and aggrandized by the Safavids—specifically by 'Abbas I and 'Abbas II—along more orderly, symmetrical, or, one might say, 'imperial'-authoritarian lines.

As to the mausoleums of the Mughal emperors, beginning with Humayun's—constructed in the late 1560s and modelled on the *Gur-i Amir*, Timur's tomb in Samarkand and itself a prototype for the famous Taj Mahal complex—they, rather than mosques, were amongst the dynasty's most splendid buildings.<sup>290</sup> Interestingly, Humayun's tomb, designed by a Persian architect, is replete with cosmic, and, according to some, Sufi symbolism, visible in its basic lay-out as a multitude of octagonal chambers and its ambulatory. However, the three most important Mughal tombs, Humayun's, Akbar's, and Shah Jahan's,

289 K. Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine: Architecture, Religion and Power in Early Modern Iran* (London, 2011); cfr. S. Babaie, 'Building on the Past', in: J. Thompson and S. Canby, eds., *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran 1501–1576* (New York, 2003) 28–29 for the Timurid origins of the shrine.

290 G. Lowry, 'Humayun's Tomb: Form, Function and Meaning in Early Mughal Architecture', *Muqarnas* 4 (1987) 133–148.

set in grandiose gardens that, in their four-square design, had their own ideological significance,<sup>291</sup> were scattered around Agra/Delhi, and, with the exception of Humayun's, certainly did not constitute a conscious political-dynastic ensemble or an imperial necropolis, though, as in the case of Akbar's tomb at Sikandra, they may well have had (a multitude of) other symbolic meanings.<sup>292</sup> Nor do I know to what extent each of these was venerated by the common people.

In China and Japan, the ruler's death and burial were not public events at all. This does not mean that they were not used to cement and legitimize imperial power. Indeed, in China the architecture—as majestic and magnificent as anything built in Europe—and decoration of, e.g., the tombs of the Tang, Ming, and Qing were meant to convey such messages, but only to the privileged, i.e. the imperial family and the court, who would be allowed and, indeed, obliged to attend the ceremonies conducted there.<sup>293</sup> In Japan, on the other hand, after a period in which the huge mausoleums favoured by the Han emperors in China were emulated, even the imperial tombs became, mostly, small-scale, almost private affairs, probably under the influence of Buddhism. The imperial bodies were cremated, the ashes often preserved in some 'Lotus Meditation Hall';<sup>294</sup> and the spirit tablets in the Koreiden shrine within the imperial palace in Kyoto.<sup>295</sup>

In short, there was an obvious difference in the way death was exploited to show dynastic continuity by publicly presenting many generations of the ruling family in one, central location. In Europe, the popes and other princes often availed themselves of this concentrated form of propaganda, while in the other worlds of Eurasia, with the exception of Lhasa, this happened less, or not at all.

Given the complexity of the power sharing and the power struggle between the imperial house and the shogunal dynasties in Japan, the Nikko Toshogu, the mausoleum built in 1617 for Ieyasu, the first Tokugawa shogun, is a

291 E. Moynihan, *Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India* (London, 1982).

292 U.E. Zver, 'King, Sufi and Messiah' (PhD dissertation, Universität Wien, Vienna, 2013) gives a very useful but not conclusive survey.

293 E.g. T. Eckfeld, *Imperial Tombs in Tang China* (London, 2004).

294 Some twelve emperors following Go-Fukakusa were 'interred' together in such a hall in Fushimi, near Kyoto. The line starting with the 108th emperor, Go-Mizuno-o, up to the 121st was buried in the imperial enclosure of the Sennyu-ji temple, also near Kyoto.

295 E. Gilday, 'Bodies of Evidence: Imperial Funeral Rites and the Meiji Restoration', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27, no. 3–4 (2000) 273–296; in spite of what the title suggests, it is, mostly, about pre-Meiji rites. In 1888, a new Korei-den was built within the precinct of Tokyo's new imperial palace.

special case. A road, the Nikko Kaido, was constructed to link it to Edo, the shogunal capital, to enable the subsequent Tokugawa shoguns and their huge retinue of daimyo and samurai to make their annual pilgrimage to the shrine of their deified ancestor. Yet, the later Tokugawa themselves were not enshrined there. Nor am I certain that the rich pictorial and sculptural decoration of the complex succeeded in proclaiming a political message quite as obvious and 'readable' as, e.g., the one created in connection with European royal tombs.<sup>296</sup> Interestingly, all over Japan similar shrines to commemorate Ieyasu and foster sacrifice to his deified manifestation were erected, obviously to acquaint the entire country with Tokugawa power.

Between life and death, the ruler's daily routine evolved, often in religious contexts as well. In Roman Catholic Europe, morning mass was the first moment the entire court could actually see the prince, and, moreover, see him kneel before God. In Protestant states, this happened only on Sundays. Normally, the prince would not leave his palace for this ritual. In Istanbul, the weekly Friday Prayer was one of the few occasions the Ottoman sultan would enter their capital, travelling in an elaborate procession, through the streets to the main mosque. But scholars disagree whether this practice was continued after the reign of Süleyman. It seems that Mehmed I decreed that the sultan should appear in public only on the two major annual religious feasts and, if the occasion warranted it, in a great public cavalcade. Otherwise, he should remain hidden, observing, through a grill, whatever went on in the audience hall or dining room: he should see without being seen.<sup>297</sup> It seems debatable whether or not this practice carried any connotations of divine or sacred seclusion. Yet, even if the sultan went to the Friday Mosque, he showed himself, like his Christian colleagues, as the first amongst the believers, rather than as a unique representative of the Divine. For he would always remember the moment when, returning to the Topkapı Saray after his accession, he had first walked through the Gate of Felicity to hear a choir chanting the warning that from then on would be repeated whenever he left the palace: 'Don't be proud, my sultan, Allah is greater than thee.'

A specific form of (periodic) visibility manifested itself in the ruler's public dining where at least the court *largo sensu* would be present. Elsewhere I have

296 K. Gerhart, *The Eyes of Power: Art and Early Tokugawa Authority* (Honolulu, 1999).

297 G. Necipoglu, 'Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces', *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993) 304–306; she argues that the rules established by Mehmed remained in force until the late eighteenth century. Other authors suggest that it depended, simply, on the sultan who ruled.

argued that, in the Christian world, this may have originated in the ritual of the Eucharist. In the early seventeenth century, precisely the popes, the chief liturgists of Christendom, created a new form of representation: when they received important subjects or foreign envoys, they would dine with them, in public; but whereas the guest(s) remained reverentially standing, the pope would be seated, partaking of every dish first and then honouring their guest(s) with food and drink from their table. This custom then spread to other European courts. Of course, both the Eucharist and the ceremonies derived from it in themselves were manifest celebrations of a ruler's prime religious-secular function, viz. to 'create' food through his relationship with the Divine.<sup>298</sup> He was, so to say, both the provider and the upholder of his state's moral economy. Though less clearly linked to religious traditions, the Ottoman sultans, too, organized such banquets, e.g. the annual feast for the powerful Janissaries, when they symbolically received sustenance from their master's table. Thus, the sultan expressed his first obligation: by pleasing God, he had ensured food—at least for the elite military corps he relied upon to uphold his power. Here, too, it seems unclear whether the sultan always was present himself or let the grand vizier do the honours. In Beijing, the Chinese emperors did offer feasts to their most important guests as well—especially foreign representatives; while they would not usually preside over such banquets themselves, the food was understood to be the gift of the Son of Heaven.

Going beyond the imperial life cycle, the various forms of (in)visibility practised across Eurasia show interesting 'paradoxes'. In the Islamic and Christian worlds, the ruler, though he might claim divine right, did not sacrifice at all, indeed had no priestly function whatsoever—unless we count the annual, ritual washing of the feet on Maundy Thursday practised at the Bourbon and Habsburg courts, and in Anglican England, as well as, of course, the above-mentioned 'royal touch'; perhaps not surprisingly, precisely on these occasions the ruler left the privacy of his palace to appear in public. On the other hand, in China and Japan the emperor's major function clearly was that of chief sacrificer. Yet, the rituals he performed often were conducted in the presence of a—socio-politically—limited audience, only.

