The Gift of Indian Higher Learning Traditions to the Global Research University

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Abstract:

The paper begins with a brief vignette of Angkor Wat in Cambodia as a great center of learning, and then highlights the traditions of Indian monastic institutions which had deeply influenced its development. It then turns the main features of the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism, showing how they created a space for women's scholarship to flourish. The next section focuses on the development of shuyuan or academies in China that arose out of the patterns of Buddhist monasteries, demonstrating another aspect of their progressive influence. Throughout the paper comparisons are made with the European university tradition, and the conclusion considers the gifts these learning traditions could bring to the global research university.

Keywords: Indian monastic universities, Mahayana Buddhism, women's scholarship, shuyuan/academies, Asian learning gifts

I Introduction: Angkor Wat

This paper was was inspired by an international conference held in Siem Reap, Cambodia. It begins with a brief vignette of Angkor Wat, "the capital that became a Buddhist monastery" (Sterlin, 1984, 34) at the height of its influence under the reign of King Jayavarman VII, from 1181 to 1218 CE. It then goes on to highlight major features of the learning traditions of the Indian monastic institutions which influenced Angkor Wat. The Mahayana tradition of Buddhism is profiled next, with an emphasis on the space it afforded for women's scholarship in the Chinese context. China's *shuyuan* or academies, built on the patterns of Buddhist monasteries, are then shown to have had a progressive influence over a long history. Throughout the paper comparisons are made with the evolution of universities in Europe, and it

closes with a reflection on the gifts which Indian learning patterns could offer to the global research university at the current time.

King Jayavarman VII was a follower of the Mahayana School of Buddhism, which had been brought to Southeast Asia by monks from India. He presided over a city of 700,000 inhabitants, at a time when Paris was estimated to have a population of 100,000. (Sterlin, 1984, 75-76) This large population was sustained through prosperous rice farming and excellent irrigation systems which had been developed on the basis of scientific knowledge and technology introduced from India. (Osburne, 1995, 25)

During his reign Jayavarman built 102 hospitals, in addition to well laid out road systems with 131 rest houses for travellers. (Srivasta, 1987, 29) The open design of the exquisitely constructed temples suggests wide participation of ordinary people in state rituals and a number of sources indicate that women were prominent in the temple rituals (Sharrock, 2009, Lavy, 2003). Most significant of all, in term of the theme of this paper, Angkor was first and foremost a centre of learning, with numerous monasteries that had libraries as well as rooms for teaching and accommodation for students (Giteau, 1996). The curriculum included reading and writing in Khmer and Sanskrit, Buddhist principles, arithmetic, manual arts, techniques for constructing temples, roads, bridges, reservoirs and factories, as well as other subjects. (Chhem, 1997)

There seems to be wide agreement that Jayavarman's reign was the peak period in Cambodia's role as a great regional centre in Southeast Asia, a role that came to an end with a massive Thai invasion in 1430 CE. (MacDonald, 1987). One visitor made the following comment: "Angkor was the chief expression of a distinct culture - originally inspired from India, but long since grown native....a culture embodied in handsome cities, magnificent temples, wonderful sculpture and poetic inscriptions..... The Khmers left the world no systems of administration, education or ethics like those of China, no literatures, religions or systems of philosophy, like those of India; but here Oriental architecture and decoration reached its culminating point.'" (MacDonald, 1987, 63)

II Indian monastic institutions and their Influence in Asia

Some of the earliest higher education institutions in Asia were established in India in the 7th century BCE, beginning with Taxila, close to what is now Rawalpindi in NW Pakistan.

Looking ahead to Indian independence, historian A S Altekar published a book entitled *Education in Ancient India* in 1944 to highlight India's indigenous higher education traditions. (Altekar, 1944) He regarded Taxila as the most important ancient seat of learning, attracting scholars from distant parts of India. Later, with Persian occupation and then Greek influence under Alexander the Great, it developed a rich curriculum that covered Sanskrit, Greek and Persian languages and included teaching of the Vedas, grammar and philosophy, also medicine, archery, accountancy, commerce and agriculture.

Taxila was not a highly organized institution but rather a community of influential scholars and teachers, each of whom attracted students who stayed in their homes. There were hundreds of teachers in various fields of knowledge and each teacher would have about 20 student followers. Taxila continued as a dynamic centre of learning into the fifth century CE, and then gradually declined.

