

Buddhism and the State: *Rājadharmma* after the *Sattelzeit*

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Abstract

Rājadharmma is a list of ten royal virtues or duties that occurs in the *jātaka* tales and that has been influential in Southeast Asian Buddhist political thought. Like pre-modern political thought in Europe—that is, thought before the *Sattelzeit*—Buddhist political thought lacks a concept of the “state” and is concerned with kings and similar rulers. Here I propose a modernized interpretation of *rājadharmma* as virtues/duties of the state.

Introduction

(*Dasa-*) *Rājadharmma*—usually translated as the (ten) duties of a king, royal virtues, or some other combination of “royal” or “king” and “virtues” or “duties”—is a recurring theme in Southeast Asian political thought.² It has

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² This doesn’t imply that *rājadharmma* (or this paper) is only relevant in Southeast Asia, of course. It is largely for historical reasons that *rājadharmma* has thus far received much

played an important role in Burmese thought on kingship in the late Toungoo (1510–1752) and Konbaung (1752–1885) periods (Candier), and much more recently, in Aung San Suu Kyi’s essay “In Quest of Democracy,” written in the 1980s. It has played a similar role in Thai political thought (Tambiah), including in Buddhādāsa’s *Dhammic Socialism*, a collection of lectures given in the 1970s. And it has been of equal importance in Sri Lanka (Lingat), where it reappeared in Walpola Rahula’s *What the Buddha Taught*, originally published in 1959, but still one of the most influential introductions to Buddhism for Western audiences. Introducing the concept, Rahula writes:

For a country to be happy it must have a just government. How this form of just government could be realized is explained by the Buddha in his teaching of the ‘Ten Duties of the King’ (*dasa-rājadhamma*), as given in the *Jātaka* text. Of course, the term ‘king’ (*Raja*) of old should be replaced today by the term ‘Government’. ‘The Ten Duties of the King’, therefore, apply today to all those who constitute the government, such as the head of the state, ministers, political leaders, legislative and administrative officers, etc. (84–5)

Despite his claim that “king” should be replaced by “government,” Rahula does not actually do so. Instead, he substitutes various government *officials*. Hence, while he suggests an application of *rājadhamma* to the government or to the state,³ which would be an important innovation in Buddhist political thought, he remains stuck in a traditional, pre-

more attention in Southeast Asia than in the rest of the Buddhist world, but the notion is not inherently tied to any specific geographical region or school of Buddhism.

³Rahula does not use the term “state,” but a government is the system and group of people that govern a state, and consequently, the two concepts are inseparable. More importantly, substituting “state” for “king” instead of “government” is less likely to lead to the mistake pointed out here.

modern, person-based view. This is significant, because traditional (and most modern) Buddhist thought lacks a concept of the “state.”

The modern concept of the state refers to something separate from both the person(s) that rule (that is, the ruler or rulers, king, and so forth) and (the collective of) the people (that are being ruled). This concept developed in Western thought during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—with Machiavelli’s *Il Principe* (1532) and Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651) being among the most important landmarks in this development—although details of the concept’s history remain disputed.⁴ In any case, political thought before the invention of the concept of the state could only be in terms of kings or other rulers as persons, who ruled over their personal belongings, more or less as extended households. After Hobbes (and some further intellectual developments), political thought could focus its attention on the “*institutions of government and means of coercive control that serve to organize and preserve power within political communities*” (Skinner 101; emphasis added).

It did take some more time before this conceptual innovation—that is, this new way of looking at sociopolitical reality—was fully accepted, however, and in that transitional period further important developments took place. Most importantly, between roughly 1750 and 1850 (starting, perhaps, a bit earlier in France and England) there was a revolution in European intellectual history that Reinhart Koselleck has called the *Sattelzeit* (saddle-time; “saddle” in the sense of a pass in a mountain ridge). Europeans living before the *Sattelzeit* were lacking many of the abstract social concepts that we are used to now—concepts like “society”

⁴The most influential text on the history of the concept of the state is Quentin Skinner’s “The State.” See also Koselleck et al. and Harding.

and “culture,” for example. Some of the words were already in use, but they did not mean exactly the same things.⁵