To broaden my argument: in Europe, from the thirteenth century onwards, rulers made a point of showing themselves to their subjects, first of all in

298 Cfr. P. Rietbergen, *Bij de paus aan tafel. Culinaire cultuur in Rome en Europa tijdens de renaissance en de barok* (Amersfoort, 2009) and Idem: 'Prince Eckembergh Comes to Dinner', in: P. Rietbergen, *Power and Religion in Baroque Rome: Barberini Cultural Policies* (Leiden, 2006) 189–193.

coronation ceremonies but, subsequently, in periodical triumphant entries/visits when they would traverse cities from the gates to the main church, the town hall, or the palace. In late sixteenth-century England, Queen Elizabeth decided that cohesion definitely would be served by her visibility outside the capital and consequently staged her famous 'royal progresses' in the provinces; we even know how she and her subjects interacted on such occasions.<sup>299</sup> Always when princes performed their *joyeuses entrées*, the entire town was a stage where, often in more than life-sized allegorical or historical imagery, the message of their power was visualized—or even acted out—, mostly in a religious-mythological or religious-political context.<sup>300</sup> For those who might not immediately understand these messages, there would be men along the route to explain the details.<sup>301</sup> Always, too, the person of the ruler was 'idolized', as the Divine was idolized in churches but, also, in public processions, through paintings and statues. In short, visibility—both of the Divine and of kingship somehow related to it—was deemed necessary to create a bond between ruler and ruled.

This seems to have been the case in the Islamic worlds as well. When the people-loving 'Abbas I ordered the lay-out of the new Isfahan *maydan*, he definitely wanted to create a stage for the meeting of both religious and secular power and the public: the piazza focuses on a mosque as well as on a palace. Moreover, he wanted it to be a *maydan e-naksh e-jehan*, 'a piazza that represented the world'. Reading contemporary descriptions, I became aware that precisely this example was followed by one of Europe's most powerful princes, the pontifex maximus in Rome. In the early seventeenth century, St. Peter's, Catholic Christendom's main church, finally neared completion. But it stood, together with the papal palace, somewhat awkwardly on a sandy slope in the middle of a densely built, rather unimpressive neighbourhood. This did not please the popes. They must have been even less pleased when they read the enthusiastic description given in the late 1620s by Pietro della Valle of the Isfahan square. He told his readers it was surrounded by 'finely designed symmetrical buildings uninterrupted by streets or anything else and with large porticoes ... superior to anything wheresoever in Christendom', and exalted it

299 See, e.g., R. Mulcaster, *The Passage of our Most Drad Sovereigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth Through the Citie of London to Westminster the Daye before Her Coronacion* (London, 1558).

300 For a detailed analysis of practices in ducal Burgundy see: K. Ragetli, 'Duchess Between Prince and People. A Thematic Approach to the Lives, Influence and Actions of the Duchesses of Burgundy (1430–1530)' (PhD dissertation).

301 Rietbergen, 'Prince Eckembergh Comes to Dinner', 182–185.

even above Rome's then major square, Piazza Navona.<sup>302</sup> Precisely from the late 1620s onwards, Pope Urban VIII, who made Della Valle a nobleman of the papal household, started planning Piazza San Pietro. Finally, in the 1650s it became what it still is: a stupendous open-air political theatre where, atop the colonnades, a host of stone-carved saints welcome the believers to this meeting place between heaven and earth, between religious power as represented in St. Peter's basilica and the 'sacred' Vatican palace, and the world at large. Its gigantic proportions ensured that the public's gaze was framed within this dual perspective as nowhere else in Eurasia.

Despite the opportunities for public display offered by Isfahan's *maydan*, after 'Abbas's death the Safavids—like the Ottomans—seem to have shown themselves with less frequency<sup>303</sup> and always with few references to the Divine, which, of course, in itself could not be visualized. Meanwhile, in Mughal India, and, specifically, in Delhi's 'Red Fort', the emperors introduced the ancient Hindu custom of the *jharokha-i darshan*, the daily 'auspicious viewing on the balcony', showing themselves from a palace window to the crowds assembled below, on the bank of the Yamuna—as did the popes in Rome. Usually, they would spend half an hour or more receiving petitions and requests. Indeed, wherever they went, they would continue this practice—until it was discontinued by Aurangzeb, who interestingly argued that it amounted to idol worship and, thus, was contrary to Islam. However, he may well have been motivated, too, by what surely was the other side of this custom: people could, and in his case indeed did use it to voice their protests as, e.g., when he re-introduced the Islamic religious taxation of his Hindu subjects.<sup>304</sup>

In Confucian China, where the essence of the Divine remained entirely unseen, the emperor never participated in any massively public ceremonies. When he left the Forbidden City, e.g. for one of the many annual ritual moments at the major altars and temples of Beijing, usually the streets were emptied. Nor could many people have seen the august person, for he travelled in a closed palanquin—whereas in Europe, if the ruler did not proceed on horseback, he yet would be visible in a partly open coach, to be gaped at, to be cheered, or—for that was the risk of such public visibility—to be jeered at. In Beijing, those who were privileged to be present at these sacrifices were supposed to prostrate themselves and avert their gaze. Nevertheless, occasionally people did see the emperor, at least Kangxi and, perhaps, also Qianlong: when they left Beijing

302 Pietro della Valle, *The Pilgrim*, G. Bull, ed. (London, 1989) 123.

303 S. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals* (Cambridge, 2010) 137.

304 A. Eraly, *The Mughal World* (London, 2007) 44.

on one of their 'inspection tours'—which, really, were shows of Qing military force—, or on actual campaign, or on the annual journey to Chengde. Yet the measure and impact of their visibility during these trips are hard to gauge.

In Japan, too, the imperial year was dictated by and indeed largely made up of prescribed ritual and ceremony,<sup>305</sup> but all this was performed within the precinct of the palace, with only the people who 'live above the clouds' witnessing. One of Japan's leading late-seventeenth-century intellectuals, Arai Hakuseki, argued that worshiping Heaven was the privilege of the emperor, only, and that the way of the Christians, acting as a community of worshippers, was wrong.<sup>306</sup> Public processions outside the palace were rare indeed. In 1626, one of the first Dutchmen ever to visit the country was, quite incidentally, present in Kyoto when Emperor Go-Mizuno-o left the Gosho to visit the ruling shogun, in Nijo Castle. Though the cortege was sumptuous, the divine person remained enshrined in his portable palace.<sup>307</sup> Moreover, not only was this the first time in decades that people at least saw some imperial splendour in the streets; it also was the last one before, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the 'restored' emperors adopted the Western regime of princely visibility. Meanwhile, since the 1630s and 1640s, the Tokugawa shoguns had used the Nikko Pilgrimage as an ideal opportunity to parade their own authority—enhanced through their descent from a deified ancestor—to the people along the routes, as, of course, they used the enforced pilgrimage to Edo by both the feudal lords of Japan and the foreign envoys from Korea and 'Oranda' to exhibit the truly imperial force of their power.<sup>308</sup>

Turning to material culture, other forms of (in-)visibility are interesting as well. In Europe, palaces were, in many ways, rather open structures. Though the really common people normally were not allowed to enter, many others could and did, and thus were able not only to see the prince, albeit from a distance, but, perhaps equally important, would experience the visual-narrative propaganda he used to impress his exalted position on his people through

305 A. Miller, 'Ritsuryo Japan: The State as Liturgical Community', *History of Religions* 11, no. 1 (1997) 98–124.

306 M. Anesaki, 'Confucian Refutations of Christianity in Japan in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Proceedings of the Imperial Academy* 6, no. 1 (1930) 1–3.

307 Rietbergen, *Japan verwoord*, 65–73.

308 On the Tokugawa's insistence on the continuation of the Dutch ambassadorial journey see: P. Rietbergen, 'Ten hove gegaan, ten hove ontvangen. Het shogunale hof in Edo en de VOC', in: E. Locher-Scholten and P. Rietbergen, eds., *Hof en handel. Aziatische vorsten en de VOC, 1620–1720* (Leiden, 2004) 277–303.

magnificent architecture, painting, and sculpture. Interestingly, however, from the sixteenth century onwards at least pictorially there seems to have been a tendency to move away from a religious-Christian contextualization of royals and of royal power towards more allegorical-mythological ones, especially in large-scale representations. Yet, in a culture wherein mythology and religion often were represented as each other's images, Louis XIV could dance as Apollo, the Sun—and, thus, as an *alter Christus*—, in the spectacular 'ballets' performed at court; more importantly for my argument, engravings of these forms of ephemeral visibility always were produced for a larger public. A few years later even the far less exuberant young prince of Orange, William III, would emulate his example in a *ballet de la paix* danced in one of his palaces at The Hague; this occasion, too, was represented in print to impress those who had not been privileged to watch it. However, by the early eighteenth century the use of mythology, too, by and large was abandoned,<sup>309</sup> leaving rulers and their families basically 'normal' mortals, though slightly larger than life. By the same token, their traditional religious contextualization was waning as well.

