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ON THE DEATH OF THE CHARISMATIC FOUNDER:
RE-VIEWING SOME BUDDHIST SOURCES

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Abstract: Routinization is a term invented by Max Weber to describe events after the death of a charismatic religious leader. It has become widely used in the humanities in a variety of contexts. The death of the historical Buddha produced the first known instance of extreme routinization, in which the charisma of the founder is transmuted into a system of teachings that are themselves invested with authority, quite separate from the charisma of any individual within that tradition. This article examines the *Sāmagāmasutta* and the *Gopaka-Mogallānasutta*, two texts from the *Majjhima Nikāya*. These texts, when read together, show us just how the Buddha prepared the way for the extreme routinization that would take place in the community, and how the early Buddhist monks reacted to this. In the *Sāmagāmasutta*, the Buddha prepares for the power vacuum after his own death by setting up procedures by which the monks will be able to govern themselves without relying on a single charismatic leader. The *Gopaka-Mogallānasutta* describes events after the Buddha's death and indicates that the Buddha's instructions had been followed faithfully. Taken together, these two obscure texts frame the far more famous *Mahāparinibbānasutta* and provide it with valuable context. This discussion is followed by a consideration of how Buddhism ended up reverting to more conventional patterns of routinization as it expanded.

Key Words: Buddhism, Charisma, Founder, *Gopaka-Mogallānasutta*, *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, Max Weber, Routinization, *Sāmagāmasutta*, Succession

In any religion that enjoys the advantage of having a single charismatic founder, sooner or later one must face the reality of that hoary old syllogism that tells us that all men, the founder included, are mortal, and that the founder must therefore die. This is the case in contemporary religious developments as much as it was when the classical religious traditions developed back in the Axial Age: “while little has been written on the succession question, the strongly held opinion remains that the death of a leader is a crisis event of major proportions for a new religion”.¹

At this stage, the currently dominant Weberian analysis informs us, that charisma must be routinized, that is, it must be channelled into social categories and actions that can function independently of the charisma of the founder's successors. This view largely devolves from comments made by Max Weber in his posthumous work *Economy and Society*², although it can be argued that the concept is prefigured in his earlier works. Since Weber invented the concept, it has become a staple of the social sciences, cropping up in a variety of contexts, not merely religion³, but also leadership theory⁴ and historical studies⁵, to name but a few. The continuing relevance of Weber's theory can be seen in Rashid Begg's article that explores use of *hadith* in the routinization process.⁶

However, the mere term “routinization” implies a tidy transfer of power and influence that is rarely seen in practice. Even among contemporary Weber's disciples, we can see differences in emphasis:

For Weber, such change entailed the transferral of the authority of charisma to a new person, or group of people. Given that the original had often challenged an existing social order, the “routinization of charisma” was most often characterized by the development and imposition of a new power structure, often remarkably similar to that which existed before.⁷

[W]hat happens when charismatic leaders die? Well, either the movement or order gathered around the leader finds another charismatic leader who can do the job, which is often difficult. Or, the movement, in order to perpetuate itself, becomes rational. ... It means that personal visions are transformed into a set of rules.⁸

So which is the primary meaning of “routinization”: the return to a *status quo ante bellum*, the search for an equally charismatic successor or the attempt to deduct universal rules from personal inspiration? I suggest that the question imposes a false dichotomy. These are parallel processes, together making up the whole complex routinization process, and one cannot predict in advance which will win out in a particular case. Indeed,

one can often see a compromise routinization, in which some of the founder's charisma is translated into structures and processes, but at the same time an individual is chosen to continue the founder's lineage. The process may be drawn out over several generations: In the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh's descendants `Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi guided the community before the routinization was completed (if, indeed, it ever is) and power transferred to the faith's Universal House of Justice.

In early Buddhism, an extreme form of routinization was followed. In the normal course of events of an Indian sect, the founder's chief disciple would be duly appointed as new leader of the sect, and the further success or failure of the group would be largely dependent on the new leader's own charisma, or lack thereof. Indeed it would be fair to say that much of the Mahayana tradition has reverted to variations on this pattern, with the Tibetan tulku system and the Zen lineages of Patriarchs and Masters serving as prime examples, to which we shall return later on.