The word “society” had been used widely for centuries in reference to small institutional units between the state and the household. Societies were social circles or legally established associations. From the middle of the Eighteenth century onward, the term started to be used in combinations such as “political society” and “civil society” to refer to an understanding of the state and its citizens that was heavily indebted to social-contract theory. But only in the late 1790s did the term start to be used to refer to something distinct from the state and distinct from its old meaning as “association” and related notions.⁶ So, for example, when Karl Marx wrote in the winter of 1857-1858 that “society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand,”⁷ he expressed an idea that was (becoming)

⁵ It would be interesting to know when the concepts of the “state” and “society” were introduced into Southeast Asian languages, but I have not found any published work by conceptual historians detailing the history of these concepts in such languages. This is not very surprising, as conceptual history, or *Begriffsgeschichte*, is a relatively new and small research field. References in the footnotes before and after this one only concern German, English, and to a lesser extent, French. As far as I know, very little work has been done on conceptual history in non-European languages. In case of Japanese, 社会 *shakai*, “society,” was coined in the late nineteenth century under Western influence (Yanabu). The modern Japanese word for state, 国家 *kokka*, is much older, but it only gained its modern meaning relatively recently, again under Western influence. (China, in turn, imported many modern/Western concepts from Japan.) I expect something similar to be true for Southeast Asian languages.

⁶ The main sources describing the conceptual history of “society” in German and English are Manfred Riedel’s two entries in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Heilbron, Magnusson, and Wittrock) and Wagner.

⁷ “Die Gesellschaft besteht nicht aus Individuen, sondern drückt die Summe der Beziehungen, Verhältnisse aus, worin diese Individuen zueinander stehn” (Marx 189).

common at the time, but that would have been nearly incomprehensible a century earlier.

It is no coincidence that the modern concept of “society” was invented around this time, of course. Northwestern Europe was in the middle of the industrial revolution and due to technological and socioeconomic changes societies in the traditional sense—that is, social circles or associations—were growing rapidly. Hence, the term “society” included ever larger groups of people. Nevertheless, this social change did not by itself lead to the invention of “society” as we now understand the term. Not even the conceptual/theoretical innovation of “civil society” by social-contract theorists was sufficient; a further catalyst was needed. That catalyst was the political change at the end of the eighteenth century in France, and its fallout throughout the rest of Europe. These intellectual developments led to a watershed (like a “saddle”) in political thought, although it must be kept in mind that this process took several centuries. (Hence, this “watershed” is not exactly a narrow ridge; it is more like a vague transition zone.) Before this period, political thought—or what is read as political thought now—concerned the ruler(s) as person(s). It was (usually) about his rights and obligations, his personal characteristics and virtues, and so forth. It was about the good king. Political thought after this period—that is, modern political thought—is about political institutions, social obligations, and many other things that would have made little sense in a pre-*Sattelzeit* conceptual framework.

What Rahula appears to suggest in the above quotation, then, is to read *rājadhama* in a post-*Sattelzeit* language. While he does not actually do this—possibly under the influence of the pre-modern/pre-*Sattelzeit* conceptual framework of (traditional) Buddhist thought—this apparent suggestion raises two important questions. Firstly, would such a reading be legitimate? And secondly, what would (or could) it be? My focus here

is on the second question, but to begin with I want to briefly address the first.

Of course, it would be anachronistic to suggest a post-*Sattelzeit* interpretation of *rājadhama* as the original or “authentic” version of that doctrine, but that is not what I am suggesting here. In the same way that most contemporary Buddhist thinkers—including the Dalai Lama, for example—no longer accept the Buddha’s beliefs in a flat earth and some related cosmological and/or geographical ideas that have been shown to be false by science, we can also update aspects of Buddhist sociopolitical thought and allow it to exploit new insights and ideas and further develop on the basis thereof. Disallowing a reading of Buddhist political thought in a post-*Sattelzeit* conceptual framework is forcing it to remain stuck in a pre-modern past and forcing it to be largely irrelevant in the modern world. Like most pre-modern political thought, traditional *rājadhama* is largely irrelevant because it applies to kingdoms where kings have absolute power and subjects (and everything else) are effectively the king’s property. Although the recent rise of authoritarian regimes all over the world may suggest otherwise, political arrangements like these do not really exist anymore,⁸ and therefore, traditional *rājadhama* has no application. Twentieth-century thinkers like Rahula and others mentioned above tried to fix this by interpreting the *rāja* in *rājadhama* more broadly, but that does nothing to solve the second, and much more fundamental problem with traditional *rājadhama*: the fundamental attribution error.

