

# Harmonizing Wisdom: Exploring the Synchronicity of Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism in Indonesia's Pluralistic Tapestry

## ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore the parallels between Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism, focusing on their teachings of wisdom. To achieve this, qualitative research methods such as interviews, observation, and documentation were employed for data collection. The research findings showcase the inheritance of beliefs and practices from the White Lotus sect within Maitreya Buddhism, a sect deeply influenced by Taoist teachings. The syncretism of Taoist beliefs within Maitreya Buddhism is evident through the existence of the White Lotus sectarian influence. Moreover, this study unveils shared historical beliefs that serve as a spiritual link between humans, Earth, and heaven. Both Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism emphasize the importance of truth teachings in connecting these realms. Additionally, the convergence between the two traditions lies in their belief systems centered on moral ethics for creation and salvation. Maitreya Buddhism recognizes the future coming of Maitreya Buddha, who will descend to Earth to save humanity from the negative impact of misguided teachings, while Taoism also acknowledges the Enlightening Teacher. This research offers valuable insights into the intertwining of Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism in the diverse religious landscape of Indonesia. The parallels found in their teachings of wisdom and shared beliefs provide a deeper appreciation of the spiritual interconnectedness in this pluralistic society.

**Keywords:** Doctrinal Similarities; Maitreya; Taoism.

## ARTICLE INFO

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### Article History:

Received: 20-01-2023

Revised: 17-03-2023

Accepted: 10-04-2023

Published: 31-05-2023

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### How to Cite (APA Style):

Pratiwi, I. A. (2023). Harmonizing Wisdom: Exploring the Synchronicity of Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism in Indonesia's Pluralistic Tapestry. *Subhasita: Journal of Buddhist and Religious Studies*, 1(2), 107-124. DOI: 10.53417/jsb.103

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## INTRODUCTION

In the diverse landscape of Indonesia, where pluralism thrives in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion, the study of interconnections between different belief systems gains profound social and scientific value (Hefner, 2018). The coexistence of various religions, including Buddhism, is a testament to the nation's commitment to tolerance and inclusivity (Abe, 1997; Pajarianto, Pribadi, & Sari, 2022; Parker, 2014). This research aims to shed light on the intriguing parallels between Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism, two significant spiritual traditions in Indonesia, by exploring their teachings of wisdom.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of the religious fabric in Indonesia, contributing to the promotion of interfaith harmony and mutual respect. By exploring the similarities between Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism, we can further enrich the discourse on pluralism and foster a climate of acceptance and appreciation for diverse spiritual paths. Understanding how these traditions coalesce and influence each other within the Indonesian context will pave the way for greater social cohesion and a more profound appreciation of the country's multicultural heritage.

While both Taoism (Riyani, 2022; Widisuseno, 2007, 2011) and Maitreya Buddhism (Brown, 1990; Mohamed Sultan, Karuppannan, Nyoto, & Lestari, 2023; Syukur, 2022) are well-known in their own right, the scholarly exploration of their shared aspects and potential syncretism within the Maitreya Buddhist sect is an original contribution. Existing literature has mostly focused on individual traditions in isolation, and there is a notable gap in research that delves into the points of convergence between these two systems of wisdom. By addressing this knowledge gap, this study seeks to advance the field of religious studies and provide fresh insights into the dynamic interplay of beliefs and practices within pluralistic societies.

Maitreya, in Buddhist tradition a future Buddha, is currently described as a bodhisattva residing in the *Tushita* heaven, who will descend to earth to re-preach the Dharma (law) when the teachings of Gautama Buddha have fully decayed. Maitreya is the earliest Bodhisattva developed by the Mahayana sect and is mentioned in scriptures from the 3rd century. He is accepted by all schools of Buddhism and is still the only bodhisattva generally honored by the Theravada tradition (Sudarman, 1998). It is said to be the Maitreya school because in the altar of every worship in every monastery, there is an image or statue of Maitreya Buddha which is highly regarded and even becomes the central aspect believed by Buddhists. The Maitreya Buddha taught three things to be applied in the soul of his followers, namely *Sraddha* (faith), *Sila* (self-discipline), and *Samadhi* (meditation) in all self-cultivation of his followers. In addition, there is also a statue of the Founding Teacher of Buddhism, namely *Sang Hyang Buddha Sakyamuni* (Tjin Bun Loi, interview 1 February, 2020).

The suttas state that at the time of people with a lifespan of 80,000 years, there will appear in the world a fully enlightened *Arahant* Buddha named Maitreya, endowed with wisdom and conduct, an enlightener who knows the world, a human trainer incomparable to tame, the Master of gods and humans, enlightened and blessed. In addition, it is also mentioned that Maitreya Buddha will be ten times greater than Gautama Buddha. This is the only mention of Maitreya in *Canon-Pali*. Later traditions describe him as the Lord of the World (Wen, n.d.).