Nalanda, another renowned centre of higher learning, emerged in the Northeast of India in the 5th century CE, and exerted tremendous influence throughout Asia from 427 to 1127 CE, coming to its final end under an invasion of the Delhi Sultanate in 1200 C.E. (Chandra, 2004,41) This was just at the time universities were taking shape in medieval Europe.

Nalanda was located close to the site of the Buddha's Enlightenment in NE India and Buddhist learning was dominant in the curriculum. Unlike Taxila, it was a highly organized institution, with a central college having seven halls attached to it and many smaller rooms for lecturing (Altekar, 1944) as well as monasteries built to accommodate monks and rooms for secular students. At the height of its influence there were as many as 10,000 students. Nalanda was financed by contributions from 200 rich villages in the area, and Altekar points out that the patronage of several Gupta emperors who were themselves Hindu, spoke volumes for "the catholicity of the age." (Altekar, 1944, 116)

While Taxila had attracted students from all parts of India, Nalanda had monks and other students coming from as far as Tibet, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Persia, Turkey and China. It was a centre of Buddhist learning, with a predominant focus on Mahayana Buddhism. The curriculum was nevertheless wide-ranging, including grammar, logic and literature, sciences such as medicine, astronomy and astrology as well as public health care. While Sanskrit was the core language for many of the sacred texts, other languages were also taught. The dynamism of this learning community was evident in the influence it held throughout Asia.

In the 8th century CE, one of Nalanda's famous teachers, Santakaraksita, was invited to Tibet to ordain the first officially sanctioned Tibetan Buddhist monks and contribute to the establishment of monastic universities in Tibet (Kapstein, 2013). In the 9th century the remarkable Buddhist temple of Borabadur was established on the island of Java in Indonesia. A majestic centre of Buddhist learning and pilgrimage, it lasted until the coming of Islam, attracting learners from around the region to a place of study and enlightenment in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. (Miksik, 2004) Two hundred years later Angkor Wat reached the zenith of its influence. This was the culmination of several centuries during which sacred Sanskrit texts, together with advanced scientific and technological knowledge relating to rice culture and irrigation had been introduced to Cambodia from India.

The work of a contemporary monk, who was educated recently in a Tibetan monastic university gives insight into the persisting features of this tradition. George Dreyfus received the highest degree awarded by a Tibetan monastic institution in 2003, after 15 years of intensive study. (Dreyfus, 2003) He identified three types of practice, which he termed intellectual technologies - memory, commentary and dialectical debate. A considerable amount of time is dedicated to the memorization of original texts in Sanskrit, which become an inner treasure that is gradually explained and understood. Monks are also integrated into the community by taking part in the monastery's collective rituals, which are its central activities. Instruction is given by oral commentary, delivered by the teacher on the text being examined at the time, a main event of the students' day. (Dreyfus, 2003, 151) Debate is also a key activity, either before or after the commentary, as a way of working through the meaning and application of the texts in terms of language and logic. Major sciences in the curriculum include Buddhism, logic, epistemology, grammar, medicine, arts and crafts. Minor sciences are poetics, lexicography, theatre, arithmetic and astronomy. (Dreyfus, 2003, 102)

In terms of the organization of a monastic university, Dreyfus notes that it is an association of the individual monks and nuns who own and govern it in accordance with the rules prescribed by the Vinaya or disciplinary code and the monastic constitution. It is a ritual community where life revolves around the practice of rituals, which take precedence over all other activity, scholastic studies included. It is also a corporate entity whose administration requires political, administrative and financial skills to manage the large estates on which its subjects live. They might be seen as the taxpayers of the monastery, providing ongoing financial resources for it to

function. The corporate status of monastic universities gives them a degree of independence that has enabled them to persist in the face of wider political change outside of their control.

Probably the most profound, widely diffuse and longlasting influence of these Indian monastic institutions has been upon China. Although many Buddhist texts in Sanskrit had been translated into Chinese as early as the second or third centuries CE, Chinese Buddhist monks were not satisfied with the quality of the translation, and felt compelled to visit India in order to experience this learning directly and bring back the most accurate texts they could find for translation. Chinese scholarship has been described as a "documentary tradition" in contrast to the "rhetorical tradition" of European scholarship (Nakayama, 1984, 20) and the texts written by three remarkable Chinese monks describing the higher learning in India may be the most detailed accounts that have survived.