But in the early Buddhist case, no individual was appointed to lead the saṃgha – not his “spiritual son” Sāriputta⁹, not Moggalāna the Great, not Upāli or Kassapa. Instead, it was the dhamma itself that would guide the bhikkhus¹⁰ as they would attempt to live out the Buddhist life, and perhaps create the occasional convert, without having the Buddha by their side as a constant source of reference and inspiration. “Dhamma” is one of the most ambivalent words in the Pali language, as can be seen from the multi-page entry for the word in Rhys Davids and Stede's Pali Dictionary¹¹, but in this context we can accept that it means the teaching of the Buddha.

In the history of religions, Buddhism was not quite unique in taking this route: Sunni Islam and some forms of Judaism and Protestant Christianity have similarly eschewed the cult of personality in the firm belief that their doctrines and practices were sufficiently clear to provide an abstract kind of leadership, even if that is true only on a global level and individual leadership remains a reality on the local plane. But Buddhism was certainly one of the first religions to do this.

How do we know all this? The simple answer is that it is written down in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*.¹² This is the answer we will find in most popular writings about Buddhism, and not a few scholarly ones too. As we shall see, it is not the only text to deal with the subject, but it has attained to a status where, to paraphrase George Orwell, all suttas are canonical, but some are more canonical than others. The *Mahāparinibbānasutta* is one of those super-canonical texts, its influence so profound that few feel the need to search further.

Much has been written about the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* over the years, and rightly so.¹³ It is a monumental piece of literature and new generations of scholars will continue to find more to say about it.¹⁴ But the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* is by no means the only sutta that deals with events surrounding the death of the Buddha. This article will discuss a

number of other texts from the Majjhima Nikāya that will broaden our insight into the routinization process as it took place in India in the 6th century BCE. These suttas do not directly contradict the Mahāparinibbānasutta. Reading them, we do not suddenly see Sāriputta declared the leader of the saṃgha and the Buddha's successor. In fact, they do not actually describe the Buddha's death, since they take place before or soon after the event. But, taken together, they do paint a picture of their own, and broaden our understanding of what kind of routinization took place within the Buddhist community. In order to allow them to do this, to let them speak for themselves, I will not contrast them directly to the Mahāparinibbānasutta, except perhaps in the most incidental of ways.

Once we have examined these sources, it will be time to ask how Buddhism arrived from what these texts prescribe for the Buddhist community to the situation in which Buddhism finds itself today, and to suggest ways in which we can understand this both from the Buddhist perspective and from the perspective of Weberian sociology.

The Sāmagāmasutta

In the *Sāmagāmasutta*¹⁵ we find the Buddha still well and apparently hearty. The same cannot be said of Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta, a recurring figure in the Buddhist canon. Nāthaputta (or Nātaputta) is the name invariably used in conventional readings of the Theravada Buddhist scriptures to denote the Jain founder Mahāvira. However, we should be careful not to attach too much importance to his frequent appearances in these pages. In many cases, it could be argued that he appears simply as a generalised straw man to illustrate Buddhist ideas and how these are superior to Jain theories. One can hardly see Jain historians agreeing with the report of "Mahāvira's" death in the *Upālisutta*¹⁶, for instance!¹⁷

For our present purposes, however, the important assertion is that Nāthaputta, whoever he was, has died and his sect is thrown into chaos, a chaos that is graphically described in the *Sāmagāmasutta* as follows:

When he died the Nigaṇṭhas had split and were quarrelling, fighting and attacking each other with the weapon in their mouths. They were saying things like these. 'You do not know this Teaching and Discipline, I know it. What do you know of it? You have fallen to the wrong method. I have fallen to the right method with reasons. You say the first things last, the last things first. Your dispute is not thought out, it is reversed and made up and should be rebuked. Go! Dispute and find your way, if possible'. The dispensation of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta had gone to destruction. The lay disciples of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, who wore white clothes too

were broken up, uninterested, hindered and without refuge as it happens in a Dispensation, not well taught, by one not rightfully enlightened.¹⁸

Sadly, this description does not enable us to date this sutta accurately. Mahāvira is traditionally said to have lived from 599 to 527 BCE and there has been little effort to uncover a historical figure behind the Jain hagiography. Much more thought has been put into the dating of the historical Buddha, and here the tendency has been to place him closer and closer to our own age, to a date of decease as recent as 400 BCE.