The fundamental attribution error is a cognitive bias that leads to an overemphasis on disposition- and personality-based explanations of individual behavior and an underemphasis or oversight of situational and environmental factors. Psychological research has shown that what we do

⁸ Absolute monarchies like Saudi Arabia, Liechtenstein, and North Korea come close, but even in those the power of the ruler is limited in a number of ways and citizens are not the ruler’s personal property (even if they are unfree).

is much more influenced or determined by circumstances than by supposed character traits such as virtues. The fundamental attribution error is a serious problem for virtue ethics (Harman), but also for other virtue-based accounts of what people do or should do, including *rājadhamma*. Hence, Aung San Suu Kyi's claim that "the root of a nation's misfortunes has to be sought in the moral failings of the government" misplaces blame; these supposed "moral failings" are less due to the lack of virtue of the people in the government, and more to the (institutional, legal, economic, political, and so forth) circumstances they find themselves in. Something like this insight seems to underlie Sulak Sivaraksa's critique of Buddhādāsa's proposal of "Dhammic socialism" as a dictatorship with a benevolent dictator guided by *rājadhamma*. Sivaraksa considers this idea a weak point in Buddhādāsa's thought "because dictators never possess dhamma" (quoted in Puntarigivat 144). A dictator could even abuse *rājadhamma* to justify their authoritarian and non-virtuous rule.⁹ The idea of a virtuous king (or dictator) as assumed by traditional *rājadhamma*, then, is dubious at best and probably even dangerously misleading.

The remainder of this paper consists of three sections followed by some closing comments on future research. The three main sections explain the *dasarājadhamma*, briefly discuss the application of the notions of virtues or duties to the state and combine these two to present a post-*Sattelzeit* reading of *dasarājadhamma*.

Dasarājadhamma

The term *rājadhamma* is not an exclusively Buddhist term, but also occurs in the Brahmanic tradition (albeit not in Pāli, of course). The most important duty of the king therein is the protection of his subjects (Lingat),

⁹I owe this point to an anonymous reviewer of this journal.

while in Buddhist *rājadhama*, there is a much stronger focus on virtues like generosity and non-anger. Furthermore, in Buddhist scripture, the term most often occurs as part of the larger compound *dasarājadhama*, which refers to a list of ten (*dasa*) royal duties or virtues mentioned in fourteen *jātaka* tales.¹⁰ In contrast, *rājadhama* without *dasa*- occurs in only one.¹¹ Twelve of these fourteen only mention the term *dasarājadhama*, without listing the ten virtues/duties or offering any other explanation. Only two tales, *Nandiyamiga-jātaka* and *Mahāhaṃsa-jātaka*, list the ten royal virtues: (1) *dāna*, almsgiving; (2) *sīla*, morality; (3) *pariccāga*, charity; (4) *ajjava*, straightness; (5) *maddava*, gentleness; (6) *taṇhā*, mental devotion; (7) *akkodha*, non-anger; (8) *avihiṃsā*, non-violence; (9) *khantī*, forbearance; and (10) *avirodhana*, non-obstruction. Neither of these texts further explains the nature of these virtues, however, and partially for that reason it is not always clear how these terms are best translated into English. The fifteenth text (that is, the one that has *rājadhama* without *dasa*-) mentions (or hints at) different virtues, such as honesty, non-anger, vigor, and righteousness. While there is some overlap, the *rājadhama* of this tale is not the *dasarājadhama*.

The first and third of the *dasarājadhama* have to do with giving, generosity, and/or charity; while the second and sixth are often understood to be concerned with morality. Because of this, it is more helpful to

¹⁰*Dummedha-jātaka* (I:126/259), *Talapatta-jātaka* (I:393/232), *Rājovāda-jātaka* (II:1/1), *Cullapaduma-jātaka* (II:115/81), *Kurudhamma-jātaka* (II:365/251), *Seyya-jātaka* (II:400/273), *Nandiyamiga-jātaka* (III:270/171), *Kukku-jātaka* (III:317/197), *Āditta-jātaka* (III:469/280), *Bhaddasāla-jātaka* (IV:144/91), *Janasandha-jātaka* (IV:176/109), *Sivi-jātaka* (IV:401/250), *Mahāhaṃsa-jātaka* (V:354/186), *Mahāsutasoma-jātaka* (V:456/246). The codes in parentheses refer to volume number (Roman numeral) and starting page numbers of, respectively, the Pāli texts in Fausbøll and English translations in Cowell. All *jātakas* are available online (both in Pāli and English) at <https://jatakastories.div.ed.ac.uk>.