Fa Xian (337-422 CE) set out over the silk road at the age of 60, returning by sea and through SE Asia seventeen years later at the age of 77. His *Record of the Buddhist Region* described his visit to Taxila, as well as many other centers of learning. This was just before the emergence of Nalanda as an important monastic institution. (Sen, 2006)

More than two hundred years later Xuan Zang (602-664 CE) journeyed both ways via the Silk Road, and spent 17 years travelling among various centres of learning. He spent two years at Nalanda, studying core Mahayana texts under the great teacher Silabhadra, and then returned for another year before going back to China. He was said to have taken 527 boxes of books back to China, including 124 sutras and 192 treatises from Mahayana Buddhist works, as well as many others. His description of life at Nalanda in his *Record of the Western Regions* gave a vivid picture of his experience of learning, his lectures and the "Treatise on the Harmony of Learning" that he composed. On return to China he dedicated the remaining 19 years of his life to major translation projects, including a new and more accurate translation of the *Lotus Sutra*, and many other core texts of the Mahayana School. (Wiggins, 2014)

Xuan Zang was followed by Yi Jing (635 to 713 CE), who spent twenty four years in India, and wrote several influential texts. *The Record of Buddhism as Practised in India* detailed monastic rules in Indian institutions which he felt should be followed closely in China, as far as they were culturally appropriate. (Sen, 2006) *Memoirs of Eminent Monks* provided biographical accounts of 56 other Chinese monks who came to India while he was there. These works showed how dynamic was the international scholar and student mobility between China and India in the

7th and 8th centuries! Not surprisingly, the labours of these Chinese monk scholars and the texts they brought back and translated into Chinese had a huge influence on China's higher learning patterns and traditions, a topic that will be addressed in a later section of this paper.

So far we have seen the tremendous impact of Indian monastic institutions in Asia and the ways in which religious texts as well as secular knowledge were widely diffused through travelling monks and scholars from all regions. We have also noted the ways in which the institutional characteristics of the monastic learning community were adopted elsewhere, without any evidence of other social structures, such as the caste system, being imposed. The final question to be addressed in this section is how far these institutions, which predated the European university by more than a millenium, had any similarity with the university communities that arose in Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries, just as Nalanda was destined to disappear.

While Sanskrit was the common language in the context of Asian higher learning communities, Latin was the common language of European universities. European universities also grew out of monasteries, although they gradually established themselves as independent communities of learning, largely in major cities. In both Asia and Europe these institutions had a corporate life of their own. In India they were supported by nearby villages as well as rulers who chose to give sponsorship, while in Cambodia they became rather closely integrated within royal power structures. In China the highly organized imperial state, with its monopoly over the civil service examinations and associated institutions, made autonomy and corporate status a little more tenuous for the academies that grew out of Buddhist monastic communities. By contrast, the studium in Europe became a third power, between secular imperium and sacerdotium. (Rashdall, 1987) The legal charters which European universities received from the Emperor or the Church made possible a significant degree of autonomy.

Major Buddhist texts were at the heart of the curriculum in the Asian context, while Christian texts stood at the core of the European curriculum. In both cases the memorization of texts and the elucidation of those texts through lectures and disputations that subjected them to reason were a major focus. Most of the same broad areas of knowledge were included in the curriculum - logic, philosophy and grammar, literature, medicine, law and the various practical arts. There is also much evidence that Indian mathematics, as well as optics and medicine from the Arabic world influenced the European university. (Makdisi, 1981, Bergren, 2001, Rajagopal, 2001)

The parallels that can be seen between European and Asian learning traditions suggest that the global research university, which has been largely shaped by German and American patterns over the past century, has some roots in common with Asian learning institutions developed in a much earlier historical period.

III Mahayana Buddhism and a Space for Women in Scholarship

The distinction widely made between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism is important to the argument of this paper. Theravada Buddhism, goes back to the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, and has continued as the dominant form of Buddhism in Southeast Asia. In Cambodia, since the decline of Angkor Wat, Theravada Buddhism has had a dominant role up to the present. However, Mahayana Buddhism was the main school which attracted the Chinese monks Fa Xian, Xuan Zang and Yi Jing. Silk (2002) has an interesting discussion of the meaning of Mahayana as the larger vehicle, in comparison to Hinayana, the smaller vehicle, a term sometimes used by Mahayanists for Theravada Buddhism.