The Sāmagāmasutta relates that the novice Cunda approached Ānanda with the story of the disputes among Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta's former disciples, and together they approached the Buddha to ask for advice, for, as Ānanda puts it "Venerable sir, it occurs to me at the demise of the Blessed One, may there be no dispute, for the good and welfare of many". Perhaps only Ānanda, the Buddha's cousin and closest confidant, could have asked the Buddha such a direct question.

The Buddha replies that disputes about the harshness of the monastic lifestyle or about the rules that govern the monk's lifestyle are inconsequential. What really matters is that there should be no disputation about "the path and method", that is, about fundamental matters of doctrine.

The Buddha then proceeds to list six reasons why a dispute might arise:

- When the bhikkhu becomes angry and bears a grudge
- When the bhikkhu is merciless with hypocrisy
- When the bhikkhu is jealous and selfish
- When the bhikkhu is crafty and fraudulent
- When the bhikkhu is with evil desires and wrong view
- When the bhikkhu is holding fast to worldly matters and not giving up easily

It will be noted that the Buddha is here not admitting that disputes about "the path and method" might arise out of legitimate differences of opinion or interpretation. Any dispute is said to be traceable to a character defect on the part of an individual monk. He continues by prescribing seven ways in which the monastic community may resolve disputes. All but one involve a communal gathering of monks, in which the disputing monk is asked to explain the reasons for his dissent and given an opportunity to recant.

Proceedings done in the presence of the accused is the most fundamental communal procedure, of which the remaining five are variants.

The bhikkhu disputes, this is the Teaching and this is not the Teaching, this is the Discipline and this is not the Discipline. Then all the bhikkhus unite and get together and examine it according to

the Teaching and should approve and settle it. Thus the proceedings are done in the presence of the accused.

In this paradigm case, the monks are actually giving their approval to the disputant's version of the doctrine. Of course, this is not always likely to happen, and the procedure called *acquittal by a majority vote of the chapter* gives us an alternative route to follow. If the monks in a particular monastery prove unable to come to a decision, the case should be taken to a larger monastery, where it is thought that the larger number of monks is more likely to reach a decision. We should not see this as a kind of appeals procedure by an aggrieved disputant: it only applies when the initial group of monks is unable to reach consensus.

What follows are three slightly different ways of solving a dispute by allowing the disputant to recant: *appealing to the conscience of the accused*, *acquittal on grounds of restored sanity*, and *acquittal for evil desires*. In each of these cases, the disputant is asked whether he recalls making the controversial statements of which he is accused, and which are serious enough to warrant expulsion from the order, and is allowed to state that (i) he simply has no recollection of such a statement, (ii) he may have made such statements but it happened in a state of temporary insanity, or (iii) he recalls committing a minor offence, but upon much prompting, he now realizes that the offence was far more grave than he had realized.

The final communal procedure is called *covering up the whole thing without going to details*, or, in a more picturesque turn of phrase used later in the sutta, "settlement by covering up with grass". In this case the monks presiding over the case realize that they have become over-emotional in their discussion of the case, and "when we were quarrelling and fighting, many things that should not be uttered by true recluses have been uttered, by you and me too." In other words, they are now themselves guilty of an offence! They would then agree to let the matter abide without coming to a definitive agreement.

There is one final method of settling a dispute, and it differs from the previous six in that it is an individual or interpersonal rather than a communal effort. *Agreement by a promise* entails a monk coming to the realization that he has committed an offence, confessing this to a senior monk and undertaking not to repeat the action.