¹¹ *Tesakuṇṇa-jātaka* (V:109/59).

discuss these related duties/virtues together than to go through the list in the order given.

If *dāna* and *pariccāga* are two different virtues or duties related to giving, generosity, and/or charity, then what sets them apart? The answer to this rather obvious question that developed in the Konbaung period in Burma is that *dāna* is soteriological, while *pariccāga* is sociopolitical (Candier). *Dāna*, in this interpretation, is making offerings with the aim of gaining merit to assure a better rebirth for the giver (that is, the king). *Pariccāga*, in contrast, refers to the king's duty to reward officials in accordance with their contributions. A different answer to the question was given by Rahula and Aung San Suu Kyi, who associated *dāna* with the king's concern for the welfare of the people (including the economic security of the state), and *pariccāga* with the king's self-sacrifice in service of his subjects.

Neither answer seems right to me. Almsgiving (*dāna*) is indeed a meritorious act, but that is entirely beside the point in the context of *rājadhamma*. The ten virtues or duties of the king are not concerned with gaining merit for the king and it makes little sense to distinguish two apparently similar virtues/duties on a ground that has nothing to do with the purpose of the list as a whole. The association of *dāna* with public/social welfare, on the other hand, completely ignores the nature of almsgiving, and could, therefore, be said to err in the opposite direction. Furthermore, there is nothing in the notion of *pariccāga* that suggests that it has anything to do with how the king rewards his officials. The understanding of *pariccāga* as self-sacrifice seems less far-fetched but raises questions about the relation between this virtue/duty and *tapa*, mental devotion (see below).

I think that the essential feature of *dāna* in the context of *rājadhamma* is not that it produces merit for the king, but that almsgiving is (typically) a charitable gift to a monk or the *saṅgha* (that is, the community

of monks, or the Buddhist religious community). The duty/virtue of *dāna* is neither giving to gain merit, nor a concern with public/social welfare, but almsgiving, that is, giving to the *saṅgha*. That financially supporting the *saṅgha* is royal duty number one also jives well with a similar emphasis in, for example, Aśoka's edicts and Nāgārjuna's *Ratnāvalī*.¹² However, both Nāgārjuna and Aśoka advocated financial support to *all* centers of doctrine, regardless of their affiliation, which raises the question whether *dāna* (as part of the *dasarājadhamma*) should be interpreted in a similar way.

Pariccāga can indeed be translated as “sacrifice,” but *pariccāga* as sacrifice (or giving up, renunciation, and so forth) is not so much self-sacrifice or devotion as it is giving up the things that are most valuable to you. *Pariccāga* in this sense would require the king to give up his kingdom. The same term can also refer to generosity, liberality, and—especially—giving to the poor, and it seems much more plausible that this is what is intended here. *Pariccāga*, then, is charity, and is thus very similar to how Rahula and Aung San Suu Kyi interpreted *dāna*.

Both *sīla* and *tapa* are concerned with aspects of morality and moral behavior. The first can refer to conduct and character, as well as to a moral code, but is primarily associated with the five (and eight) precepts. The five precepts, of course, ban killing, theft, sexual misconduct, lying and malicious speech, and intoxicants. (The eight precepts add not eating food at the wrong time, abstinence from music, ornaments, and so forth, and not sleeping in a high place.)

Tapa can mean two different things. The first is asceticism or austerity, which was rejected by the Buddha, so that is not what the term can refer to here. The second is mental devotion and self-control (but also the

¹² See Nāgārjuna's *Ratnāvalī*, verses 317–318, and Aśoka's major rock edict number 12 (Hultzsch 20-21).

practice of morality, and in that sense the term overlaps with *sīla*). It seems to me that this is what is intended here, and that much of the remaining royal virtues further flesh out this virtue of mental devotion and self-control.