Mahayana Buddhism is usually traced back to Nagarjuna, a scholar in South India who lived in the period between 150 and 250 CE. "Whereas Theravada saw the discipline of the bhikshu (monk) as a precondition for enlightenment and liberation, Mahayana offered lay people the opportunity to strive for those goals as well. Whereas Theravada focused on the historical Sakyamuni, Mahayana developed a framework in which he represented only one manifestation of buddhahood. Theravada emphasized that the only way to enlightenment and liberation was through personal effort - that there was no supernatural grace on which human beings could call..." (Ching and Amore, 2007, 398) By contrast, Mahayana presented the bodhisattva as a figure who reached Nirvana and returned to help all those who prayed for assistance. The *Lotus Sutra* treats previous Buddhist teachings as provisional, as steps towards a more complete understanding, with temporary formulations hiding "the ultimate truth from those just starting on the path." (Ching and Amore, 2007, 399)

Given the key tenets of Mahayana Buddhism it is not surprising that it was seen by Christian missionaries in 19th century China as having profound parallels with the Christian Gospel. Welsh Baptist missionary Timothy Richard, translated the *Lotus Sutra* and published it under the title *The New Testament of Higher Buddhism*. (Richard, 1910) He "distinguished between the 'old' Hinayana Buddhism, with its 'primitive atheistic views' and the 'Advanced buddhism of the

Mahayana,' which has the 'God of endless age' Amitabha at its root. He likened the relationship between the two to that of the Old and New Testaments, with Mahayana differing from Hinayana as much as Christianity differs from Judaism." (Scott, 2012, 68) The Christian theology that constituted the foundation of early European universities may thus have some parallels in the Mahayana Buddhist teaching at the core of Asian higher learning traditions. The rest of this section turns the role of women in both traditions.

Before the founding of European universities, women had been active in both scholarship and spiritual leadership through organizations such as nunneries, abbeys and religious schools. One of the outstanding examples was Hildegard of Bingen, the medieval abbess and nun who lived from 1098 to 1179 and wrote scholarly treatises on cosmology, ethics and medicine, as well as corresponding with popes and rulers on a wide range of subjects. (Dronke, 1984,144-150) Once the university was founded, however, women were excluded from formal participation in the European world of higher learning, resulting in what in one scholar has described as a "World without Women."(Noble, 1992)

This was linked to the imposition of celibacy on clergy by the Roman Catholic Church in the 12th century and the fact that universities were dominated by members of the clergy as both students and teachers. It wasn't until the 19th century that women were able to re-enter the academic community, as students, professors and finally deans and presidents. This has been described by feminist scholars as a process of "Storming the tower" (Lie & O'Leary, 1990). The experience was somewhat different for women in East Asia, and one reason may relate to the Mahayana Buddhist tradition.

There was no mention of women in the accounts of Chinese monks who visited India between the 5th and 7th centuries. However, Indian historian A S Altekar devoted a chapter to women's education in his 1944 book (Altekar, 1944, 207-227), while later writing a whole book on the the subject. This second book begins with the comment that "one of the best ways to understand the spirit of a civilization and to appreciate its excellences and realise its limitations is to study the history and the status of women in it." (Altekar, 1962,1) He noted that India was unique among ancient civilizations in the high status given to women during the Vedic and Upanishadic periods and profiled many women authors, teachers, philosophers and doctors. With the imposition of early marriage in around 300 BCE, however, women were excluded from significant roles in religious and scholarly institutions, including those of Buddhism.

A defining feature of Mahayana Buddhism is the bodhisattva and up till the 7th century CE, bodhisattvas were depicted as male figures. Guan Shi Yin, the one who hears the cries of the world, first appeared in China around 550 CE as a male. By the 8th century, however, she had become female and over the centuries she has become a beloved figure in East Asian Buddhism: - Guanyin in China, Kannon in Japan, Kwanyin in Korea. Her statues are found in many places and she is appealed to by sailors at sea, by women desiring to have children and by anyone in need or trouble. This transformation occurred not long after Syrian monks brought Orthodox Christianity to China in the 7th century and introduced the figure of the Virgin Mary. (Palmer, 1995, 19-25)