In most of these methods of settling disputes, the threat of expulsion from the order features prominently: the disputant is warned that his offence "merits expulsion or something similar". But nowhere in this sutta is it said explicitly that the disputant should be expelled after one or more of the seven procedures has followed its course. On the contrary, there is an unspoken assumption that the settling of the dispute will enable the re-integration of the offending monk. A very similar procedure can be found in the *Kintisutta*.¹⁹

Although the *Sāmagāmasutta* does not mention the possibility

explicitly, we can assume that a period of probation would be applied, as this is the normal course of events in Vināya discipline for all but the most minor and the most serious offenses.²⁰ Automatic and compulsory expulsion of monks from the order applies only to four serious offenses: sexual intercourse, theft, murder and lying about spiritual attainments²¹. For nuns, there are four additional serious offenses.²² The emphasis in these proceedings is on the attempt to avoid conflict within the monastic community, to smooth over internal dissent and to present a united face to the outside world. There is no attempt at punishment here, only one of correction. As Blumenthal comments on the Buddhist approach to justice:

Buddhists might ... advocate for a form of imprisonment for some crimes for the dual purpose of the safety of society and a period of reformation / restoration / transformation of the prisoner. But contrary to most prison systems today that are so horrendous that criminals usually come out worse than when they went in, I believe a Buddhist model would emphasize healing the root causes behind the crime, some of which are related to material conditions in the world, but more importantly ... are related to the mental and psychological states (or one might say, 'karmic predispositions') of the criminal.²³

The Sāmagāmasutta ends on a positive note: the Buddha enumerates six qualities that monks should cultivate in order to prevent disunity from ever occurring in the first place. Monks should cultivate loving-kindness towards one another on the mental, verbal and physical levels. They should share alms equally, and cultivate virtue and wisdom.

Thus, in the Sāmagāmasutta we see that when the Buddha eventually expires without leaving a successor, he is not casting his monks adrift. This sutta establishes a set of procedures and practices that would serve the community to identify sources of dissent restore the unity of the community and prevent re-occurrences of the disunity.

What is conspicuously absent from this discussion is that Buddhism itself divided at least twice during the Buddha's lifetime. The Vināya records that

The monks of Kosambi were divided into two opposing groups over whether the actions of one of the monks violated their rules of discipline. Though living together, neither group would cooperate with the other, and even Buddha's efforts to dissuade them from their antagonism were in vain. Finally, when the laymen of Kosambi stopped giving alms to the saṅgha, the monks, recognizing the

error of their ways, made up with each other in the presence of Buddha.²⁴

Then there was the effort by Devadatta to set up an independent community²⁵, although it is possible that “most of the Vināya text accounts of the evil done by Devadatta use the name ‘Devadatta’ not as a reference to an actual person but as a symbol for whatever threatens the existence or harmony of the saṃgha”²⁶. Unfortunately, the way the Pali Canon is organized with scant regard for temporal sequencing does not allow us to determine definitively whether either of these events had already taken place at the time of the Sāmagāmasutta.

Above, we have seen that one possible meaning of “routinization” is that “[T]he movement, in order to perpetuate itself, becomes rational. ... It means that personal visions are transformed into a set of rules”.²⁷ This is indeed what happens in the Sāmagāmasutta. But here we see this taking place even before the charismatic founder has died.

Furthermore, it is all quite orthodox. Nothing we find in this sutta is an extraordinary teaching that applies only to the extraordinary situation of a leaderless community. The attempt to trace dissent to the mental state of an individual is a normal Buddhist analysis, analogous to the way a society’s well-being is reduced to the character and deportment of the king in the *Cakkavatti-Sihanādasutta*.²⁸ The seven ways to resolve disputes set out in the Sāmagāmasutta are fully in accord with the general approach of the Vināya literature, and the six ways of avoiding disunity boil down to a recommendation to follow general aspects of Buddhist practice found elsewhere in the Canon. The Sāmagāmasutta is largely a set of pointers to other aspects of the Buddha’s teachings. In retrospect, it is not so much a new set of regulations to be followed upon the Buddha’s demise as a gentle reminder that Buddhism as the Buddha had set it up would be immune to disunity and fragmentation. All one had to do was to follow it.