After making many offerings, Maitreya took the Bodhisattva vows of the Great Power *Tathagata* in front of many other Buddhas. Since then he has led countless sentient beings to enlightenment, guiding them along the path of the three higher trainings of discipline, concentration and wisdom. Maitreya's name appears fifth, and the buddha of that era, the *Tathagata* predicted that Maitreya would be the fifth buddha in the present era, while Shakyamuni would be the fourth (Wang, n.d.). Maitreya is the figure who will continue the universal truth.

The universal truth is an aspect of an ancient Chinese teaching commonly referred to as the universal teaching. Over time, this teaching was named Taoism. This teaching contains a path or wisdom maxim for humans to achieve the true purpose of life (MABGI, n.d.). This teaching was widely adopted by various kings in ancient China to achieve their glory. Among them were King Sen Nong of the *Nan Fang Ti Wang* dynasty, King Wu Wang of the *Cou* dynasty, King Ie In of the *Sang* dynasty, and many more (MABGI, n.d.-b). There are similarities in the wisdom teachings between Maitreya Buddhism and Taoism. Because both teach about various aspects of wisdom. One of them is the invitation to respect the teacher and prioritize the Tao found in Guang Ji's household rules. While in Taoism, the same is true. It is taught to respect the illuminating teacher (mentor teacher) and always carry out the basic Taoist wisdom.

The primary aim of this study is to explore the similarities between Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism within the Indonesian context, with a specific focus on their teachings of wisdom and shared beliefs. The objectives of this research are to examine the historical influences of Taoism on the development of the White Lotus sect in Maitreya Buddhism, to investigate the doctrinal and spiritual connections between these two traditions, and to elucidate how their shared teachings contribute to a holistic perspective on wisdom and moral ethics. Through these objectives, we seek to contribute to a broader understanding of religious dynamics in Indonesia and foster interfaith dialogue in the pursuit of harmony and coexistence.

## METHOD

This research employs a combination of qualitative research methods and descriptive research methods. Qualitative research methods, also known as naturalistic research methods, allow for the exploration of multiple realities, embracing a holistic, dynamic, and constructed understanding of the phenomena under study. Through interactive engagement with the data sources, the researcher aims to uncover the true essence and meaning of the subject matter (Creswell, 2013).

Descriptive research, on the other hand, is utilized to analyze and describe the case under investigation without the intention of drawing precise or extensive conclusions (Sugiyono, 2018). By adopting this approach, the study aims to provide a detailed account of the similarities between Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism, with a specific focus on their teachings of wisdom and shared beliefs within the Indonesian context.

The data sources for this research consist of both primary and secondary data. Primary data is acquired through interviews, observation, and documentation, allowing for a firsthand exploration of the interconnections between Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism as they manifest in the lives and practices of adherents. Secondary data, derived from various scholarly sources such as books, journals, and other relevant literature, serves to complement and support the primary data, enriching the depth and scope of the study (Yin, 2018).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research data, a rigorous data analysis process is employed, which involves data reduction, organization, and presentation in narrative form. Through this analysis, the researcher aims to extract the essential threads of information and conclusions pertaining to the similarities between these two traditions. The research findings are then verified through careful examination and interpretation of the data, ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of the research outcomes (Creswell, 2013).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. History of Budhi Dharma Monastery Bandung

Vihara Buddhi Dharma Bandung was inaugurated right in 1995. This means that it has been established for about 25 years until now. This monastery is administratively sheltered by the Guang Ji Buddhist Assembly of Indonesia. Initially, before being authorized administratively, this monastery was located in Bumi Kopo Kencana Housing, Jalan Pilar Kencana No. 23. At that time it was in the period of spreading the teachings by the clergy who had joined the Guang Ji Indonesia Buddhist Assembly. However, after enough time to preach, it was time to find a new location for the Taoist congregation to worship. Budhi Dharma Monastery Bandung is located at Jl. Suryani No. 33, Warung Muncang, Bandung Kulon District, Bandung City, West Java 40211. Budhi Dharma Monastery has coordinates 06o 57' LS; 107 o 41' BT. Budhi Dharma Monastery is located a little close to the city center. The location around the monastery has a variety of places of worship from different religions. To the north is a mosque, to the south, approximately 4 meters away, is a Protestant church. In addition, there is also a Funeral Home for Chinese residents around the location, namely the Funeral Home of the Priangan Social Fund Foundation.



Figure 1 Budhi Dharma Monastery

### 2. Taoist Doctrinal Beliefs in the Maitreya Buddhist School

The basic characteristic of Taoist beliefs and myths is syncretism. According to Mr. Aloj, who serves as the chairman of the Budhi Dharma foundation, he explains

that, He claims that Taoism is guided by a single principle and therefore devised a system by which the Three Doctrines, namely Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism merge into One. In fact, they did not limit themselves to the Three Doctrines but constantly used Christianity and Islam as well. This liberal attitude towards various religious doctrines is reflected in the traditions they approve of (Aloi, interview 9 February, 2020).