One should also ask what happened to the tradition of large- and even huge-scale princely statues so obviously cherished for their propagandistic potential by the rulers of pharaonic Egypt and the states of the ancient Near and Middle East as well as, of course, by the Roman emperors; indeed, a very visible and, assumedly, large one was erected to represent the first Christian emperor, Constantine, atop a huge porphyry column in his new capital; whether or not it represented him as Apollo, or as the Christ, whose iconography after all derived from the antique gods, is still debated. It seems that in the ages following the decline of the Roman Empire, the rulers of a politically divided Europe, all of them Christian now, did not choose to follow this custom, despite the political effect it might have had. Whether representing a mere and, moreover, still living mortal in such super-human dimensions was considered pagan or, at least, contravening the humility God's creatures should observe, I do not know. Fact is that nearly a thousand years later, besides the Renaissance popes, among the first rulers to again adopt this means of propaganda in the public space were the French kings Henry IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV. Whereas the former two chose the ancient Roman, equestrian-imperial mode that lacked an obvious religious connotation, the latter set himself upon a huge pedestal in the centre of the Place des Victoires in his coronation garb, which, of course, referred

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309 P. Burke, 'The Demise of Royal Mythologies', in: A. Ellenius, ed., *Iconography, Propaganda and Legitimation* (Oxford, 1998) 245–254.

to the God-given origin of his power. Nevertheless, few of his fellow princes followed him. However, as I indicated above, in death men, especially royal men, were publicly represented in sometimes larger than life-size statues. But those, rather than expressing the power and the glory of imperial rule, tended to express the humility that became them as they were awaiting redemption and salvation. But even that custom was far from universal.

Nowhere else in Eurasia were visual narratives used in quite the same way. I know of no large-scale and publicly presented ruler portraits or, even more visually powerful, statues. In China and Japan, the ruler simply was not part of this kind of 'two-sided', viewer-viewed and, moreover, personalized public representation. Admittedly, the Ming and Qing emperors had themselves portrayed, mostly on silk scrolls. Yet, these never were shown to larger audiences or, for that matter, reproduced in print, as had become customary in Europe. Especially from the Mongol Yuan dynasty onwards, these imperial representations were increasingly modelled on the formal, hieratic, frontal visage-type of Tibetan religious art;<sup>310</sup> actually, they seem to have been mostly shown in the seclusion of the imperial ancestral temples. Yet, the portraits did not present the ruler in a religious context. In the eighteenth century, more 'personal' portraits were painted, some, perhaps, under the influence of and indeed produced by European artists at court, such as Giuseppe Castiglione, a.k.a. Lang Shining; but these, too, were hung only in the most private of imperial chambers,<sup>311</sup> where, perhaps, only eunuchs and, maybe, a very few selected imperial advisers ever saw them.

Painted scrolls of another kind, such as the Nanxuntu, the twelve 'Pictures of the Southern Tour'—the second of six such inspection tours undertaken by Emperor Kangxi, in 1689—were both detailed and gigantic, but never intended to be publicly viewed, either; they depicted, amongst other moments of imperial glory, such scenes as, e.g., Kangxi's pilgrimage to pray to Heaven on Mount Tai. Other scrolls show Emperor Yongzheng offering at the altar of the god of agriculture and performing the annual tillage ritual. But all of these artefacts were seen by a small group, only—if at all. The same seems to hold for the paintings of imperial ceremonies produced by European artists at the Beijing court. Stored away in a special palace room, all of these visual representations of power primarily were kept as historical documents. It seems that only imperial

310 W. Fong, 'Imperial Portraiture in the Song, Yuan, and Ming Periods', *Ars Orientalis* 25 (1995) 47–60.

311 W. Hung, 'Emperor's Masquerade—'Costume Portraits' of Yongzheng and Qianlong', *Orientalis* 26, no. 7 (1995) 25–41.

calligraphy was used in or on public buildings or monuments,<sup>312</sup> but the impact on the larger, mostly illiterate public cannot but have been almost negligible. To conclude, there may have been more 'common' Europeans than Chinese who 'saw' such Chinese rulers as, e.g., Kangxi, since his life was the subject of a series of nine Beauvais tapestries made in the early eighteenth century,<sup>313</sup> of which at least a dozen sets were sold and, obviously, proudly exhibited in royal palaces and noble mansions.

In between these two extremes, in the Islamic world the issue of images was a complex one<sup>314</sup>—as it had been in the Byzantine Empire. Basically, the rule, or, rather, the prevailing practice, seems to have been that religious images, e.g. of the Prophet, were not allowed—though, indeed, they definitely did occur, certainly in Central Asia—whereas secular themes occasionally could be realistically represented. Generally speaking, however, only symbols were used to present the message of power, as in the calligraphy on public buildings like mosques and madrasas,<sup>315</sup> though this, as well as the sultanic 'monogram', or *tughra*, was not presented as the ruler's personal writing. Yet, even were such epigraphy understood by the larger public, it is to be doubted whether it would have had the same appeal as narrative, emotion-laden, and life-like representations involving either religious or secular persons would have had.<sup>316</sup> Perhaps the constant recitation of the Qur'an—especially in royal *awqaf*—as well as the Friday prayer, if combined with an invocation of the ruler's name, did make his presence if not visible at least audible. In the Sufi tradition of the Mevlevi Order, the faithful even were given a history lesson, for in

312 E.g. M. Kern, 'Announcements from the Mountains. The Stele Inscriptions of the first Qin Emperor', in: F. Mutschler, ed., *Conceiving the Empire. China and Rome Compared* (Oxford, 2008) 217–240, and also: J. Hay, 'The Kangxi Emperor's Brush-Traces: Calligraphy, Writing, and the Art of Imperial Authority', in: W. Hung and K. Tsiang, eds., *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005) 311–334.

313 E. Standen, 'The Story of the Emperor of China: A Beauvais Tapestry Series', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 11 (1976) 103–117.

314 M. Hodgson, 'Islam and Image', *History of Religion* 3 (1964) 220–260.

315 R. Ettinghausen, 'Arabic Epigraphy: Communication or Symbolic Affirmation?', in: D. Kouymjian, ed., *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History* (Beirut, 1974) 297–317; cfr. also: E. Dodd, 'The Image of the Word: Notes on the Religious Iconography of Islam', *Berytus* 18 (1969) 35–79.

316 I definitely do not agree with: O. Grabar, 'The Inscriptions of the Madrasah-Mausoleum of Qaytbay', in: *Near Eastern Numismatics*, 465–468, who argues that Qur'anic inscriptions were used in the manner of Biblical subjects in Christian iconography. Christian art—especially the *Biblia pauperum* and other genres—developed precisely because most Christians could not read. Moreover, they expressly did represent the Divine.

the prayer invocation almost the entire sequence of significant rulers since Muhammad was listed, ending with the reigning sultan's name. Obviously, the same occurred in Europe: from 1549 onwards, in England the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* prescribed prayers for the reigning monarch, particularly during the congregation's weekly communion service.

Insofar as Islamic rulers did allow themselves to be depicted at all—mostly the monarchs in the Indo-Persian world—this was in the very small-scale, hand-painted illustrations that accompanied the manuscript texts that, by their very nature, reached an extremely limited audience, only. There were, of course, the few, larger portraits painted by European artists of the early Ottoman sultans. They do not, however, show any religious element connoted with kingship. Indeed when, in 1619, Pietro della Valle saw the frescoes in the upper reception room of the 'Ali Qapu in Isfahan, the gate to the newly constructed Safavid palace, he saw men and women drinking, some even in European dress. Also, a few of the rooms seem to have been hung with figurative European oil paintings. This fashion apparently gained acceptance at the Safavid court, as shown when, in the 1640s, Shah 'Abbas II added a series of spectacular frescoes to his new 'forty column hall'. However, they mostly depict battles fought by previous Safavid rulers, such as those that reinforced their claim to the Chinggisid-Timurid inheritance through, e.g., the capture and possession of Kandahar. Only one episode seems to have an obvious religious background, viz. the mural representing the moment in Mughal-Safavid relations when Humayun gave in to Shah Tahmasp's wish that, to receive Persian support, he convert from Sunnism to Shi'ism.<sup>317</sup> However, references to 'supra-natural' intervention, as, e.g., in the war- and peace frescoes adorning the three central halls of Versailles, are definitely lacking. Nevertheless, in their scale and visibility as well as their content, these specific Isfahan sites seem the exceptions that prove the rule in the Islamic world.