The Gopaka-Mogallānasutta

The *Gopaka-Mogallānasutta*²⁹ takes place “soon” after the death of the Buddha. It takes the form of a conversation between Ānanda, the brahmin Gopaka-Moggalāna and Vassakāra, a high official in the kingdom of Magadha.

There are other suttas, even within the Majjhima Nikāya itself, that take place after the Buddha’s death. In the *Madhurasutta*³⁰, for example, Avantiputta the king of Madhurā becomes a lay follower and mistakenly tries to take refuge in the monk Kaccāna. Likewise we see in the *Ghotamukasutta*³¹ that a potential convert is at first reluctant to take refuge in a dead religious leader and tries to take refuge in the monk Udena. This pattern, while by no means definitive, does suggest that refuge-taking in a deceased religious leader was unusual at the time. Another case is that of

the *Bakkulasutta*³², where we can deduce that it must take place after the Buddha's death because the elder Bakkula is said to have been a monk for eighty years. Even if Bakkula had been among the first batch of converts, he must still have outlived the Buddha by thirty years or so. However, it is the *Gopaka-Mogallānasutta* that most directly informs us whether the instructions laid down in the *Sāmagāmasutta* were followed after the Buddha's death. After all, the main speaker is Ānanda, who was present when the *Sāmagāmasutta* was pronounced.

The sutta starts with a short consideration of whether any of the monks are equal in attainment to the Buddha. Ānanda answers in the negative. Indeed, he repeats his negative answer when Vassakāra joins him and Gopaka-Moggalāna. This sets the scene for what is to come: if not a single monk can be said to have equaled the Buddha's attainments, then is it not more reasonable to suppose that none of them could act as his successor? However, the precise point on which the Buddha's superiority depends is that his is the founder, the discoverer of the path. There is an implicit assumption here that only the one who discovers the path can lead the community based on the existence of that path.

Vassakāra proceeds to dominate the conversation from this point onwards. He asks whether the Buddha had appointed one of his monks as successor, or alternatively, whether the elders in the community had chosen a new leader for themselves. To both these conventional options of routinization, Ānanda replies that no such monk has been chosen. No living person serves as a "refuge". Ānanda is quite explicit on this point, using the phrase "not a single monk" (*ekabhikkhāpi*).

Vassakāra enquires as to the reason for such unity in the absence of a refuge and Ānanda replies that the monks are not bereft of a refuge as the dhamma serves them in that regard. Vassakāra requests further elucidation.

At this stage, one might expect Ānanda to recite the various teachings found in the *Sāmagāmasutta*. Alas, Buddhist scriptures rarely present such a neat picture. Instead, he presents a vision of the monk's attainments that is calculated to draw the admiration of the influential layman he is now addressing. Some of these are the standard benefits of the meditative life, such as attainment of the higher states of meditative absorption, but others emphasize the supernatural abilities of the enlightened monk, such as the ability to walk on water and to recollect thousands of previous births³³.

We know that these abilities were never taken all that seriously by the Buddha and his followers. But such powers, or even the rumours of them, would certainly have impressed the laity. Indeed, Vassakāra is discomfited by the notion of people possessing such abilities and he quickly changes the subject, asking Ānanda whether his present dwelling place is congenial to the monastic lifestyle. There follows a section on forms of meditation that were presented either positively or negatively by

the Buddha, and right at the end of this short text Gopaka-Moggalāna reappears and asks Ānanda to reiterate the statement that opened the sutta. But these sections do not concern us directly.

What we can gather from the Gopaka-Mogallānasutta, though, is that the Buddha's instructions in the Sāmagāmasutta (and, incidentally, in the Mahāparinibbānasutta) were followed faithfully. In perhaps the first historical instance of extreme routinization, the leadership of a religious movement devolved not upon an individual, but on a set of abstract principles. If we read this sutta together with the Sāmagāmasutta, we see a limited form of participatory democracy coming into being, where the purity of the teaching is not left to the whims of an individual, however gifted he might be, but subject to a process of communal deliberation.