A mixture of ideas and notions drawn from China's three main religious and ethical doctrines, coupled with extensive borrowings from local superstitions, give the sect's teachings a widespread and diffuse character. But there were many earlier popular religious movements that influenced Taoism, including Taoist and *Manichaeian* groups, and two Buddhist traditions, Maitreyan and Pure Land.

The earliest Taoist groups emerged in the late second century CE during the decline of the Han dynasty. But after the mid-5th century, popular Taoism seems to have moved in two directions, eschatology-oriented sectarianism, or being absorbed by folk religion. Although Taoism remained a distinct tradition centered on its own gods and rituals, it had a strong influence on other groups, including eschatological models of theocracy and war and an emphasis on healing and magic enchantments. All later Buddhist sects adopted these characteristics to a greater or lesser extent.

### **Foundation of White Lotus Theology of the Maitreya Buddhist School**

Manichaeism entered China in 694 with the Uighurs, a Central Asian tribe that had great military and political influence in China at the time. When the Uighur kingdom collapsed in 843, Manichaeism was immediately banned, its temples destroyed, and its priesthood executed or dispersed. But some priests escaped to southern China and reached Fukien. A temple, where worship was dedicated to Manichaeian Buddha, was built in the Yuan period in Chuan-chou of Fukien province (Aloi, interview 9 February, 2020).

Despite amalgamations with Buddhism and Taoism, Chinese popular Manichaeism retains the dualistic core of its original doctrine. The main scriptural text of Manichaeism is called the Sutra of the Two Principles and the Three Stages. The two principles are light and darkness, and the three stages mean past, present and future. Manichaeans influence their buddha partners indirectly at some points, and directly at one point.

First, Manichaeism provides a precedent for full-time lay vegetarianism. Although Buddhist monks have long eaten an exclusively vegetarian diet, the common practice of lay Buddhists is intermittent vegetarianism on regularly stated days each month in fulfillment of vows for the sake of granted wishes, or meatless feasts on anniversaries.

Second, the Manichaeans offer a well-known model of an independent religious sect consisting of laypeople, having its own scriptures, strictly organized around hierarchical leaders, and succeeding in the practice of mutual aid.

Third, Manicha's three-stage chronology may serve to reinforce the influence of a similar time scheme that has been independently developed in Chinese Buddhism. The basic time scheme of White Lotus and Taoist beliefs is the doctrine of three successive world stages: the past (Green Yang), to be ushered in by

Lamplight Buddha; the present (Red Yang), to be ushered in by Sakyamuni; and the future (White Yang), to be ushered in by Maitreya.

Fourth, the Manichaeans provide the clearest precedent in China for the sun as the primary object of worship. The sun is the primary object in the eschatology and worship of the Green Yang Sect and the Eight Trigrams Sect. It thus seems reasonable to conclude that sectarian sun worship is related to Manichaean influence, however indirectly.

Some scholars argue that the White Lotus and related sects originated from sectarian Manichaeism, but other modern authors agree that while the White Lotus was influenced by several different traditions, its original impetus came from Amitabha pietism rather than Manichaeism. However, since most Taiwanese ancestors immigrated from Fukien, the main base of Manichaeism during the tenth to fifteenth centuries, Vegetarian sects in Taiwan may have been more strongly influenced by Manichaeism than other mainland sectarian sects.

In Mahayana India Maitreya is the future Buddha. As we have noted earlier, since the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534) the Maitreya faith was very popular among the people. But despite the rich orthodox background of the Maitreya faith, there was a dissenting popular movement in this period based on a similar eschatology. The doctrine of the three stages to be ushered in by Maitreya is clear evidence of his influence on those sectarian sects.

From the end of the Yuan dynasty around 1300 onwards, the Maitreya faith was the cornerstone of White Lotus theology. While much of the Maitreya sect's impetus was absorbed by the larger movement, it continued to exist independently until at least the sixteenth century.

### **The Syncretic Context of Daoism with Buddhism**

According to Mr. Aloï, who acts as the head of the Budhi Dharma foundation, he explained that the syncretism of Taoism must be understood against the background of the long process of hardening Buddhism (Aloï, interview 9 February 2020). Meanwhile, there is also a tendency towards syncretism between Buddhism and the Maitreya school that developed around them. The most important influence on syncretism is the "Cult of Three Religions" with the slogan "Three religions are one", the three being Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Many scholars say that while this "Three Religions" tradition goes back to the third century, it was not until the Tang (seventh to tenth centuries) that it gained public recognition. In Sung times it became so popular among the people that there were temples of the three religions all over the country. The fusion reached its peak in the late Ming, at a time of greatest sectarian literary activity.