The virtues of *ajjava* and *maddava* are often mentioned together. *Maddava* is mildness, kindness, or gentleness. *Ajjava* is straight(forward)ness, uprightness, or integrity. As a pair, these virtues require the king to be consistent, incorruptible, sincere, and unaffected by fear or favor in his judgments (*ajjava*), which should be kind and gentle (*maddava*).

Akkodha, *avihiṃsā*, and *khantī* are related to the moral virtues mentioned above, and especially to *tapa* (mental devotion and self-control). *Akkhoda* is freedom from anger, hatred, ill will, and so forth. *Avihiṃsā* is abstinence from violence, cruelty, and the ill-treatment of people (and other sentient beings). *Khantī* is patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and tolerance.

Avirodhana literally means “non-obstruction,” but it is not immediately clear what that means (that is, what it is that should not be obstructed). Robert Lingat suggests that it refers to a conciliatory spirit (159), and somewhat similarly, Rahula claims that *avirodhana* means that the king should “not oppose the will of the people” and “rule in harmony with his people” (85). Aung San Suu Kyi even interprets this virtue/duty as an endorsement of democracy (172-173).

Virtues/Duties of the State

The idea of (re)interpreting *rājadhamma* as the virtues or duties of the state or government (that is, the system and group of people governing the state) raises two questions: the more specific question of what *these* virtues/duties of the state would be—this is the topic of the next section—

and the more general question of what it means to talk of virtues or duties of a state or government.

Notice, by the way, that I have refrained from deciding whether the *dasarājadhamma* should be interpreted as virtues or duties. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, some of the items on the list may be more easily understood as duties and others as virtues. And secondly, in their application to the state, the conceptual boundary between (the counterparts of) “virtues” and “duties” is not the same as in the case of duties and virtues of individual moral agents, and moreover, the distinction becomes somewhat irrelevant.

A duty is an obligation to perform some act, either unconditionally or in some specific circumstance(s). In the case of a state, such obligations are mostly established in constitutional law or in public policy,¹³ depending on the nature of the obligation. A virtue is, roughly, a disposition to perform some act showing moral excellence. The “moral excellence” part is inherent in the listing of duties/virtues that constitute the *dasarājadhamma*, so the only apparently substantial difference between a duty and a virtue here is the obligation/disposition distinction. The dispositions of a state range from the formal, explicit dispositions that are expressed in constitutional law and codified in public policy, to the informal, implicit dispositions that make up political culture. In the case of a state, then, duties and virtues overlap in constitutional law and public policy. The only significant difference between the two categories is that the latter extends into political culture.

¹³I am using the terms “constitutional law” and “public policy” rather broadly here. The first includes administrative law, for example, while codified public policy would include, among others, tax law, criminal law, and many other laws that concern aspects of the relations between the state and the public, except for those that are primarily related to the organization and functioning of the state.

There is, however, another important distinction that does not map onto the duty/virtue distinction. Constitutional law and political culture are primarily concerned with how the state works (and how the state does its work). Public policy is about the state's relations with (specific parts of) the public.¹⁴ Duties with regard to the latter specify *what* the state should do; duties with regard to the former specify *how* the state should work.¹⁵

Rājadhama after the Sattelzeit

The previous two sections briefly discussed the nature of the ten virtues/duties that constitute the *dasarājadhama* and the application of the terms “virtue” and “duty” to the state, respectively. We can now put these two together to update the *rājadhama* to a post-*Sattelzeit* understanding of sociopolitical reality. As mentioned, some of the items on the list are more easily interpreted as virtues, while others are more like duties, but this distinction does not translate well to a post-*Sattelzeit* reading. A more important distinction in the latter case is that between public policy on the one hand, and constitutional law and political culture on the other. Of the *dasarājadhama*, the first three belong—quite clearly—to the former category, while the other seven belong either to the latter category or combine aspects of both.

1. *Dāna*, almsgiving. The state should financially support the *saṅgha* (or possibly all centers of religious/philosophical doctrine; see above).

¹⁴ See previous footnote.

¹⁵ Virtues with regard to public policy characterize the morally excellent things the state actually (habitually) does. Virtues with regards to constitutional law and political culture characterize morally excellent aspects of how the state works.