As Thomassen³⁴ was quoted as saying above, the movement itself became rational and a personal vision was transformed into a set of rules. But the use of the passive case does not transmit the entire story of how this transformation happened in early Buddhism. Remarkably, the one doing this transforming was the founder himself, in the Sāmagāmasutta. As Piyasilo³⁵ has shown, the Buddha was quite uncomfortable with the entire concept of charisma and made considerable efforts to suppress it even while he was still alive:

Although the Buddha has not formally proscribed the use of charisma, there are a number of Sutra accounts showing the Buddha's discouragement, even disapproval, of it. In the Araṇavibhaṅga Sutta, for example, the Buddha admonishes that monks 'should speak quite slowly, not hurriedly' so that 'the body does not tire and thought does not suffer and the sound does not suffer and the throat is not affected; speech... is clear and comprehensible'. This advice makes sense when one considers that loud and gesticulatory speeches are popular with politicians, warmongers and evangelists, all of whom may be examples of charismatics. Yet it also might be argued that this very decorum of the monk or nun could be a source of charisma. That may well be so, but the charisma has a more peaceable and tranquil effect, as that found in a traditional Theravāda sermon.³⁶

We can therefore see the Buddha's decision not to transfer power to a single individual as a logical extension of an approach he followed consistently, possibly from the beginning of his ministry.

Conclusion

It was not to last, of course. In time, breakaway movements were to occur and these movements did not always see the need to perpetuate the routinization so carefully laid out by the Buddha himself. And so it is today. To mention only the most well-known examples, Tantric Buddhists created a system of succession-by-rebirth³⁷ and Zen Buddhists follow distinct lineages in which the master of a lineage appoints one or more “dharma heirs” before his death.³⁸ Today we can see Buddhist organisations taking recourse to secular courts to question the rights of certain individuals to act as the “chief priest” of temples.³⁹

Even within Theravada Buddhism, in many ways the most conservative form of Buddhism extant today, we can see how other forms of routinization have emerged, with different lineages and different wielders of power and influence. Marston, for example, discusses the reintroduction of doctrinally pure Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia:

... the decision was made to have only one monastic order in Cambodia. While it was not initially called Mahanikay, most observers see it as representing a continuation of the Mahanikay tradition much more than the Thammayut. Some early attempts to restore the Thammayut order were suppressed. In 1980 a group of Theravada monks came from Vietnam to re-establish the monastic lineage, ordaining seven Cambodian monks, including the *current Mahanikay patriarch*, Tep Vong, and from that time on *only monks who had been ordained within that lineage were recognized*.⁴⁰

All of this seems to take us very far away from the Buddha’s insistence that no individual should lead the order and that monks should restore harmony by reaching consensus or failing that, by a majority vote, with dissenters given many chances to recant. Can we deduce from this that reversion to a traditional pattern of routinization is inevitable?

Perhaps not. It is easy for us, at a remove of twenty-five centuries, to look at the fragmentation that characterizes Buddhism on the doctrinal and organizational levels and to judge the project a failure. But did the Buddha ever expect his teachings to endure this long? When nuns were allowed to form their own community, the Buddha remarked that the expected longevity of the order had now been reduced from a thousand to five hundred years. A joke, of course, and possibly a later insertion into the Canon.⁴¹ But underlying that remark we see an expectation among the Buddha or at least among the early Buddhists, that eventually, the Buddhist order, like anything else, would succumb to impermanence (*anicca*). And impermanence, in the Buddhist view, need not involve a total

disappearance, only that something gradually changes beyond recognition.⁴² Buddhism does not regard itself as exempt from the process of universal impermanence that it preaches, as we can see in its central eschatological myth described in the *Cakkavattisihanādasutta*⁴³, where Buddhism gradually degrades and declines and needs to be rediscovered anew by the next Buddha, Metteya.

From the Buddhist point of view, therefore, it was inevitable that the Buddha's prescriptions for the routinization of his charisma would fall into disuse over time. But the fact of universal impermanence tells us nothing about the direction it will take. Whatever the Buddha might have prescribed, it would eventually have changed. Even if he had gone the conventional route and appointed, say, Sāriputta to succeed him, the chances that today there would have been a single Buddhism whose leader could trace his authority directly to Sāriputta would be nil.