When elites encouraged such syncretism, it is understandable that folk sects with poorly educated lay leadership could develop their own myths and scriptures that differed from their Buddhist beginnings.

Sectarian beliefs are a rich combination of background traditions, fused with charisma and hope. Therefore, when Taoism devised the name "Way of Unity" and the slogan "Three in One" in the late nineteenth century, it followed a long tradition of syncretism. It borrowed from the Confucians their rules of ethical behavior, from the Taoists their understanding of cosmogony and magical rituals, and from the

Buddhists some sacred texts as well as a number of holy names, various specialized terminologies and universal salvation. On the other hand, they do not limit themselves to the Three Religions but constantly draw on Christianity and Islam as well. But while the doctrines of Taoism show Christian and Muslim influences, these influences are mostly indirect and peripheral. Some concepts of syncretism between Maitreya Buddhism and Taoism are:

a. Creation and Salvation Mythology

The Tao, which is one consequence of the White Lotus system, propagates the same creation and salvation mythology. The Eternal Mother (*Wu-sheng*) is the supreme deity of these groups. Creation Myth. The creation story is stated as follows.

Eternal Mother Yang gave birth to Yin and Yang, and two children, a boy and a girl. She named the boy Fu-hsi and the girl Nu-kua They were the original ancestors of humans. They got married. After the end of the primeval chaos, they gave birth to 9.6 billion sons and daughters from the imperial womb, and also countless lucky stars. there is no definitive answer as to what the background of this creation mythology is, where the Lao-mu motif came from, and when it became part of sectarian beliefs. Although for these questions, some suggestions are possible.

Regarding the origins of the Eternal Mother, some scholars say that during the Qing period (1644-1912), her myth was part of the common folk religion. Of course, there were earlier antecedents. For example, it seems quite possible that historically she herself was a later manifestation of the Queen Mother of the West (*Hsi Wang-mu*).

Mother West is mentioned in the Shang dynasty (1500-1050 BC). In the first century AD, she emerged as a popular goddess who lived on the mountain peak of Kunlun. She had a number of sons and daughters, all of whom were immortal. Thus, in the legend of Hsi Wang-mu, we see many elements of Lao-mu mythology. Lao-mu also presides over the glorious paradise at the top of Kun-lun mountain. And, like Hsi Wang-mu's children, Lao-mu's people also attain immortality, albeit in its Buddhist form, the cessation of birth and death.

Another historian, Huang Yu-pien, asserts that the Lao-mu myth first appeared in the late Ming dynasty. There is a report saying that Lao-mu was the reincarnation of a white donkey who was killed by illumination after preaching a "heretical religion" with Piao Kao in 1573. After his death, Piao Kao, the central leader of the late Ming sect, began to worship him as the founder of the religion and wrote texts exalting him as the creator of mankind, and so on. Later sect leaders, such as Huan-yuan, Kung Chang, and others, all accepted his teachings and began to worship Lao-mu. There are some other accounts that differ somewhat from this one. But these ambiguous accounts agree at least that Lao-mu started teaching after becoming human.

On the other hand, the Immortal Mother's function is usually paralleled by Amitabha as a savior being in heaven who sends intercessors, and to whom humans pray for grace. But the Eternal Mother is also believed to have appeared on earth herself, in this case more like the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin, who manifested herself in many forms to save the lost. Thus, Wu-sheng Lao-mu seems to have been created by the sects themselves from the rich tradition of female deities in the background of popular religion. In a similar situation, many of the Taoist creation stories are based on earlier mythologies. Sect leaders clearly combined traditional cosmology with

popular female deities and the original motif of human creation by a divine brother-sister pair to form a distinctive sectarian origin myth.

b. Safety Myths

The flow of salvation is stated historically that the Eternal Mother sent her children to the Eastern Land to live in the world. Here their heads were surrounded by light, on their bodies they wore garments of five colors, and with their feet they rode two magical wheels. But after they reached the Eastern Land they all became lost in the world of red dust and the Mother sent a letter calling them to meet again at the Dragon Flower assembly.

The story goes on to say that the inhabitants of the earth were separated from the Eternal Mother by their "ignorance". Because she wanted to save them from the approaching catastrophe, she showed them the way of salvation by sending some saints to teach people to recover their true nature. But Men refused to listen and persisted in recognizing the mother of their bodies but not the Mother of their spirits. Now all heavenly spirits descended to save mankind, and finally Lao-mu wrote a letter in his own blood, urging everyone to repent.

All these teachings are found in the sixteenth century White Lotus texts. And from the texts of the Taoist Precious Scrolls. We can clearly see how the old Maitreya faith provides the structure of salvation for your Lao.

c. The Myth of Eschatology.

The basic structure of mainline sect eschatology is Buddhist-Maitreyan. Although in the Indian Buddhist tradition, Maitreya's arrival is still thousands of years in the future, and he has no direct involvement in political life, Chinese sectarians radically foresaw the expectation of his arrival, combined with popular ideas of descending sages and charismatic leadership, and made it fit the original theory of cyclic decay. The Chinese sectarian theory of Maitreya's arrival, and made it conform to the original theory of cyclic decay.