Kathryn Tsai notes that there were no formal rules for ordination of women in Chinese Buddhism until Singhalese nuns came from Sri Lanka in 429 CE and established the first order. Chinese monk Bao-Chang's collection of the biographies of Chinese nuns, compiled in 516 CE, put them into four categories: 1) faithful and steadfast, who resist marriage, 2) meditators and contemplatives, 3) those who fall into deep trances (ascetics) and 4) those who were learned and had many disciplines. (Tsai, 1981,9) Of the 65 nuns in this study, all but 12 could read and write, suggesting that many came from urban upper class backgrounds. They were described as being educated in both secular and sacred literature – both the Confucian classics and the Buddhist scriptures. (Tsai, 1981, 12) They studied and gave lectures on various Scriptures, the most popular being the *Lotus Sutra*, especially the Guanyin chapter. Tsai sums up the situation as follows: " Once established, the convent was a respectable institution where a woman might find a home; it was also a place to exercise talents, especially scholarly ones; further, it was a place to practice religion in which the accomplishments of women were not considered inferior to those of men." (Tsai, 1981,19)

Daughter of Emptiness (Grant, 2003) offers translations of the poems of Chinese Buddhist nuns from the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) to the 19th century, with the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE) seen as the period of greatest flourishing. Grant noted that there were over 61,000 nuns during the Song, making up 13% of the entire monastic population. They were active as teachers and abbesses, also as patrons who used their money to sponsor the printing of Buddhist texts and the building or renovation of temples and statues. Many were able to serve as Dharma teachers, ascending the Dharma hall platform to deliver sermons, accept disciples, and formally pass on the Dharma lineage. A few were even listed as official Dharma heirs in the

venerable lineages of Chan masters. (Grant, 2003, 26) Chan (Zen) was a Mahayana School that required a high level of literate expression, even though the emphasis was on direct mind to mind communication without words.

Thus it could be argued that Mahayana Buddhism made possible an independent space for women's scholarship in the Chinese context that would not have been possible within the constraints of the partriarchal Confucian family and the subordination of women to fathers, husbands and sons. The studies in Buddhist nunneries included the Confucian classics alongside of Buddhist and Daoist texts and may have inspired women more widely by the Ming dynasty. Dorothy Ko's *Teachers of the Inner Chambers* provided a vivid depiction of the ways in which women developed active roles as itinerant teachers and writers of both poetry and prose in settings which they organized for themselves. (Koh, 1995) Although they were never allowed to take the civil service examinations, they had the space to make their own significant and ongoing contribution to scholarship.

There are certainly parallels to this in the lives of Christian women in medieval and early modern Europe, but Western feminists have critiqued the impact of the scientific revolution on the European university in terms of ways in which women's approach to knowledge was sidelined. Scholars such as Carolyn Merchant (1980) and Sandra Harding (1986, 1987) have highlighted the linear and mechanistic character of Enlightenment rationalism, its espousal of a dualism between facts and values, its concern with objectivity and the resultant isolation of subject from object and its embrace of metaphors drawn from the mining of natural resources and the subjugation of "irrational" forces in nature. All of these characteristics of scientific knowledge were troubling to Western women when they finally entered universities in the 19th century. No wonder their advance has been described by some as a process of storming the tower. (Lie and O'Leary, 1990) There have also been challenges for women moving into modern universities in the East Asian context, but positivistic science did not have the deep roots it had in Europe, and the epistemological challenges were less daunting, with Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist and even Christian ways of knowing closer to the surface. (Hayhoe, 2005)

IV China's shuyan as the conscience of the imperial examination system and the model for modern Chinese universities

China's *keju* or imperial examination system has been widely admired as creating the first meritocracy that the world has known, with a strong state led by officials who qualified for their roles through examinations held at local, provincial, national and palace levels. The positive contributions of this system have been elaborated in Fukuyama's recent volume, *The Origins of Political Order* (Fukuyama 2011). There is a rich Sinological literature that addresses the emergence of the system during the Han dynasty (206 BCE to 220 CE) and its formalization in around the 6th century CE, with studies on how far it made possible genuine social mobility. It was entirely a male preserve and the advantages of scholar official status to the individual and the wider family were such that it fostered a significant degree of instrumentalism in the pursuit of scholarly knowledge, and a close connection between knowledge and power.

The texts that were studied were largely Confucian in origin, but by the early Song dynasty an alternative set of higher learning institutions emerged, known as *shuyuan*. These institutions were often found in quiet rural areas or provincial towns, supported by donations of land. This made it possible for them to be financed through the renting out of land for agricultural purposes and to be largely independent of the imperial government. The *shuyuan* or academies were clearly influenced by the Buddhist monasteries established by Chinese monks who had travelled to India, with shared rituals and patterns of learning that included memorization of important texts, drawn from Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism, lectures and commentary, as well as debate. Each shuyuan had a scholarly leader, the *shanzhang*, as well as other administrative staff who managed the financing and organization, as described in Ding Gang's influential study of Buddhism in Chinese education. (Ding, 2010, 125-154)