Finally, in those parts of Mughal India where Hindu rather than Islamic traditions prevailed, e.g. such states as Udaipur and Bundi, at least inside the private quarters of their palaces the ruling family might present itself in mural paintings showing its members disguised as the gods and goddesses or the heroes and heroines of one of the myriad stories taken from ancient religious lore; but yet again, given the limitations of the audience, the political impact must have been limited.

317 S. Babaie, 'Shah Abbas II, the conquest of Qandahar, the Chihil Sulun and Its Wall Paintings', *Muqarnas* 11 (1994) 125–141. For Tahmasp and Humayun: J. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*. The New Cambridge History of India, 1,5 (Cambridge, 1993) 11.

To elaborate an argument already touched upon above, we need to realize that in Europe the introduction of printing and the engraved reproduction of drawings as well as, moreover, their almost immediate adoption by both the religious and the secular authorities allowed them to effectively present every aspect of their rule that they felt to be of propagandistic use. Thus, images that in the Islamicate worlds and in the Sinosphere were produced as (coloured) manuscript drawings or otherwise 'unique' paintings, and, hence, remained basically 'private' representations, in Europe became public property; mass-reproduced, they could affect potentially huge audiences, even reaching the illiterate, e.g. through cheap, single-sheet, loose-leaf pictures.

Not only were portraits of princes in all the splendour of their royal garb printed and distributed on a large scale, so were the sometimes huge plates that, in often meticulous albeit idealized detail, showed the 'great works' of, e.g., the Roman popes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>318</sup> and of Louis XIV at Versailles.<sup>319</sup> They also visualized various moments in a ruler's life: his birth and, indeed, his death,<sup>320</sup> but, also, his leadership in battle—only when the outcome had been victorious, of course—or the reception of foreign envoys.<sup>321</sup> Where but in Europe could people see their king kneeling down in prayer, as they might see said Louis, or touching the sick for scrofula, as Henry IV of France and Charles II of England were depicted? Indeed, even if the occasions thus publicized did not immediately link secular power to religion, 'the Church', in the persons of its leading representatives in their splendid attire, always would be manifestly present, as in the engravings showing royal entries, coronation ceremonies, and burial processions. Thus, the complexity of the religious-political order was impressed upon the viewers. Arguably, these often inexpensive prints definitely could influence the opinions of an—admittedly predominantly urban—public.<sup>322</sup>

318 E.g.: R.M. San Juan, *Rome: A City out of Print* (Minneapolis, 2001).

319 E.g. P. Fuhring, et al., eds., *A Kingdom of Images. French Prints in the Age of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles, 2015) esp. 1–44; 54–135; 206–231.

320 A. Bourke and R. Chartier, *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, 2014). For a specific case: L. Silver, *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (Princeton, 2008).

321 In the case of foreign envoys, Japan is an interesting exception, as shown by the representations of the, admittedly very few, Korean embassies: R. Toby, 'Carnival of the Aliens. Korean Embassies in Edo-Period Art and Popular Culture', *Monumenta Nipponica* 41, no. 4 (1986) 415–456.

322 E.g.: E. Lincoln and E. Peters, *The Festive City* (Rhode Island, 2012).

Interestingly, from the sixteenth century onwards, the ‘processional order’ of society that in Europe was continuously imprinted on the public eye became a format also adopted by the men who illustrated the travelogues that informed Europeans about the other Eurasian worlds. However, in doing so, they—inadvertently—created an often inaccurate or even wholly false vision of the cultures thus depicted.

In short, certainly up to the end of the nineteenth century there is no comparison between non-European visual propaganda, or gaze-framing, and the large-scale urban projects and architecture, paintings, frescoes, and statues that provided the suggestive decor of the (semi-)public places created and used for the display of power by European rulers, the more so since only in Europe did print culture create an even wider audience for the messages involved.

Analysing the impact of large-scale public representations of rule and power, one also should mention—last, but certainly not least—the propagandistic role of coins, which, after all, were daily under public scrutiny, and, moreover, linked princely power to its first *raison d’être*, creating economic prosperity.<sup>323</sup> In the ancient Near and Middle East, rulers always had shown their idealized, stereotyped visage on major coins, often using the obverse for allegorical references to kingship that, also often, were linked to religion. The Achaemenid emperors set the example. It was followed by the Macedonian rulers, by Alexander, by his Hellenistic successors, as well as by the Romans in the West and the Parthians and the Sassanids in the East. However, when the Muslim caliphs took over, this form of propaganda disappeared entirely. Admittedly, in Mughal India golden *mohurs* were minted with the likeness of Akbar and, after him, Jahangir with, on the obverse, the sun—an eminently obvious link between the prince and the cosmic order. But these ‘personalized’ coins seem to have been exceptional indeed. As far as I have been able to ascertain, subsequent Mughal emperors discontinued this practice—perhaps because they felt it did not sit well with their Muslim subjects? Nor did I find any Ottoman imperial coins showing a sultan or any Safavid ones representing the shah. Religious symbols are lacking as well. As to the Sinosphere, before the late nineteenth century, Chinese and Japanese coins were non-representational altogether.

In Europe, the culture of coins was rather different. In the sixteenth-century Papal States Pope Julius II had coins minted that showed him wearing the three-tiered crown with, on the obverse, Saints Peter and Andrew steering the

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323 I have based this analysis on a (selective but representative) scrutiny of the many Eurasian coins presented on the Internet.

Ship of State. Often, the representational part would be a saint, only—mostly, again, St. Peter. On the coins used in the many other ecclesiastical principalities of the Catholic world, such as the archbishoprics of Salzburg, Mainz, Trier, and Cologne, the relationship between ruler and religion always was firmly stressed as well; they would show the ruling (arch-) bishop as well as, often, Christ or Mary enthroned on the obverse.

In France, the *Louis d'Or*, the 'Golden Louis', first minted during the reign of Louis XIII but also used by Louis XIV, made the ruler's image as the lord bountiful of his subjects almost omnipresent; sometimes, on the obverse the 'world' of France would be represented as a cross, its arms adorned with the Bourbon armorial lilies. In Europe's other princely states, comparable practices prevailed, though, coins would usually show the ruler only; religious imagery was rare indeed.

As to commemorative medals—admittedly a costly medium that only reached the political-economic elite—the 1685 coronation medal of James II of England, for example, showed a hand from heaven bringing the country a new crown; almost inevitably, the 1689 coronation medal of the king who realized the Glorious Revolution, William III, represents him as a force from heaven annihilating the power of the fallen James.

Thus, while enlisting support through public visibility had been an important element in European kingship from the sixteenth century onwards, only by the early nineteenth century did Ottoman rulers begin to build European-style palaces, where they, too, engaged in a policy of greater albeit still ritual visibility<sup>324</sup> and also showed themselves depicted full-length, with the paraphernalia of kingship peculiar to their cultural context.

They were joined in the adoption of this genre of royal self-representation by the Qajar shahs, the monarchs who in Iran had succeeded the Safavids, and by the Rajput and other Indian princes, who now were largely independent of their former Mughal overlords. It is obvious that in the Ottoman Empire as well as in India, rulers emulated European custom, in Istanbul because, by now, the sultans sent their ambassadors to the courts of Europe and in the palaces of India's princely states by the increasingly forceful example of the local representatives of the East India Company.

In China and Japan, large-scale imperial portraiture was introduced at an even later age but, again, to follow what people thought were European precepts; however, even then the coins minted in the emperor's name did not show

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324 Necipoglu, 'Framing the Gaze'.

the imperial face. Yet again, as long as a strong print culture—coupled to, by that time, photographic reproduction—to distribute these images amongst a wider public was lacking, the impact of these new-fangled, ‘foreign’ modes of royal representation remained limited.

Interestingly, by that time all over Eurasia religious connotations had gone out of fashion or, to put it another way, become superfluous because other forms of imperial legitimation were being introduced.

### 2.9 *The Reciprocal Gaze? Observing the Imperial Other*

A question rarely asked and even more seldom answered is, of course, whether and, if so, to what extent rulers in Eurasia were interested in, and by who(m) they were informed about, their imperial colleagues, either in neighbouring states or in far-away kingdoms. In the context of this essay, the question also is whether they were aware of the religious or ideological foundations of the power of their equals, who might be their competitors as well. Given the dearth of research on these topics, my contributions will be indicative, only.