2. *Sīla*, morality. The state should itself adhere to the five precepts.¹⁶ Recall that these ban killing, theft, sexual misconduct, lying and malicious speech, and intoxicants. Hence, the state is not allowed to kill, steal, or lie.¹⁷ It is also not allowed to use intoxicants or practice sexual misconduct, of course, but as a state is not a human or other kind of animal, so is not physically able to break those precepts anyway.¹⁸
3. *Pariccāga*, charity. The state should financially support the poor and others who are in need.

All three of these duties of the state are somewhat vague, leaving much room for interpretation and debate. *Dāna* and *pariccāga* require financial support for the *saṅgha* and the poor (and others in need), respectively, but who or what exactly need to be supported,¹⁹ what form should

¹⁶The virtue/duty of *sīla* concerns merely the moral agent (king or state) itself. Hence, it is adherence by the state (or king) to the five precepts, and not the promotion thereof, or the imposition of the five precepts on the subjects of the state. The third and fifth precepts cannot apply to the state itself (see above), but the virtue/duty of *sīla* (as part of *rājadharmā*) does not imply that the state (or king) should prohibit sexual misconduct and/or intoxicants (within its jurisdiction) either. There may be other reasons for the state to discourage sexual misconduct and intoxicants, of course, but that is beside the point here. See also footnotes 18 and 21.

¹⁷The *Tesakuṇa-jātaka* (V:109/59) also emphasizes that the king (or state) should avoid falsehoods and lies.

¹⁸“Using intoxicants” in the sense of the precept means taking intoxicants. However, a state could “use” intoxicants in another sense. It could, for example, criminalize certain kinds of intoxicants while allowing other kinds to serve political or other interests. (For example, to oppress racial groups that favor the criminalized kind of intoxicant). While this is not literally a violation of a precept, it certainly seems very much against the spirit of the precept as well as a violation of the idea of a virtuous state. Much of the same applies to sexual misconduct, which could be used by the state to further political or other interests (for example, rape as a weapon of war). See also footnotes 16 and 21.

¹⁹In the case of *pariccāga*, how poor is “poor” and who else are eligible for support? The most fundamental question in the case of *dāna* is whether only the Buddhist *saṅgha* or all

this support take exactly, and how generous should it be? *Sīla* does not refer to a single duty, but to several, and all of those are ambiguous to at least some extent. A narrow interpretation of the prohibition of killing would ban offensive warfare and capital punishment, for example, but a broader interpretation such as Sivaraksa's would have much more far-reaching implications. In his interpretation, the first precept does not just forbid literally killing someone, but also making weapons, depriving people of their livelihood, using chemical fertilizers and insecticides, destroying forests, polluting the environment, and living a wasteful life of excessive consumption. In the case of the prohibition of theft, broad interpretations could vary from abolition of most taxes based on the libertarian idea that taxation is theft to Sivaraksa's rejection of the exploitation and institutional violence that is an inherent part of the capitalist economic system.²⁰ In his view, the second precept means, among others things, that society must be radically reformed and that we must "overturn the structures that compel others to live in poverty involuntarily" (Sivaraksa 131).²¹

centers of religious/philosophical doctrine should be supported (see above). This is by no means the only question, however. In case one opts for merely the *saṅgha*, what exactly is that? Traditionally, the *saṅgha* is just the monastic community, but in Buddhist modernism and (especially) Western Buddhism the term often refers to lay followers as well.

²⁰ Various Buddhist socialists, anarchists, and other radical Buddhists seem to have interpreted the precept against theft in similar ways (Brons; Shields).

²¹ Notice that even in Sivaraksa's understanding of the prohibition of theft, it is not the state who is guilty of theft itself, but rather, the state is part of an economic and political system that breaks the second (and first) precept. In a sense, then, the state is not the perpetrator, but an accomplice. This raises the question whether the five precepts merely prohibit the acts themselves or also being an accomplice in those acts. I am inclined to say that it is the latter, but I also think that this is an open question. Notice that this point is closely related to the issue raised in footnotes 16 and 18.