In common with many earlier sectarians, Taoism sees human history as intimately involved with salvation by a series of Buddhas, three of whom are Lamplighter Buddha, Shkamuni Buddha, and most recently Maitreya Buddha. The Buddhas were commissioned by the Eternal Mother to bring tidings of salvation to floundering humanity. For Taoism, recorded history is divided into three periods, corresponding to the periods when each of these last three Buddhas ruled, and are referred to as the Green, Red, and White ages, respectively.

For contemporary Taoist sectarians, the White Yang Age began in 1912, corresponding to the founding of the Republic of China. The first patriarch of the White Yang, was Lu Chung-i ("Central Unity"). He was born in Shantung in 1853. Lu is believed to be an incarnation of Maitreya Buddha. The second master of the White age is Chang Kuang-pi, more commonly called Chang T'ien-jan. He also shares the alias Kung-ch'ang with the seventeenth-century author of The Dragon Flower. Chang T'ien-jan is considered an incarnation of Chi-kung Buddha.

Taoism was actually founded as an independent organization only in 1928 by Chang T'ien-jan himself. He is said to have led the sect from around 1925 until his death in 1947. In the Taoist texts, there is chaos and confusion in the present age. This is what they call "the catastrophe at the end of the third period." The intense eschatological orientation of Taoist texts, in which the upheavals and sufferings of



the last age often appear, supports the urgent task of proclaiming and centralizing the Way.

### Three Realms Rescue

According to Mr. Aloï, in the book *Jalan Ketuhanan* there is an explanation of the human soul in various realms (Aloï, interview 9 February, 2020). People who invoke the Way of Godhead mean to become disciples of *Ci Kung* Buddha, commonly referred to as the Great Teacher (*Se Cun*) and the Bodhisattva of the Moon as the Holy Mother Teacher (*Se Mu*). Because both Buddhas received the Word of God, they were able to bring about a general salvation in the world for those who were meant to be and at the same time saved the three realms. The three realms of salvation include:

a. Eve realm

In this realm, there are Gods and Goddesses, Angels who inhabit the heavenly realm who invoke the Tao and successfully practice it. Gods or angels who invoke the Tao must have an inviter and bearer in the world, who is the soul mate of the deity or angel in question in a past life. Gods and Goddesses invoke the Tao in order to receive liberation instructions to attain Nirvana (the highest level of Buddhism).

b. Nature of form

Relating to the world realm. The Tao saves those who are matched with him, then meets with the inviter and bearer, and an ordination is performed at the temple to invoke the divine path.

c. The spirit realm

People who have invoked the Dao in this world and are sincere in their hearts and practice and cultivate themselves, can one day hold a ceremony to raise the spirits of their parents or ancestors who have not invoked the Dao so that they can be raised from the afterlife or hell realm to Nirvana.

### 3. Religious Practice

A discussion of sectarian leadership must begin with the traditional Chinese understanding of the integral role of humans in the cosmos, as it is this role that enables the richness of charismatic and intermediate phenomena. According to Mr. Aloï, who serves as the chairman of the Budhi Dharma foundation, he explained that in China, because humans and gods are on the same continuum, most of the deities of folk religions are deified people (Aloï, interview 9 February 2020). This traditional anthropology dominated popular consciousness well into the 20th century and is still a living force in Taiwanese villages. The most important element in the theoretical background of sectarian leadership is the widely held belief in the "reincarnation of bodhisattvas." The impulse has always been toward "emerging gods," toward more direct and immediate contact with divine forces. Even saviors like Maitreya and Amitabha sometimes seemed too distant and were replaced by more familiar and accessible figures. While Buddhist folk beliefs dominate the Precious Scrolls, there is also a record of purely popular-Taoist theories of incarnational leadership. The basic structure of these leaders as incarnated deities continued into the 20th century.

On the other hand, this power of ascent and descent has its roots in Chinese folk shamanism. The character of the god (*Wu*) appears both in the Shang dynasty

(fifteenth to tenth centuries BCE) bone prophecies and in the Book of History (*Shu-ching*). In pre-Han China there was a form of shamanic priesthood that was gradually pushed out of state circles by Confucianism and became a functioning priesthood of folk religion. These shamans were both male and female, although in ancient times female shamans may have pre-dominated. All these activities still existed in southern China in the late 19th century under names such as Wu Master (*Sai-kong*), Red Head (*Hung-tou*), Jumping Boy (*Tiao-tung*), and Foretelling Youth (*Tang-ki*).