Obviously, since few heads of state ever met other rulers in person—the (mutual) ‘state visit’ is a nineteenth-century phenomenon that originated in Europe—diplomatic relations, in the widest sense of the word, and specifically ambassadorial reports were a prime vector for the exchange of information also on this topic, which, assumedly, did tickle the curiosity of even the most self-assured monarch. Yet, interestingly and, perhaps, even tellingly, the source material is decidedly one-sided: the men in charge of European governments, religious Orders, and trading companies did send their agents to the courts of Eurasia, but, with a few rare exceptions, these did not reciprocate: the two embassies from Japan to Portugal, Spain, and the Papal court, and of Safavid Iran to Europe in the 1580s, 1590s, and 1610s,<sup>325</sup> as well as the two embassies sent by King Narai of Siam to the court of Louis XIV in the 1680s among them; they all had their background both in trade and global politics and, at least in the first and third case, in religion.<sup>326</sup> Generally, however, insofar as ‘oriental’ rulers did want to know what went on in the world of the Christians they contented themselves with questioning the Europeans who visited their capitals. Only by

325 Cfr. R. Matthee, ‘Between Aloofness and Fascination: Safavid Views of the West’, *Iranian Studies* 31, no. 2 (1998) 219–246. Also his: ‘Safavid Iran through the Eyes of European Travelers’, *Harvard Library Bulletin* 23, no. 1–2 (2012) 10–24, and his: ‘The Imaginary Realm: Europe’s Enlightenment Image of Early Modern Iran’, *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30, no. 3 (2010) 449–462.

326 Cfr. M. Schenk, ‘Die Reise der siamesischen Botschafter an den Hof des Sonnenkönigs (1686–1687)’ (PhD dissertation, Zürich, 2013).

the early or, as in the case of China and Japan, the late nineteenth century did the non-European monarchs deign to establish permanent embassies at the courts of Europe.

In Europe, the in many ways systematic, not to say sometimes stereotyped and often detailed, reports about non-European polities produced by royal envoys and other informants in Constantinople, Isfahan, Delhi, Beijing, and Edo were avidly read by kings and their counsellors. Moreover, even nowadays historians gratefully use these documents. No in-depth study of the early Ottoman court, for example, is possible if one does not include the extensive *relazioni* of the Venetian representatives in the sultanic capital, nor would we know as much as we do about India's many rajahs and maharajahs without going through the often long letters written about their states, courts, and personal characteristics by the Portuguese and the Dutch in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>327</sup> Indeed, it has been argued that, for example regarding Safavid Iran, we would not have any information on a variety of topics now studied by historians without, precisely, the (admittedly biased) reports of European travellers—diplomats but, also, missionaries and traders.<sup>328</sup> Actually, one may argue that by the end of the eighteenth century in Europe the accumulated information about Eurasia's other worlds was remarkable both in its extent, which by far surpassed what the rest of Eurasia had chosen to know about Europe, and, also, in its depth.

Yet one has to admit that the general public—Europe's *respublica litteraria*—often was offered this rich information in much reduced form, viz. through the image that, from the sixteenth century onwards, became almost a 'model' of Eurasia's non-European rulers and actually was codified as such in the twentieth century by Max Weber and Karl Wittfogel: the 'eastern potentates' were seen as 'oriental despots',<sup>329</sup> men whose power over their people and, moreover, their possessions was judged to be almost unlimited. The concept of 'oriental despotism' has been much discussed over the past decades and now is generally discarded. Nevertheless, the notion originated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a result of an awareness of but, also, the actual growth of differences between, on the one hand, the various realities that

327 See, e.g., L. Bes, 'Imperial Servants on Local Thrones. Dynastic Politics in the Vijayanagara Successor States' (PhD dissertation).

328 R. Matthee, 'The Safavids under Western Eyes: Seventeenth-Century European Travelers in Iran', *Journal of Early Modern History* 13 (2009) 137–171.

329 D. Felice, ed., *Dispotismo: genesi e sviluppi di un concetto filosofico-politico* (Naples, 2001) vol. I; cfr. also: J.-P. Rubiés, 'Oriental Despotism and European Orientalism', *Journal of Early Modern History* 9 (2005) 109–180.

characterized most European states and those that structured the empires of the Near, Middle, and Far East.

The comparison especially must have struck European monarchs of that time, who increasingly had to reckon with the—often formalized—political influence of the so-called ‘estates’: the Church, the aristocracy/nobility, the towns, and, sometimes, even the agricultural countryside. Indeed, they could not but compare, sometimes enviously, their own position to that supposedly held by their colleagues in ‘the East’, men ruling empires of vast dimensions and inhabited by millions of amenable, not to say slavish subjects—an image going back to, even, Aristotle and other Greeks writing about the Persian and the pharaonic empires. The comparison must have made many a European monarch secretly long for such ‘absolute’ power though, or perhaps because, on the other hand, they felt themselves forced to publicly declare their abhorrence of such a situation—if it curtailed their own power. Had not, already in 1324, Marsilius of Padua argued against the ‘absolute’ power claimed by the papacy precisely because he felt it to be as tyrannical as that wielded by many ‘Asian’ rulers? Certainly the then king of France as well as the then Holy Roman emperor fervently seconded this view—also because they hoped it would give them, as the representatives of a secular state, power over the Church rather than the other way round.<sup>330</sup>

Actually, from the late fifteenth century onwards, such political thinkers as Michel le Vassor, in his *Soupirs de la France esclave qui aspire après la liberté* (1689), did liken the power of the French kings—especially as perfected by Louis XIV—to that of the ‘Grand Seigneur’, i.e. the Ottoman sultan, and the ‘Great Moghul’, in part because of the French monarchs’ hold over the Church.<sup>331</sup> On the other hand, Le Vassor tried to argue that the absolute power ascribed to the sultan was, in fact, not absolute at all but mitigated by, precisely, the clergy. Admittedly, he then contradicts himself by arguing that the sultan holds absolute power over his subjects, putting himself in God’s place.<sup>332</sup>

Yet, given the threat still presented by the sultans, Europeans ever more liked to study the example set by the man they considered a potential ally, the ‘Grand Sophy’, the ruler of the Safavid Empire.<sup>333</sup> Between 1701 and 1708,

330 C. Nederman, *Community and Consent: The Secular Political Theory of Marsiglio of Padua’s “Defensor Pacis”* (Lanham, 1995).

331 E.g. M. le Vassor, *Les soupirs de la France esclave* (Paris, 1689) 44; 45; 45 double (a printing mistake).

332 Le Vassor, *Les soupirs*, 50.

333 E.g.: S. Schuster-Walser, *Das Safawidische Persien im Spiegel europäischer Reiseberichte, 1502–1722* (Baden-Baden, 1970).

Johann Dinglinger, court jeweller to the elector of Saxony and king of Poland, August 'the Strong', a great admirer of everything 'oriental', produced—at a cost equalling the building of a fair-sized castle—a stupendous tableau of gold, silver, and precious stones representing, in over a hundred incredibly miniature figurines, the birthday weighing ceremony of the Emperor Aurangzeb, whom, by that time, Europeans saw as the epitome of 'oriental despotism' and, indeed, of the kind of universal world-rule August himself aspired after. Using the accompanying book outlining the foundations of Aurangzeb's rule, the Polish king could move around these figurines and thus imagine himself in the oriental emperor's place.<sup>334</sup> However, when I examined the tableau, I did not see any overt references to the role of religion at Aurangzeb's court. Actually, reading the seventeenth-century travelogues about India on which Dinglinger had based his 'manual', it seems obvious they did not stress the religious factor in Mughal imperial rule. Or did the learned goldsmith realize that as he was crafting his masterpiece—at the beginning of the eighteenth century—European rulers themselves were less interested in representing their power as God-given?<sup>335</sup>

Meanwhile, from the sixteenth century onwards, a number of European observers who had tried to penetrate the actual and ideological basis of 'oriental' rule had asked themselves to what extent religion was a necessary part of it. Thus, Niccolò Machiavelli argued that the near-absolute power of the Ottoman sultans partly stemmed from their caliphal authority.<sup>336</sup> A few decades later, Jean Bodin (1530–1596) called this form of government a 'monarchie seigneuriale', contrasting it with a 'monarchie royale', like the French one that, also, was called 'légitime'; for though 'absolute', it still was restricted by both divine and natural law. To Bodin, the 'monarchie seigneuriale' was the most ancient and, in general terms, primitive form of monarchy and one, moreover, that often had created polities of great longevity.<sup>337</sup>

The more perspicacious observers of Eurasia's polities, while 'embedded' in this general vision, presented more nuanced views, though these would

334 J. Menzhausen, *Am Hofe des Grossmoguls: Der Hofstaat zu Delhi am Geburtstage des Grossmoguls Aureng-zeb. Kabinetstück von Johann Melchior Dinglinger, Hofjuwelier* (Munich, 1965).