The pattern of Buddhist monasteries was evident in their layout and organization. One expression of this was the placing of a meditation hall at the northern end of the axis, comparatively secluded from the rest of the compound. "The axial foundation of Chinese compound buildings and the hollow-square style of Indian monasticism both contributed to the 'academy style.'" (Meskill, 1982, 46) Scholars were drawn to *shuyuan* when they felt the need to withdraw from their roles as scholar officials on the basis of conscience. Furthermore, *shuyuan* were attractive as places of broad and serious learning for the sake of deepened knowledge, not merely career or political advancement. Each academy had its own detailed rules of behaviour, establishing the main rituals to be followed, the dress code for different events and the patterns of learning.

By the later Ming *shuyuan* had become places where local societies critical of government tended to convene and an "embryonic civil society" began to develop (Lee, 2000, 14). There was a special urgency around this in the late Ming arising from what was seen as widespread corruption in government. The *shuyuan* thus functioned as a kind of social conscience to the scholar-official bureaucracy, as well as a source of new thinking, given the broader curriculum and exposure to a wider range of philosophical and religious texts.

Shuyuan did not have the same degree of autonomy as the universities of Europe, since they lacked the legal protection of a legal charter, and tended to rise and fall with dynastic change. Nevertheless they persisted right up to the end of the 19th century as an alternative system of higher education which was never absorbed into the dominant bureaucratic system. (Keenan, 1994) Their tendency to pose questions from a place of broad knowledge and deep spiritual understanding might be seen as a gift of the Indian monastic tradition to China. This gift may have been crucially valuable to the success of the imperial bureaucracy up to the early Qing period, when China was depicted as a model for Europe by Jesuit missionaries who translated Confucian texts into Latin (Mungello, 1989) and wrote admiring accounts of a bureaucracy dominated by scholars. (Maverick,1946)

With the collapse of the Qing dynasty, and China's weakness in the face of overweening power from the West, the imperial examination system was finally abolished in 1905, and a modern higher education system gradually established. On the surface the modern universities looked very much like those of such dominant western powers as the German, French and American universities of the early 20th century. With many Chinese students and scholars studying in Japan, Europe and America it was natural that they should learn from what appeared to be "advanced" models from the West and Japan.

If one looks more closely, however, it was the *shuyuan* which inspired the spirit of these new institutions. This can be seen in the thinking and ideas of such influential intellectuals as Cai Yuanpei and Hu Shi as well as political figures such as Chen Duxiu and Mao Zedong. Mao's Hunan self-study university was consciously modelled after the *shuyuan* with a strong emphasis placed on students' patterns of self-study. Hu Shi established a research institute at Tsinghua university which was famous for its four great teachers, who focused on thinking through the ways in which China's classical traditions could support a national transformation. (Ding, 1996) As president of Peking University, Cai Yuanpei combined the spirit of the *shuyuan* with what he

had learned from the German universities of Berlin and Leipzig, creating an institution which has been both a centre of scholarly excellence and a bastion of intellectual freedom and democratic change for more than a century. (Hayhoe, Zha & Yan, 2011)

These modern institutions emerged in China under conditions entirely different from those prevailing in Europe and North America in the early 20th century. The decision to create universities along Western lines was a matter of national survival in a time of great difficulty. In contrast to the atmosphere of confidence and even triumphalism that prevailed in Europe, the mood of university leaders was close to despair, as they saw China falling farther and farther behind the Western powers. The Chinese male scholars who led the new universities finally came to understand the sense of humiliation suffered by Chinese women in being excluded from the imperial examination system over the centuries and many were thus active supporters of women entering the university. (Hayhoe, 2001, 336-337) Furthermore, the positivist science that shaped the disciplines and spirit of Western universities had a lesser grip on the curricula of newly developing Chinese universities. The epistemological flexibility and openness of the Confucian-Daoist-Buddhist balance produced by centuries of interaction among these ways of thinking and being was more open to women.

Could this be traced back to the gifts of ancient India's monastic institutions and Altekar's account of women's leadership in religion and scholarship in the Vedic era in India, or perhaps to the space provided to women by Mahayana Buddhism and parallels in the Christian gospel brought to China by missionaries keen to support women's education? The story of one remarkable scholar, who became China's first woman university president in 1928 may be instructive. Wu Yifang was born in 1893 and grew up in the family of a minor official that was struck by tragedy with several members committing suicide. She nevertheless persisted with study and was a member of the first graduating class of Jinling College, where she had converted to Christianity. Subsequently she gained a scholarship for graduate study at the University of Michigan and earned both Masters and PhD degrees there in biology. On completion of her doctorate she was offered the presidency of Jinling, one of China's earliest colleges for women, and returned to serve in that role until 1951.