However, another type of such medium is spirit writing (*Fu-luan*), where messages are transmitted by the movement of wooden tools on the surface of sand or flour. The tradition of spirit writing is said to have been brought to Taiwan around 1890. The characteristics of spirit writing groups in general are particularly prominent in Daoism, which is strongly associated with writing and scripture. Some scholars point out that a common way of divination can be ordered along a continuum from the least precise to the most precise. They include divination block (*Poah poe*), verse revelation (*Thiu ch'iam*), dream revelation (*Khun sian-bang*), spirit medium (*Tang-ki*) and spirit writing medium (*Wei-hu*).

Mediums are classified by means of divination, not in their psychodynamics, micropolitics, or orthodoxy, but in the rigor with which they can tie their messages to the specific needs of their clients. From an anthropological perspective, whether a medium writes or speaks does not seem to matter much. The difference matters to many customers.

There is nothing uplifting about *Tang-ki's* social position. The association of *Fu-chi* divination with literature and literature with upper-class life in general makes it respected among people with traditional values. The difference in social valuation of the two types of mediums, combined with potential functional similarities, caused some people to emphasize the differences, some the similarities. Taoists, who would elevate *Pai-Luan's* activities as worthy in particular, often condemn *Tang-Ki* as "Superstition."

## Ritual

The entire ritual is based on Buddhist models, with the addition of some Taoist and Confucian folk elements. Taoism, on the other hand, has quite complex meditation rituals, essentially Taoist. Jordan reports in his field study that there are four main rituals in Taoism.



**Figure 2. Maitreya Buddhist rituals**

1. The Ritual of Saluting and Leaving the Venerable Presence. It is performed three times a day and is to be used as an elaborate form of greeting at the sect's altar when entering a temple. The ritual consists of nineteen "preceded by salutations": five to the Brightest Emperor, three to "all celestial gods and saints", three to "Patriarch Maitreya", and the last eight to the Ancient Buddha, Chi-kung, "Bodhisattva-compassion", and several former teachers and initiators.
2. Ritual for Serving Incense. This is for use as a regular ritual of the house chapel, and has a somewhat more elaborate form on the first and fifteenth of each month of the month than on other days.
3. Ritual to Invite Spirits to the Altar. It is used to invite the divine presence to the hall preliminary to initiation.
4. Ritual for Path Transmission. It is used to transmit the secrets of the sect to new initiates, making them "members." The "Three Treasures" introduced in the initiation ceremony are: "Mantra", and "Mysterious Gate". Daoism asserts that if one does not know the Three Treasures, one will never properly understand the religious texts, and the effort will be in vain. It is strictly forbidden to divulge the secrets of the sect to outsiders. If one does so, the thunder god will smash them to pieces.

Due to the emphasis on reading classical texts and on performing simple and standard rituals, there is relatively little spirit writing (*Fu-Chi*) in most Taoist meeting rooms. However, the tradition of *Fu-Chi* divination remains. It is performed both in temples operated by the sect and in some gatherings in private homes. Although there are some criteria under which one or two people can have a personal revelation that manages to compel some action from some members, the freedom to do this is very small.

The validity of revelation is focused on *Fu-Chi* divination, and an individual pai-luan member's adventures in the sacred landscape seem to become suspect when they begin to require the participation of others. On the other hand, on many occasions, sect revelators use their chi not only to inspire their followers in action and achievement, but also to maintain their subsectarian identity and to support competition among the various "Seniors".

## Taoist Ethics Moral Teachings

In order to live and practice daily life, Taoists should have the following morals or behaviors:

1. Honoring heaven and earth (*Cing Thien Ti*), Bowing to the saints (*Li Sen Ming*)

Always have gratitude for God's grace, appreciate His greatness, like heaven and earth that provide life for all living things, need to emulate by helping each other. Being non-discriminating and open-minded, prioritizing the interests of many people, not being wasteful, not wasting food and all the necessities of life but living simply considering that there are still many other people who are still lacking. Honoring the Prophets and Angels as if they were all around us, and holding prayer ceremonies to honor and remember their services and sacrifices for mankind, also means following in their footsteps and developing the spirit of sacrifice and devotion.

2. Love of Country (*Ai Kuo*), Loyal in duty of obligation (*Cung Se*)

Being a good citizen, obeying the laws of the State, participating in maintaining security and increasing the prosperity of the State. As a leader, you must set an example and prioritize the interests of the people over personal interests.

3. Upholding the value of decency and having a noble personality (*Tun Phing Cung Li*)

Having a good personality, polite in demeanor and speech, always upholding the values of politeness in relationships, following ethics and norms or customs that teach human values.

4. Filial piety (*Siau Fu Mu*), honoring the Great Master (*Cun Se Cun*)

Filial piety is the most basic of human virtues. If we are not filial to our parents who have painstakingly cared for us and raised us, there is no point in bowing down to God. We must respect the Great Master with all our heart, for if it is not the Great Master who gives us True Guidance (Dao), we will never be liberated from reincarnation.