335 Alas, this question is not dealt with in: A. Flüchter, 'Weighing the Mughal', in: A. Flüchter and S. Richter, eds., *Structures on the Move: Technologies of Governance in Transcultural Encounter* (Heidelberg, 2012) 147–166.

336 N. Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, book IV.

337 J. Bodin, *Les six livres de la République* (Paris 1576) Book I, 6.

not always alter the popular notions held by Europe's educated classes until well into the nineteenth century. Jean Chardin, a 'simple' traveller and not a 'philosopher', perceptively analysed the situation in the late Safavid Empire. While, as I indicated above, he was fully aware of the importance of the shah's power over the religious establishment, he yet did not feel that 'despotism' was inherent in Islam; indeed, he felt most Iranians were rather tolerant of religious differences. However, for Charles de Montesquieu, easily Europe's most influential political analyst in the mid-eighteenth century, Islam was a, or perhaps even the, major ally of oriental monarchs since it divinely sanctioned a rule that, consequently, everybody had to accept.<sup>338</sup> Nicholas Boulanger's *Recherches sur l'origine du despotisme oriental* (1761) did not explain despotism by referring to climate and other natural conditions such as the vast plains of Asia, as Montesquieu and so many before him had done. Rather, he explicitly linked religion to power, arguing that some form of theocracy was the essential basis of despotism. Partly in consequence of the Jesuits' enthusiasm for the Chinese 'model', gained through their presence at the court of Beijing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, oriental despotism also acquired a more positive connotation: the 'religion' of Confucius was deemed to be one of the major stabilizing and also otherwise beneficial elements in the Celestial Empire and greatly admired by the so-called Physiocrat School of economic and political thought in France and elsewhere in Europe.<sup>339</sup>

By the end of the eighteenth century, these—to a large extent non-judgmental—observations changed. Two positions crystallized. The one held that since Christianity was the only true creed, and, moreover, one under which all people—the term and concept of 'humankind' was now introduced—had been created equal, other, i.e. pagan, religions were used by rulers as instruments of subjugation, as systems wherein people were kept in a state of ignorance and superstition and, hence, were easier to dominate and more willing to accept supposedly supernatural forces as the basis of imperial power. The other position was the one held by many Enlightenment thinkers, who had simply substituted 'reason' for 'faith' and then concluded that both in Europe and in other parts of Eurasia religion was a negative force since it prevented man from using his mental faculties to improve his position and his world.

338 Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des Loïs*, R. Derathé, ed. (Paris, 1973) book V, 14 and book VII, 29.

339 E.g. C. Théré, et al., eds., 'Fr. Quesnay, Despotisme de la Chine', in: Idem, *Oeuvres économiques complètes et autres textes* (Paris, 2005) vol. 2, 1005–1114.

Though many non-European rulers may not have had any profound knowledge of the power bases of their European colleagues—nor of the restrictions imposed thereon—, they still realized that, precisely, Christianity was a force to be reckoned with.

From the early seventeenth century onwards, the Japanese shoguns of the Tokugawa line did decide to forbid Roman Catholic missionaries from spreading their faith not only because they had allied themselves with the gun-bearing Portuguese traders and soldiers but also because they feared the disruptive force of this faith that had the potential to undermine Japan's social and political order. They definitely did not want any of their subjects to travel to the papal priest-king in Rome anymore as Japanese converts had done during the 1580s and, again, the 1610s, and most certainly did not want such converted daimyo as the powerful Date Masamune to address the pope as 'the Great, Universal, Most Holy Lord of The Entire World'.<sup>340</sup>

Nevertheless, after having eliminated the threat posed by Christianity in the 1620s and 1630s, some Tokugawa shoguns did show an interest in Europe, both from a cultural and from a political point of view; they would ask pertinent questions during the annual visit to Edo of the envoys of the Dutch East India Company. They also wanted to be informed about the power structure of Europe's monarchies.<sup>341</sup> Meanwhile, in Mughal India, Akbar had translations made of the Christian Gospels. Moreover, both he and his successor Shah Jahan for some time did adopt Christian imagery to emphasize their power in their visual representation, with the always creatively eclectic Akbar even showing himself as the equal of the Christ.<sup>342</sup>

While, both under the later Ming and the early Qing, Christianity was accepted in China, under the influence of the Jesuits at the imperial court, Emperor Qianlong reversed his ancestors' policy; he chose to severely restrict its influence partly because the eighteenth-century popes started tightening their reins over those missionary Orders whose willingness to adapt to Chinese or other non-European cultures they felt to be negatively impacting on Christianity as it was defined by Rome.

340 J. López-Vera, 'La Embajada Keicho (1613–1620)', *Asiadémica: revista universitaria de estudios sobre Asia Oriental* 2 (2013) 85–103.

341 Rietbergen, *Japan verwoord, passim*.

342 E.g. E. Koch, 'The Influence of the Jesuit Mission on Symbolic Representations of the Mughal Emperors', in: C. Troll, ed., *Islam in India* (New Delhi, 1982) 14–29.

### 2.10 *The Islamic Empires: Sultan/Shah/Emperor, Caliph/Imam, and Sadr/Shaykh Ul-Islam/Grand Mufti*

Whereas the origin, in the early sixteenth century, of the Safavid state in the link between power-seeking men and the Safaviyya Sufi Order is clear, one might feel that, though perhaps less obvious, such a link existed between the Mughals and the Naqshbandiyya Order as well. This Sufi Order spread from Kabul to India in the late sixteenth century and became very influential there: Aurangzeb even was a member. In the Ottoman Empire, too, Sufist Orders were a power to reckon with though, perhaps, not as closely related to the imperial court.

Given the combination of a common background in Turco-Persian-Islamic culture and the influence of Sufism, the subsequent conjunction of religious and secular power in, specifically, Safavid Iran and Mughal India, resulting in a caliphal or even imamic position of the ruling emperor or shah-in-shah, is not, perhaps, surprising—certainly less so than its absence in the third Islamic empire, that of the Ottomans. Indeed, disregarding the debate over the question whether or not the Ottoman sultans formally used the caliphal title and, if so, what extra authority it brought them, it seems clear that they did not forcefully assert the religious power their Umayyad and Abbasid predecessors sometimes had claimed, nor that which was wielded by their Shia and/or Sufi-inspired contemporaries in Iran and India. Pretending to be the revelation or, even, embodiment of God's word was not normally the Ottoman way.

The question remains how the rulers of the Islamicate world actually controlled the religious culture of their state. Alas, there is no comparative study of the office of *sadr*, and/or of (grand) mufti, both with the title *shaykh ul-Islam*, which existed in all three empires, nor, indeed, of the exact functioning and power of this institution in each of them as subordinate to or, rather, vis-à-vis imperial rule. Yet, it has been suggested that at least in the Ottoman Empire the power of the grand mufti increased over time. Not only did he, by the end of the sixteenth century, appoint most of the empire's judges, he also could decree a *fatwa* that legalized the wish of the faithful to depose a sultan if the latter did not follow the rules of the shari'a.<sup>343</sup> One thing is obvious, though. The man who held this office was not chosen by his 'peers', the members of the '*ulama*'. He was not, therefore, to be compared to the pope, though Western observers, specifically the anti-Popish Protestant ones, sometimes suggested as much. Nor

343 M. Greene, 'Goodbye to the Despot: Feldman on Islamic Law in the Ottoman Empire', *Law and Social Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2010) 219–241, discusses the various positions in this intricate field of State-shari'a relations.

was he an independent actor, who might voice God's word to each and sundry, the emperor included. Rather, from the sixteenth century onwards, he was a state official, honoured as long as he served his purpose, but deposed whenever and for whatever reasons the government in Istanbul or, for that matter, in Isfahan or Delhi might see fit. The interesting thing is, however, that nowhere in these Islamic empires did the rulers seem to have considered appointing members of their own family to this highest ecclesiastical office—perhaps, as I suggested above, because they wished to prevent the always dangerous combination of a dynastic claim to the throne and great religious prestige or, even, power?