The motto of the college was "Abundant Life" and hers was a servant leadership, that involved many initiatives to support the education of girls and women at all levels, service on international women's organizations and various types of war-relief efforts through the period of

Japanese occupation and civil war. She was one of only four women to sign the UN charter in June of 1945, the only woman in China's ten person delegation, along with three other women among the delegates from 50 nations.

After the Communist Revolution of 1949 she remained in China and served as education commissioner for Jiangsu province, then as the first woman to be appointed vice-chairman of the provincial government. A recent biography gives the following summary of her life: "Wu's emphasis on service and self-sacrifice and her firm belief in the transformative power of education echoed elements of Confucianism, Christianity and Communism and served as her compass through an extraordinary life that spanned three major changes of Chinese government. Maintaining a strong personal Christian faith throughout her life, Wu continued her commitment to Christian service and to achieving national salvation in post-1949 China, meshing it with the Communist ideal of service to society." (Waelchli, 2009, 170)

If the *shuyuan* are seen as a gift to China from Indian monasticism, it may be easier to understand some of the qualities of curricular balance and openness to women's participation in higher education that characterized China's early modern universities. From there it may be a short step to reflect on the gifts that India's highly developed learning traditions might offer to the global research university. That will be the focus of the final section of this paper.

V India's Gifts to the Global Research University

The global research university has emerged as the dominant model of the university on the world stage at the present time, and there can be little doubt that it is a Western model, built upon the roots of the medieval university of Europe, as transformed in the University of Berlin founded by Humboldt in the early 19th century and the American multi-versity of the 20th century. The global research university serves as a kind of gold standard in the higher education ranking systems that use corporate methods to calculate and judge excellence in scientific research productivity and innovation, as well as teaching, reputation and other areas. (Li, 2018) We might say the dominance of the Enlightenment science which has shaped western universities over recent centuries is reaching its apogee. Values of instrumental rationality, individual liberty, calculated self-interest, material progress and rights consciousness tend to

over-ride all other considerations, and there is little space for the values desperately needed to nurture a global knowledge society.

In his recent research on universities and the global public good, Simon Marginson has noted how "global rankings have caught universities all over the world in the same status-incentive trap. Status competition ..... ranks them vertically on the world scale and confirms the dominance of the comprehensive Anglo-American science university..... this narrows the diversity of knowledge that secures global value, through which public goods are created." (Marginson, 2011, 430) Later he notes how university ranking has normalizing effects, generating convergence on the Americanized model of "Global Research University." (Marginson, 2013, 5)

In contrast to this status competition imaginary and to the neo-liberal human capital imaginary, which tend to dominate thinking around higher education under globalization, Marginson recommends using a network imaginary in thinking about universities as creators of global goods through the use of collaborative networks that function in global public space, beyond the constraints of markets or national governments. He calls for plural, de-centered conversations that make possible such social (collective) benefits of higher education as "its contribution to stable, cohesive and secure environments, more efficient labour markets, faster and wider diffusion of new knowledge, higher economic growth, viable social networks and civic institutions, cultural tolerance and enhanced democracy." (Marginson, 2013,10) Fundamental to all of these is a foundation in the spiritual.

This paper has documented an Indian tradition of higher learning in monastic institutions that functioned democratically with the nurturing of ritual communities that put the spiritual at the heart of their learning activities, yet also fostered cultural, scientific and technological forms of knowledge which enriched the whole Asian region. Angkor Wat at the height of its glory in the 13th century was a vivid expression of this. Its advanced irrigation systems supported a scientifically sophisticated rice culture that fed a large population while spiritual texts were memorized, debated and applied to action, and exquisitely beautiful architectural spaces were created for the benefit of a wide community. Borabadur in Indonesia constitutes another dramatic historical example and there still exist many Buddhist monastic universities in Tibet which draw scholars from all over the world. A main focus of this paper has been on the largely unacknowledged contribution of Indian monastic institutions to the historical development of

higher education in China, including the provision of a space for women's scholarship to flourish and the emergence of *shuyuan* as civil society institutions that balanced the imperial meritocracy and strove to keep it honest.