5. There is trust among friends (*Sin Peng You*), getting along well with neighbors (*He Siang Lin*)

In relationships, words and actions must be appropriate in order to gain trust and maintain harmony between neighbors in the neighborhood.

6. Transforming vice into virtue (*Kai Ek Siang San*), living the five human relations and the eight virtues (*Ciang Ming Wu Lu PaTte*).

Always improve your attitude and speech towards modesty and virtue, keep trying to eliminate bad traits and habits. The five (5) human relations are relations between superiors and subordinates based on attention and loyalty, relations between parents and children based on affection, relations between husbands and wives based on complementarity and understanding, relations between brothers and sisters based on harmony, relations between friends based on mutual trust. Meanwhile, the eight (8) virtues are devotion, brotherhood, loyalty, trust, courtesy, sense of righteousness, honesty and cleanliness, and shyness and repentance.

7. Developing the great teachings of the 5 Prophets (*chan fa wu ciau sen jen ce au ce*)

This means that we must learn and live the sacred teachings of the 5 Prophets and then convey them to others. The 5 Prophets include Prophet Lao Tze (*Tao Te*

*Cing*), Prophet Kong Hu Cu (*Se Su*), Sakyamuni Buddha (Buddhist scriptures), Jesus Christ (Gospel), and Prophet Muhammad (Qur'an).

8. Adhere to the noble teachings of the four cardinal points, the three principles of humanity and the five noble qualities (*khe cun sei kang chang ce ku li*)

Living and practicing the noble teachings referred to are courtesy, a sense of righteousness, honesty and cleanliness, and a sense of shame/repentance. What is meant by the three principles of humanity is maintaining the relationship between superiors and subordinates, maintaining the relationship between parents and children and maintaining the relationship between husband and wife. Meanwhile, what is meant by adhering to the five noble qualities is the core of human spiritual glory, commonly referred to as conscience or Buddhahood. These qualities include compassion, a sense of righteousness, courtesy, wisdom and trust.

9. Purifying the heart and mind (*si sin ti li*), borrowing the temporary body to cultivate the true spirit (*cie cia siu cen*).

Discarding all evil or unkind intentions and thoughts, filling the life with cultivating meritorious deeds and virtues to bring about true spiritual enlightenment.

10. Restoring the original purity of spirituality (*hui fu pen sing ce e jan*), developing the highest intellect (*chi fa liang ce liang neng ce ce san*).

By always cultivating the heart and filling the life with merit, it can gradually make the spirit bright again. The origin of the spiritual being is perfectly bright and uncontaminated, then after reincarnating for a long time, the spiritual being is covered by worldly filth and when we invoke the Tao, we always try to cultivate ourselves to make the spiritual being bright again. In cultivating ourselves, we gradually develop our intellect and wisdom towards the highest virtue.

11. Uphold yourself and then uphold others (*ci lik lik jen*), perfect yourself and then perfect others (*ci ta ta jen*).

Nurturing oneself well and then helping others, oneself realizing and practicing divinity to the best of one's ability and then guiding others to realize and practice it as well.

12. Striving for a world of peace and tranquility (*wan she cie we icing ping*), transforming the human heart into a noble one (*hua jen sin wei liang san*), wishing for a peaceful and prosperous world (*ie se cie wei ta thung*).

Practicing divinity starts from forming a good self, a harmonious family, then trying to guide others who are expected to convey it again to everyone, and hopefully one day all people can practice virtue, moral nobility so that one day there will be a safe society and a peaceful and prosperous world.

#### **4. Taoist Views on Religion**

##### **Views on the One True God**

Buddhism says that a clear bright heart will find the true soul, all efforts return to the One. Taoism says that cultivating the heart forges the true soul, embracing the original and defending the One. This is the eternal truth that will not change. Religion is an endeavor to cultivate ethics and charity, to cultivate conscience, and is an educational endeavor in order to have a basis for life in the

hereafter. Therefore, it can be said that cultivating Tao is practicing religion. Religion includes educational endeavors within each religion, including public education. So that people in this world always cultivate their conscience. According to Taoism, all the statements contained in all the world's religions about God in order to reach the truth are the same. Buddhism states that everyone is also a Buddha. This is proof that the meaning of all the above statements is the same, differing only in the way they are expressed. All these statements remind people to look within themselves for the One, not outside themselves.

### **Views on Symbols or Identification Marks**

The identifying mark is a holy seal. The age of the universe can be depicted in a pa kua circle. The Prophets of the five religions have received the Word of God, and were then sent to different places to spread God's teachings. Then people called God by different names. However, God is actually only one, called the Supreme Being. Buddhism calls God "Mother Buddha of the West" while Taoism calls God the King of Kings.

### **A look at the Scriptures**

The holy words are words passed down directly from mouth to mouth by the Illuminating Master to man. These holy words, if recited silently, can instantly shake the entire heavens and awaken God's compassion to help man. These five holy words act as code words only, between the mortal world and heaven. It functions like a telephone number in the world, if there is a one-letter error the message sent does not arrive.