### 2.11 *European Empires and the Mongol-Manchu-Chinese Empire: Pope and Emperor—Dalai Lama and Son of Heaven?*

The various Reformations of the sixteenth century constituted a watershed not only in the history of Europe in general, but also in the relationship between pope and emperor in particular. Between the sixth/seventh and early fifteenth centuries, there had been one Church, only, ruled by the pope—at least in the Latin West. This meant that the emperor, both within the multi-state Holy Roman Empire and in his dealings with other European princes, could and often did claim the unique papal-imperial bond as a sign of his special position. By the mid-sixteenth century, the situation was very different indeed. First of all, papal power was greatly diminished: a significant part of Christian Europe no longer acknowledged Rome's authority. Secondly, in the Holy Roman Empire itself, many of the sovereign rulers no longer were Roman Catholics, which, in subtle ways, altered their relationship with the Roman Catholic emperor who yet felt he was specifically called upon to maintain the empire's cohesion. Thirdly, in Europe at large, many princes now were Protestant as well. They not only used the Reformations to strengthen their own, intra-state power, but also branded their reforms as the new orthodoxy, and, consequently, as an ideological weapon in inter-state relations—in which the role of the emperor was increasingly reduced to that of one monarch among many. Indeed, in the great, Europe-wide struggle between the France of Louis XIV and its, or rather his, enemies, which lasted from 1672 until 1713, leadership of the coalition forces was taken not by the Holy Roman emperor but by the Protestant William of Orange.<sup>344</sup> He, however, was supported by the

344 P. Rietbergen, *Willem III (1650–1702). Stadhouder en koning in Europese context* (Amersfoort, 2015) 63 sqq.

two symbolic representatives of Roman Catholic Europe, Emperor Leopold I and, at least as rumour had it, Pope Innocent XI.

Obviously, a confirmed Confucian emperor never would feel the need for a high priest at his side. But China's two foreign dynasties were not of that strict mould. While revering Heaven, the Mongol Yuan rulers had embraced Tibetan Buddhism from the thirteenth century onwards, and had forged a relationship with the Buddhist popes, the dalai lamas. So did, two centuries later, the Manchu Qing emperors. Though there were few followers of, specifically, Tibetan Buddhism amongst the Han Chinese, many did respect Tibet's religious leader. By honouring him, the Qing definitely strengthened imperial authority, both within China proper and in Tibet. More importantly, to control the mainly Lamaist Buddhist tribes of Mongolia on their western frontier, the Manchu felt that a strong alliance with the dalai lamas was imperative as well. Yet, unlike the Holy Roman emperors, who were willing to leave the popes their sovereignty *in temporalibus*, the successors of the Qing emperor Shunzhi were not. They wanted totally to control Tibet, mainly because they felt they could not really trust the priest-kings in Lhasa—or, rather, their advisors, headed by the regent *pro tempore*. These men, in their turn, felt that the only way to escape increasing Chinese pressure was, precisely, to support anti-Manchu leaders amongst the Mongols. When, in the 1750s, Emperor Qianlong succeeded in finally subduing the Dzungarian federation, the dalai lamas lost their military arm and Tibet became, indeed, a state largely under Chinese suzerainty. The non-priestly power of the religious leaders in the Potala decreased accordingly.

## 2.12 *European Empires and Japan: Pope/Priest/King and/vs. Emperor—Emperor and/vs. Shogun?*

Hesitating to over-extend the potential of comparison, in this section I still find it interesting to note that while the pope was not divine, he was addressed as 'His Holiness'; the Holy Roman emperor, on the other hand, was not in any way referred to as such. At least in pre-Meiji Japan, the emperor was not personally divine, either, though the imperial institution might be so seen.

As to the states these men ruled, in the *Kojiki*, the creation of the islands that form Japan is, quite obviously, a divine act; indeed, one might infer that, therefore, the country itself is 'sacred' as well—as sacred as the Holy Roman Empire or, indeed, as also was the realm of the czars in Europe.<sup>345</sup> Obviously,

345 M. Cherniavsky, 'Holy Russia: A Study in the History of an Idea', *The American Historical Review* 63, no. 1 (1958) 617–637.

however, these notions of the sacrality of one's territory, one's fatherland, and of the collective of its inhabitants owed much to national or, even, nationalist ideologies that, though they really did originate in far earlier periods, became widely articulated only in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the concept of the sacred land, both in Europe and elsewhere, needs a more in-depth comparative study.

Also, it is debatable whether I am right in equating the pope, who was priest as well as king, with the—Shinto or Shinto-ized—emperor with his largely ritual, 'priestly' roles. And should one identify both of them with the shogun in Japan and the emperor in Europe, though from the sixteenth century onwards some European observers tended to do so? That is, Protestant European observers did so, for however scholarly detached, the Roman Catholic, mainly Jesuit, missionaries who knew most about Japan were unwilling to detract from the unique position of their own 'pontifex maximus' by comparing him to any other person on earth. As relatively 'objective' outsiders, the Protestants arguably were in a better position to analyse Japanese culture and society, or at least thought they were. They always referred to the shogun as emperor and to the emperor as pope, thus creating, in a sense, the basis for a comparison between what, to them, seemed a complex balance of powers, both in Japan and in Europe.

Since the fourth century—but certainly with the restoration of the imperial dignity in 800 CE—the Roman pontiffs always claimed they represented God's ultimate authority and power on earth, arguing that it was the Holy Roman Emperor's duty to serve them in enforcing that authority and power. Obviously, reality was more complex. In the Greek Christian world, the 'basileus', too, was very much his own man, governing with perhaps even greater independence from, or, rather, dominion over the patriarch than ever did the Western emperor over a pope. However, by the thirteenth century the Byzantine Empire was crumbling and the power of both leaders declining. In Western, Latin Christendom, the emperors, while needing the sacralization only the Church and, at least formally, the popes could give them, increasingly ruled very much in their own right. Of course, if they wanted to retain their legitimacy in the eyes of the people, it never was politically wise publicly to confront the Roman Curia. But at least they had some say in the election of the next successor of St. Peter: from the late fifteenth to the late eighteenth century, there always was a faction of cardinals in the 'Holy College' who followed the wishes of the emperor regarding who would be the next pontifex.

Consequently, in Europe, imperial dependency on the papacy slowly became a fiction, only: after the early sixteenth century, emperors no longer even

were crowned by the pope<sup>346</sup> and the role of the seven prince-electors became more prominent. On the other hand, over time, the Japanese imperial role was restricted to the sacral-ideological domain, only. Certainly from the fall of Osaka in 1615 onwards, the third *bakufu*, of the Tokugawa family, was the country's real power centre. While the shogunal position had been created on the battlefield—as had, actually, Roman-imperial rule—and formally could exist only with the ritual endorsement of the Son of Heaven—a construction reminiscent of medieval popes' attitudes vis-à-vis European emperors—the Tokugawa shoguns nevertheless became as independent from the *tenno* as the emperors from the pope. Indeed, as shown above, the last shogunal dynasty even decided upon the posthumous deification of their founder.<sup>347</sup> Admittedly, while this increased the legitimacy of the family, it did not make Ieyasu's successors in any way divine. Yet he did develop into a 'national' deity, the sole protector of the country—in several texts proclaiming his unique status, the reigning emperor was not even mentioned. To strengthen the first Tokugawa's posthumous status and, hence, the power of his descendants, he also was presented as of equal stature with Japan's own, oldest gods and, given the religious duality of most Japanese, the Buddha.<sup>348</sup> In short, the Tokugawa tried somehow to combine military and divine authority in their own family, rather than relying only on the emperor for their religious legitimacy.

In nineteenth-century Europe, the Habsburg emperor did try to continue to rule, though since Napoleon's conquests the Holy Roman Empire no longer existed. However, other, new emperors now vied with him for status and power: since 1870 the king-emperors of Prussia-and-Germany, since 1878 the king-emperors of Britain-and-India, and since 1936 even the king-emperors of Italy-and-Ethiopia.

Meanwhile, the pope-king reaffirmed his temporal rule over the Papal States but in the 1860s nevertheless lost his kingdom. Significantly, though, viewed from a global perspective his religious power waxed far greater than ever before, not only geographically. The millions of Roman Catholic faithful all over the world now were admonished always to think of their allegiance to Rome, first, despite the fact that they were citizens of a distinct, 'national' state as well.