In the modern period it has been assumed that Chinese universities were shaped by Western models, from German to French, American and finally Soviet. (Hayhoe, 1989) But a deeper level of reflection shows that the scholars who developed them were influenced by China's own *shuyuan* tradition and had a profound commitment to equity for women, social progress and democratic change. A parallel situation can be seen in Korea, where the *sowon* of the Yi Dynasty and the progressive *Sirhak* tradition of learning are still viewed as an inspiration to the development of authentic higher learning institutions (Lee, 1996). Furthermore, there are patterns of women's leadership in institutions such as Ewha Women's University that parallel the role played by Wu Yifang in China's early modern higher education.

It has been noted how the wide spread spiritual, intellectual and cultural influence of Indian monastic institutions in Asia was not accompanied by political dominance or the imposition of such regressive social patterns as the caste system. Unfortunately, the experiences of imperialism imposed by Western powers in the 19th and 20th centuries did involve geopolitical and social patterns of dominance and subordination. In spite of that, however, traditions of Christian service and service learning introduced by missionaries managed to connect in transformative ways with indigenous spiritual traditions, such as that of Mahanaya Buddhism, in creating a spiritual foundation for modern higher education in Asia. Women scholars and activists from Asia and the West were often the initiators of this kind of collaboration. There are thus deep spiritual resources in Asian higher institutions which could be connected to the Christian values underlying Western universities in efforts to produce the global public goods identified by Marginson.

Confucian scholar Tu Weiming has consistently affirmed the importance of Enlightenment values, yet he took the opportunity of the call for a dialogue among civilizations in the 1990s to promote Confucianism as a world philosophy and suggest how Confucian values might enable the global university community to move "beyond the Enlightenment" as it faces the challenges of the 21st Century. "Mutuality between self and community, harmony between human species and nature, and continuous communication with Heaven are defining characteristics and supreme values in the human project." (Tu, 1998,14) Most recently, Pope

Francis addressed Chile's Catholic pontifical university in a similar vein, calling for "educational processes that are transformative, inclusive and which foster coexistence" to counter the "technology-driven forces of globalized post-modernity." (Ivereigh, 2018)

It has been most encouraging recently to encounter two cases of Asian universities which have explicitly rejected the values upheld by global ranking systems, in favor of a concept of excellence closer to Buddhist, Confucian and Christian values. Malaysia has made the following comment on what world-class standing means in its Accelerated Program for Excellence (APEX): "the idea of being world-class is not defined by dominant neo-liberal concerns of occupying better positions in university rankings or league tables, but more in terms of addressing and providing sustainable solutions to the more immediate global problems in the areas of health care and poverty." (Wan, Sirat & Razak, 2015, 273) In seeking APEX recognition, University Sains Malaysia has set up Key Intangible Performances (KIPs) in place of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) where contribution made to alleviate poverty and social deprivation among the "bottom billions" based on the principle of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) will be acknowledged, recognized and weighted in as successful impact. (Wan, Sirat & Razak, 2015)

Meanwhile, in India there has been a revival of Nalanda, the ancient monastic university that drew learners from all parts of Asia seven hundred years before the first universities of Europe were established. Interestingly, this decision was made at a meeting of the East Asian Summit in 2007. Nalanda International University was then established by a Special Act of the Indian Parliament in 2010. With support from the government of India, as well as governments across South and East Asia, it enrolled its first students on the original historic site in 2016. Already established schools of Historical Studies, Ecology and Environment, Buddhist Studies, Philosophy and Comparative Religions will soon be joined by schools of Linguistics and Literature, International Relations and Peace Studies, Information Science and Technology, Economics and Management, as well as Public Health. Its website declares that it "will respond to the needs of a world, which has miles to travel before it can ensure peace & prosperity with equity & hope for all the people of the world." (Beck, 2017, 2)

In a recent paper, Kumari Beck broke down the Sanskrit word Nalanda and elucidated its possible meanings in relation to wisdom, knowledge and the giving of alms without intermission. She explained that it may come from "Nalam," meaning lotus as a symbol of wisdom and knowledge and "Da" meaning "to give" or "alms." From there she goes on to suggest "no

stopping the gift of knowledge" as a colloquial translation for Nalanda. (Beck, 2017, 5) What better way could this paper end than with the hope that universities throughout Asia can build upon the spiritual resources developed over several millenia in an effort to enhance and indeed transform the global research university by their unstoppable gifts of knowledge.

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