From the perspective of Weberian sociology too, we should be careful not to regard routinization as a once-off event. Weber himself hinted at this when he wrote "The process of routinization is ... not by any means confined to the problem of succession and does not stop when this has been solved".⁴⁴ No later Buddhist may have enjoyed the same level of charisma as the Buddha, or the movements they founded would today be known by their names instead of his. Yet some of them must have had some charisma of their own, and upon their deaths, the routinization question would have arisen all over again, and would have been solved in ways appropriate to that time and place. A Nāgārjuna, an Asaṅga, a Padmasambhāva or a Huineng might not be a Buddha, but would not be easily replaced either.

We can see then, that the transmission of charisma Buddhist history is not a steady state of regression from the ideal proclaimed by the Buddha. Instead, if we may borrow a term from evolutionary biology, it is a punctuated equilibrium, with long periods of tranquil routinized charisma being transmitted along well-established lines, followed by short bursts of charisma emanating from a highly charismatic individual who nevertheless elects to remain in the broad Buddhist tradition. Each time, the routinization question arises once again, even though the charismatic individual might not have met the full Weberian definition of a "founder".

Consider Huineng: in the various hagiographies about him, much is made of the handing over of the robe and bowl of his master, symbolizing the transmission of authority within the Zen tradition.⁴⁵ But after him, the practice seems to have died out and transmission became a direct "mind-to-mind" process "beyond speech and words". There remains a ritual that involves the handing over of a bowl and a ceremonial cloth in at least some Zen schools, but these are no longer the bowl and robe personally used by the previous master.⁴⁶ There is a reference to the foundational myth of Zen, but the actual, historical rite is not duplicated. Clearly *something* happened at roughly this period, in some way there has been a

renewed routinization with a de-emphasizing of the physical aspect of the symbolic act.

Elsewhere, I have argued that Buddhist history as a whole can be seen as the repeated occurrence of four distinct phases: Representation, Relational Positioning, Respectability and Re-enlightenment.⁴⁷ It seems that the smaller process of routinization of charisma, at least in Buddhism, follows a similar process. First there is the Presentation of the charisma of a specific person, be it the Buddha or a lesser figure. This is followed by the crisis of routinization, analogous to the way Buddhism as a whole needs to relate to the society in which it finds itself. What follows is a long period of Respectability, in which little innovation occurs but Buddhism maintains its position in the status quo; and finally a new teacher arrives and the entire process repeats itself, if perhaps on a smaller scale.

If we look on the process from this point of view, then it becomes clear that each instance of routinization takes place in a specific milieu, an environment awash with factors that make a specific form of routinization either possible or impossible. A routinization that would work in 6th century BCE India might simply not be feasible in 6th Century CE China. Indeed, it may be the case that only in the specific circumstances of his time and place could the Buddha have given the instructions he did give in the *Sāmagāmasutta* and confidently expect them to be carried out. Exactly what factors made it possible we may never know with certainty.

One thing does become clear, however. The routinization that follows the death of the founder of a religion is a historical happenstance. It provides no indisputable guide to what will happen after the deaths of later sages, prophets or reformers within that tradition.

Notes:

¹ J. G. Melton, "Another Look at New Religions", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 527 (1993): 106.

² M. Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

³ A. F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements", *American Anthropologist*, 58 (1956): 275.

⁴ R. C. Tucker, "The Theory of Charismatic Leadership", *Daedalus*, 97 (1968).

⁵ O. B. Van der Sprenkel, "Max Weber on China", *History and Theory*, 3 (1964).

⁶ R. Begg, "Hadith as a Means of Routinizing Charisma", *Religion & Theology* 19 (2012): 110-12.

⁷ L. Fogelin. "Ritual and presentation in Early Buddhist Religious Architecture", *Asian Perspectives* 42 (2003): 148.

⁸ B. Thomassen, "Alexander the Great as Charismatic Leader: A Weberian perspective on the Life and Death of Alexander" (paper presented at the AUR interdisciplinary workshop on "Who was Alexander the Great?", October 11, 2005): 10.