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346 The question remains if any (arch-) bishop would have dared crown an emperor without at least tacit papal consent.

347 W. Boot, 'The Death of a Shogun: Deification in Early Modern Japan', in: Breen and Teeuwen, eds., *Shinto in History*, 144–166.

348 Boot, 'The Religious Background of the Deification of Tokugawa Ieyasu', 331–338; cfr. also Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology*, 177.

In short, it is precisely in the nineteenth century that the Roman Catholic Church really became a 'spiritual empire', maintaining cohesion through a very effective, centralized but global bureaucracy and an increasingly articulate veneration of the pope and his (infallible) authority.

In Japan, by the 1860s and 1870s, the shogun-emperor dichotomy finally was abandoned. At least formally, the emperor became the country's sole ruler again. Moreover, far more than in previous centuries, he now was made into the centre of an intricate, 'national' divinity-cult created on the basis of a partly invented 'national' past. Also, towards the end of the century, the political circle surrounding the emperor began using him as a symbol of an imperialism that, soon, spread beyond Japan proper: into Manchuria, Korea, China, and, even, South-East Asia. At last, both the Christian pope and the Japanese emperor had become as holy, or sacred, and, at least nominally, as powerful as they ever were to going to be.

### **Conclusion: Religion, Princely Power, and Imperial Cohesion— A Fundamental Connection**

Examining the relationship between religion, princely power, and imperial cohesion, obviously one should study the ideological factor and its impact first.

In all Eurasian cultures, divine sanction was the basis for, or at least did significantly strengthen, most princes' often already innate conviction of their incontestable right to rule. Such sanction, perhaps most necessary because of the belief of the majority of people that a ruler's virtue would somehow influence (the) god(s) to bring them safety and prosperity, was indeed a prime basis of authority and power. Nevertheless, in some states the men whose religious authority was strongest—the popes, the dalai lamas, the emperors of Japan—often also were those whose real political power was weakest, certainly in the centuries studied here, which is, of course, not to say that through the performance of their role(s) they did not contribute to the creation and continued existence of a coherent society and culture. Indeed, perhaps precisely because they were forced to—or allowed themselves to—accept a broadly speaking cultural rather than a strictly speaking political role they gave the institution they embodied the longevity and, hence, cohesive capacity it so obviously has achieved.

Even so, to effectively wield (some) power all rulers needed to create and capitalize on a relationship with the Divine—perhaps most so those whose rise to that power had been through 'illegitimate' means, i.e. through rebellion and conquest. Therefore, every monarch had to show those groups in society

who mattered politically that, indeed, he was thus sanctioned and, therefore, likely to continue upholding the established order, the preserve of these elites. Hence, some kind of ‘consecration’, ‘communion with the Sacred’, was an essential part of the princely (accession) ritual, though more so in the Christian and Islamic *oikoumenai* than in the Chinese-Mongol world. It was—and is—perhaps most fundamentally practised in Japan. Moreover, staging and participating (whether as chief sacrificer, as in China and Japan, or as chief *orans* in the other Eurasian polities) in periodic ceremonies related to the Divine always was necessary, too, in order continuously to impress one’s subjects with one’s legitimacy.

To make the most of religion’s fundamental role in structuring and, preferably, unifying society, and, moreover, to inculcate the people with the norms and values that helped shape their acceptance of princely rule, monarchs always had to cooperate with the religious establishment(s)—a clergy, a priesthood—, while at the same time they had to curb the independent power—or tendency thereunto—these institutionalized groups had achieved; certainly if these were strongly hierarchical they were, at least potentially, the more politically effective in competing with and threatening the preponderance of secular leadership. Not surprisingly, to a greater or lesser extent leaders all over Eurasia were aware of the need to follow this dual strategy.

Also, they could and often did considerably increase their power by exploiting the enormous economic resources of organized religion(s) in their state. In Christendom, this was one of the factors which in the sixteenth century led to princely support for and active involvement in the various Reformations, which resulted in a huge re-distribution of riches and, often, through the support of (new) elites thus gained, in increased royal power. Yet, in the Islamic worlds and in the Sinosphere, too, many rulers took every opportunity to somehow control or even straightforwardly appropriate ecclesiastical wealth if circumstances allowed them to do so or financial necessity dictated it.

Given the (politically) disruptive potential of the deep-seated religious beliefs that characterized most Eurasian cultures well into the nineteenth century—and, in many societies, continue to do so even today—, to retain their power over an otherwise unruly society (secular) princes also needed to enforce religious homogeneity; they had to impose a form of orthodoxy. However, quite a few had gained the throne precisely by linking themselves to some sort of religious non-conformity; if that ‘taking of power’ had been successful, that heterodoxy tended to become the new religious norm. Obviously, there was some grave risk involved, for re-establishing religious order and, preferably, unity, always would take time and careful manipulation, especially if the

previous balance of power between the various power groups had been upset to accommodate a new one, viz. of the new monarch's supporters. Nevertheless, this use of the power of religion by secular leaders has been—and still is—manifest all over Eurasia as well.

Ensuring imperial (in-)visibility always has been a prime instrument of princely propaganda and, therefore, power politics. It expressed itself in the ideological, mostly cosmological lay-out and political use of palaces and even of the town(s) wherein these were located as much as in the intricacies of the ceremonies and the ritual performed there, which often mirrored those related to the religious sphere. Indeed, the entire 'imperial life cycle' might be visualized to enhance princely authority, though, perhaps, this was practised nowhere as structurally and, indeed, visibly as in Christian Europe, due to the 'sacramental' character Christianity gives to the decisive moments in man's life: birth and baptism, marriage, death. These religious occasions definitely gave the rulers of the European states a variety of possibilities to represent themselves to a politically significant public. Such a religiously connoted sharing of the royal person with (large groups of) his subjects certainly occurred far less in the Islamic world and in the Sinosphere. Admittedly, in Islam the annually recurring religious festivals were used by princes publicly to insert themselves in and reassert themselves through the realm of the Sacred; in China and Japan, however, princely participation therein could be witnessed by limited groups, only, though, of course, these were so privileged precisely because they were deemed to be the politically most important actors. Thus it seems that in Europe the relationship between royal authority and, at least, the urban groups it increasingly came to rely upon may have influenced changes in the traditional balance of power that, in the end, brought about more fundamental societal and political changes as well. In the process, emperors, kings, and other princes did not abandon all notions of power sanctioned by religion but, certainly during the nineteenth century, consciously sought to re-define them to be more inclusive than had been the case during the *ancien régime*.

In forging links with other states and their rulers—as well as in striving after the possibility of some future succession to power in another state—dynastic marriages always were a useful instrument. However, it seems that by and large they were practised consistently and successfully only in Europe—though, up to the eighteenth century, this policy mostly tended to unite dynasties either within the Roman Catholic part of Christendom or the Protestant one. In the Islamic world, inter-dynastic marriages between ruling houses were rare, and in the Sinosphere even non-existent. However, when they occurred religious

considerations do not seem to have been part of the process. Needless to say, the peace secured by inter-state marital ties mostly was short-lived.

On the other hand, religion often was, as it often still is, invoked precisely to supply a pretext for inter-state, inter-dynastic wars. These, of course, mostly served to distract the criticism wielded by various power groups from a ruler's—or his counsellors'—perceived inability to maintain the state's cohesion. Often at the same time, such wars were deemed necessary to increase a state's economic potential through territorial and, hence, fiscal expansion.<sup>349</sup>

Within a larger imperial or, rather, imperialistic context, using the missionary tendencies evident in many Eurasian religions—Christianity, Islam, but also, Buddhism—definitely did help those princes who wanted to extend their power beyond the frontiers of their original polity. From the late fifteenth century onwards, judging from a global perspective the former, especially the Portuguese and the Spanish kings, have been outstandingly successful in this respect. Thus, empires were created that decisively changed the history of Eurasia and, indeed, of Africa and the Americas, though we now know these changes were not lasting.<sup>350</sup> Indeed, they themselves have created a dynamic that, from the twentieth century onwards, again started to change not only the global balance of power but, also, the role of old and new empires therein.

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349 For Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see the analysis in: Rietbergen, *Willem III*, 75–102.

350 Cfr. also: P. Rietbergen, *Europa's India. Tussen fascinatie en cultureel imperialisme, 1750–2000* (Nijmegen, 2008).