4. *Ajjava*, straightness, straddles the boundary between constitutional law and political culture. It includes respect for the rule of law, as well as a rejection of corruption, nepotism, arbitrariness (including arbitrary discrimination), inconsistency, and so forth.
5. There are two obvious interpretations of *maddava*, gentleness: (i) The state (and the officials representing it) should maintain a kind, gentle, and helpful attitude in its (or their) dealings with members of the public. This interpretation of *maddava* overlaps with *tapa*; and (ii) *maddava* requires kindness in judgment. This also seems to be covered by *khantī*.
6. Two facets of *tapa*, mental devotion, were mentioned above. One of these, self-control, is closely related to *ajjava* as the rejection of arbitrariness and inconsistency in judgment. The other, mental devotion, concerns devotion to the task at hand, that is, governing. *Tapa* in that sense includes devotion to the public good, which is related to *maddava*, but also to the remaining four items on the list. Significantly, both facets of *tapa* also suggest a rejection of frivolous spending, wastefulness, and distraction.²²
7. *Akkodha*, non-anger. The state (and the officials representing it) should refrain from anger, hatred, ill will, and so forth.²³ As such, *akkodha* overlaps with *ajjava*, or could be considered an elaboration or an aspect thereof.
8. *Avihimsā*, non-violence. The state should abstain from violence, cruelty, and the ill-treatment of people (and other sentient beings). To some extent, this is also an aspect of *sīla*.

²² It does not imply a blanket endorsement of austerity (as this is commonly understood), however, as that would conflict with *pariccāga* especially.

²³ This is also mentioned in the *Tesakuṇa-jātaka* (V:109/59).

9. *Khantī*, forbearance. The state (and the officials representing it) should be patient, tolerant, and forgiving in its (their) dealings with the public. As mentioned, this overlaps with one interpretation of *maddava*, but it also includes a compassionate or forgiving attitude to criminals and other offenders similar to that advocated by Nāgārjuna in *Ratnāvalī* verses 331–337. Notice that a rejection of harsh punishment is also implied by *avihiṃsā*.²⁴
10. *Avirodhana*, non-obstruction. As mentioned above, Aung San Suu Kyi interprets *avirodhama* as an endorsement of democracy and that is indeed the most obvious interpretation in a post-*Sattelzeit* framework.

While some aspects of items four to ten can be codified in constitutional law, administrative law, or criminal law (the latter in the case of *avihiṃsā* and *khantī*),²⁵ many of these aspects of *rājadhama* are too much concerned with attitudes and approaches to be meaningfully codifiable, and are, thus, better understood as aspects of political culture. This does have implications for the interpretation of *dasarājadhama* as a whole, however. Without such political-cultural elements, *dasarājadhama* could be seen as a political program, but *akkhoda*, for example does not fit well, if at all, in such an interpretation. Arguably, *rājadhama* in this post-*Sattelzeit* reading includes a political program (in its first three items, especially), but it also offers a picture of how the state (and the officials

²⁴ It could, perhaps, be argued that some human rights—such as Article 5 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which forbids “torture or . . . cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”—are supported by (or even follow from) some of the virtues/duties discussed here. In case of Article 5, that would be *avihiṃsā* and *khantī*. However, the virtue/duty that seems most important in this context is *ajjava* as respect for the rule of law and rejection of arbitrary discrimination (see above), and often, the connection is rather vague and subjective.

²⁵ In their application to criminal law, of items four to ten on the list, *avihiṃsā* and *khantī* are also the most concerned with public policy. The others seem to be exclusively about constitutional law and political culture.

representing it) should approach its (their) tasks and how it (they) should engage with (members of) the public. Parts of this picture can be codified in laws and regulations, but not all of it.

Closing Comments

The ten virtues/duties of the state that constitute *rājadharmma* after the *Sattelzeit* offer one modern(ized) Buddhist perspective on politics, but obviously this is not the only (possible) perspective. It would be worthwhile to compare it with other modern Buddhist political views, but this is a task beyond the scope of the present paper. Above, I mentioned Nāgārjuna's *Ratnāvalī* and Aśoka's edicts explicitly in the context of *dāna* and *khantī*, and a more detailed comparison between the *rājadharmma* and Nāgārjuna's recommendations seems especially pertinent. (Aśoka's edicts, on the other hand, offer far less substance than sometimes seems to be assumed.) Three other interesting comparative projects could take up (1) the virtues/duties of the Wheel-turning king mentioned in the *Cakkavattisutta* (DN26); (2) a political view based on the Bodhisattva ethics as expressed in Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, which is (as far as I know) the most detailed text on the moral obligations of a Bodhisattva; and (3) the most explicitly political variants of Twentieth-century Buddhism that are sometimes called "radical Buddhism" (Shields; Brons).

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