⁹ *Anupadasutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, sutta 111.

¹⁰ Bhikkhu – a Buddhist monk.

¹¹ T. W. Rhys Davids, and W. Stede, (ed.) *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary* (London: Pali Text Society, 1986).

¹² Digha Nikāya, sutta 16.

¹³ For an early example, see G. De Lorenzo. *Gli ultimi giorni di Gotamo Buddha: Dal Mahāparinibbānasutta del Canone Pāli* (Bari: G. Laterza & Figli. 1948).

¹⁴ For a more recent example, see P. Gnanarama, *The Mission Accomplished. A Historical Analysis of the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta of the Digha Nikāya of the Pali Canon* (Singapore: Ti-Sarana Buddhist Association, 1997).

¹⁵ Majjhima Nikāya, sutta 104.

¹⁶ Majjhima Nikāya, sutta 56.

¹⁷ The status of Nāthaputta in the Theravāda literature will be more fully explored in an upcoming article.

¹⁸ Direct quotations in translation taken from the versions of the suttas available from <http://www.metta.lk/>, translated by Upalavanna.

¹⁹ Majjhima Nikāya, sutta 103.

²⁰ D. R. Loy, "How to Reform a Serial Killer: The Buddhist Approach to Restorative Justice", *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 7 (2000): 158

²¹ Loy, 155

²² C. Kabil Singh, *The Bhikkhuni Patimokkha of the Six Schools* (Bangkok: Buddha Dharma Education Association, 1991): 16-19.

²³ J. Blumenthal, "Towards a Buddhist Theory of Justice", *Journal of Global Buddhism*, 10 (2009): 339

²⁴ Y. Matsunami, "Conflict Within the Development of Buddhism", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 6 (1979): 330

²⁵ J. S. Walters, "The Buddha's Bad Karma: A Problem in the History of Theravada Buddhism", *Numen*, vol. 37 (1990).

²⁶ Matsunami, 337-8

²⁷ Thomassen, 10

²⁸ Digha Nikāya, sutta 26.

²⁹ Majjhima Nikāya, sutta 108.

³⁰ Majjhima Nikāya, sutta 84.

³¹ Majjhima Nikāya, sutta 94.

³² Majjhima Nikāya, sutta 124.

³³ P. Granoff, "The Ambiguity of Miracles. Buddhist Understandings of Supernatural Power", *East and West*, 46 (1996).

³⁴ Thomassen, 10

³⁵ Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism* (Petalang Jaya: Dharmafarer Enterprises 1992):144-146.

³⁶ Piyasilo, 145

³⁷ P. Logan, "Tulkus in Tibet", *Asia Quarterly*, (28 January 2006).

³⁸ Mountain and Rivers Order of Zen Buddhism, *Dharma Heirs*, <http://www.mro.org/daido/the-future/>

³⁹ Soka Gakkai International, "Lawsuit by Nichiren Shoshu is Dismissed", (31 July 2009) , <http://www.sokaspirit.org/soka-spirit-update/lawsuit-by-nichiren-shoshu-is-dismissed>.

⁴⁰ J. Marston, "Cambodian Religion since 1989", in *Beyond democracy in Cambodia: political reconstruction in a post-conflict society*, edited by J. Öjendal and M. Lilja. (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2009): 226, emphasis added.

⁴¹ H. Hecker. *Ananda: The Guardian of the Dhamma*. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication

Society, 2006).

⁴² O. H. de A. Wijesekera, *The Three Signata: Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta (with extracts from the Buddha's discourses)*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society (2008).

⁴³ Digha Nikāya, sutta 26

⁴⁴ Weber, 253.

⁴⁵ J. M. Thompson, *Huineng (Hui-neng)*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/huineng/>

⁴⁶ H. Downey, e-mail message to author, 20 February 2011.

⁴⁷ M. Clasquin. "Transplanting Buddhism: An investigation into the spread of Buddhism, with reference to Buddhism in South Africa", D Litt et Phil thesis, University of South Africa, 2000.

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