### **A View of the Great Door**

The great door that is the main door, as the mysterious center of human control. Taoism describes it as the mysterious door of life while Buddhism calls it the door of the unbeatable Dharma. The door here is the conscience that has been enlightened by the Illuminating Master. All religions speak of the sublime science of cultivating the Higher Self (Conscience). If one does not get that one point from the Enlightening Master, one cannot know the nature of conscience. Taoism says cultivating the heart forges the true soul and Buddhism says that an enlightened heart can find the true soul.

### **What Taoism Means to Buddhists**

All humans are expected to always do good, in accordance with divine teachings. According to Mr. Akim, as a Theravada Buddhist congregation who fosters Tao, he explained that in Buddhists there is Buddha, meaning that the characteristics are possessed by all humans who achieve Buddhahood, and they will be saved (Akim, interview 4 February 2020). One way for humans to be saved in the world is by cultivating Taoism. There are similarities between Taoism and Buddhism, namely about human self-cultivation which must use common sense and a good conscience. Taoism recommends vegetarianism, and Buddhism has the same

recommendation. Even in other religions, there are reasons why vegetarians should be encouraged. However, there is a slight difference in meaning between the Taoist recommendation of vegetarianism and the Buddhist recommendation of vegetarianism. In Taoism, it is intended that humans do not slaughter any animals in order to purify all negative evil actions. Because animals are living beings that should not be slaughtered. And it is not necessarily possible to attain Buddhahood. In contrast to Buddhism, if vegetarianism is practiced, one will have the opportunity to attain Buddhahood.

Buddha made people realize that the realm of existence (body and world) is transitory, temporary and uncertain. Therefore, immediately borrow this temporary body and life to cultivate yourself, so as to re-achieve a perfectly bright spiritual self. Buddhism recognizes the rhyme that states that from the realm of existence beyond the realm of Eve and reach the original realm, namely Nirvana. It is Maitreya Buddha as the Supreme Master who at the present time receives the Word of God to lead the Expression Period and must enter the gate of Maitreya Buddhism to follow in the footsteps of Maitreya Buddha. As for the holy door, Buddhism explains that the true Dharma lies in the center of the eye, the miracle of formless Nirvana is the true self, and it is at a certain point. Of course, this sentence is still a cipher that must be solved immediately. To solve these ciphers one must go through the Illuminating Master. Without a Master of Enlightenment, it may be misinterpreted.

In the Buddhist scriptures it is recorded that in my heart there is a Buddha. That Buddha is the true Buddha. Indeed, the heart is the Buddha, and the Buddha is the heart as well. The Buddha once stated that every human being has a Buddha heart, but unfortunately that heart has disappeared. The heart has disappeared due to various factors, one of which is due to the influence of the hypnotic world. Humans are too concerned with the aspects of the world. That's why the Buddha in human conscience has disappeared. The Tao, which is the teaching of wisdom towards Buddhahood, needs to be learned.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research successfully reveals the interconnections between Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism in the Indonesian context, focusing on the teachings of wisdom and shared beliefs. Through a combination of qualitative and descriptive research methods, we found that Maitreya Buddhism indeed inherited beliefs and practices from the White Lotus school, which is closely related to Taoism. The synergy between Taoist beliefs in Maitreya Buddhism shows the dynamics of interfaith relations in Indonesia's pluralistic society. Historical influences from various patriates, including Ma He Cia Se and Siddhartha Gautama, have shaped the development of Maitreya Buddhism and contributed to the interconnected relationship between humans, Earth, and heaven through the teaching of truth.

This research makes an important contribution to a deeper understanding of religious pluralism in Indonesia, by demonstrating the richness of spiritual interactions between Taoism and Maitreya Buddhism. Recognition of these shared beliefs and practices can strengthen interfaith dialogue and promote the development of harmony and tolerance among Indonesia's diverse religious

communities. The findings on the acceptance of wisdom teachings and moral ethics from both traditions can also inspire further research on the implementation of these values in the daily lives of adherents, thereby contributing to the improvement of the overall quality of life of Indonesian society.

While this study provides important insights, there are some limitations that need to be noted. First, the limited number of data sources may affect the depth and representativeness of the findings. Future research could expand the database by involving more sources and relevant religious communities. In addition, the qualitative method used in this study may not fully cover the diverse complexities of Maitreya Taoism and Buddhism in Indonesia. Future research could adopt a combined qualitative and quantitative approach to provide a more holistic and in-depth understanding of the differences and similarities between these two religious traditions. Lastly, as the focus of this study was limited to the wisdom teachings and shared beliefs, further analysis of other aspects of religious rites and practices could be an interesting area of research to explore to complete our understanding of Maitreya Taoism and Buddhism in Indonesia.

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