

SANJIAO HEYI AND TIBET: Resuscitating Buddhist and Daoist Perspectives



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ABSTRACT

This paper considers Chinese Communist Party policies in Tibet from Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist perspectives. I first explain how these three traditions are unified in the *sanjiao heyi*, but I contend that this practice has been neglected in favor of state repression. I then elucidate Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism with respect to their general principles and application in Tibet. I conclude that a fuller embrace of the *sanjiao heyi* where Confucian tenets are balanced by insights from Daoism and Buddhism would cultivate an anti-oppressive response to governmental control.



I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I analyze the Chinese tradition of *sanjiao heyi*, “the unity of the three teachings” of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, in light of contemporary Chinese Communist Party (CCP) policies towards Tibet. Religion in Tibet functions as a tool of state control that must be disciplined when it steps out of line. Because the governing philosophy of Confucianism is conducive to CCP interests, Confucianism is elevated above Buddhist and Daoist teachings. I draw attention to Buddhist and Daoist critiques of CCP policy in Tibet as evidence. Finally, I argue that philosophical resources within Buddhist and Daoist traditions can provide an anti-oppressive response to Chinese occupation.

II. THE THREE TEACHINGS AND STATE CONTROL

Sanjiao heyi began in the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368) and persisted as the Mongol rulers regarded the teachings of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism as equally foreign.¹ All three teachings were equal in principle and availability, and worshippers could associate and interact with them in overlapping ways.² Common was the practice of joint worship, where deities from separate traditions were worshipped at the same religious site.³ For example, an early sixteenth century magistrate is recorded as promulgating an unpopular order in Yichuan County to remove statues of the Buddha and Lao-Tze that were being jointly worshipped alongside Confucius.⁴ As recently as the 1930s, a visitor from Japan expressed surprise at the presence of non-Buddhist deities in China’s Buddhist monasteries.⁵ It appears that for some time, the practice of multiple popular religions was normalized amongst ordinary Chinese.

The magistrate’s frustration at joint worship is illustrative of a broader state of anxiety towards *sanjiao heyi* that has permeated elite thought. Organically grown from below, *sanjiao heyi* stood in stark contrast to the cold state supervision of sanctioned religious traditions.⁶ Nineteenth century Confucian scholar Huang Yupian argued against *sanjiao heyi*, contending that only Confucianism provides a proper framework for

governance.⁷ Huang’s thesis reflects an underlying belief that religion should be controlled by and in service of the state. Such views may be traced to the Confucian philosopher Mencius, who argued that human beings have inherent dispositions to become good if expressed in a proper state.⁸ Mencius’s view of human nature added to Confucius’s concept of Ren, a trait that enables virtuous choices in every situation, by articulating an active role for the state in developing this trait. In contrast to the *sanjiao heyi*, Mencius provides an unquestioned role for the state in both moral and religious life.

After the triumph of the officially atheist Communist Party in 1949, state policy towards religion became increasingly hostile. From 1949–66, state policy focused on co-opting and then transforming official religions (Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism) through mandated registration with “patriotic associations.”⁹ These still-existing associations monitor religious organizations and ensure that they practice fealty to state dogma.¹⁰ Beginning in 1966, Mao launched the Cultural Revolution, and all religion was banned. Religious sites were officially closed, and many religious buildings, artifacts, and scriptures were destroyed.¹¹ After the pragmatic Deng Xiaoping assumed power in 1979, heavy-handed religious policies were partially relaxed. An edict of religious tolerance, known as Document No. 19, has served as the basis for Chinese religious policy since it was issued in 1982.¹² While the five official religions are legally recognized, they must participate in “patriotic associations” and may only proselytize in sanctioned premises.¹³ Additionally, only “normal” religious behaviors are protected, an ambiguous term whose meaning is arbitrarily enforced by bureaucratic officials.¹⁴ Given the historic submission of religion to the Chinese state, religious activities are likely to be interpreted as abnormal insofar as they are perceived as resisting CCP rule.

1 Timothy Brook, “Rethinking Syncretism: The Unity of the Three Teachings and their Joint Worship in Late-Imperial China,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 21, no. 1 (1993): 13–44, 10.1179/073776993805307448.

2 Brook, “Rethinking Syncretism,” 15.

3 Brook, “Rethinking Syncretism,” 27.

4 Brook, “Rethinking Syncretism,” 29.

5 Brook, “Rethinking Syncretism,” 28.

6 Brook, “Rethinking Syncretism,” 33.

7 Brook, “Rethinking Syncretism,” 26.

8 John M. Koller and Patricia Koller, *Sourcebook in Asian Philosophy* (Hoboken: Prentice-Hall, 1991), 477–87.

9 Fenggang Yang, “Regulating Religion under Communism,” in *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 65–84.

10 Patrick Poon, “Controlling Religions with Chinese Characteristics,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, March 16, 2020. <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/controlling-religions-with-chinese-characteristics>.

11 Yang, “Regulation Religion,” 65–84.

12 Yang, “Regulation Religion,” 65–84.

13 Yang, “Regulation Religion,” 65–84.

14 Yang, “Regulation Religion,” 65–84.



III. TIBET: A CASE STUDY

Tibet is a classic case study of Document No. 19 in practice. Tibet has a long history of autonomy from China, with boundaries first demarcated in the eighth century CE.¹⁵ Over time, the term Tibetan (*bod pa*) evolved from naming Central Tibetans to those “of all regions” of Tibet, to describe “a territorially based political unit.”¹⁶ In the modern era, Britain helped secure Tibet’s de facto independence from 1911 onwards in order to create a buffer state between the British Raj and Russia.¹⁷ While Chinese leaders use this example to portray Tibet as a product of foreign imperialism, the CCP’s 1931 constitution recognized self-determination for national minorities such as Tibetans.¹⁸ In fact, the CCP continues to recognize Tibet as the “Tibet Autonomous Region,” and its area is virtually identical to the area claimed by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile.¹⁹ These facts point to a long tradition of autonomy for Tibet and the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, which place the Dalai Lama at the center.

In practice, Tibetan religious activities continue to be suppressed for failing to meet the CCP’s standards of normalcy. Chinese authorities have expelled Tibetan Buddhist monks from monasteries, demolished dwellings, and forcibly imposed “re-education” measures.²⁰ In addition, the CCP has subjected monks to “legal” exams for political re-education and requires senior religious leaders to endorse government policies on the Dalai Lama’s selection.²¹ Wang Yang, a former member of China’s powerful Politburo Standing Committee, has claimed that Tibetans ought to embrace the “cultural symbols and images of the Chinese nation.”²² Wang’s words reflect the belief that Tibetan Buddhism should be regulated by the Chinese state. As head of religion and state, the Dalai Lama’s presence as Tibetan leader challenges longstanding Chinese views of religion.²³ Under Document No. 19, we should expect Tibetan religious activities to be considered “abnormal” and therefore subject to state discipline.

15 Åshild Kolås, “Tibetan Nationalism: The Politics of Religion,” *Journal of Peace Research* 33, no. 1 (1996): 51–66.

16 Kolås, “Tibetan Nationalism,” 52.

17 Ben Hales, “The Tangled History of the ‘Tibet Card,’” *The Diplomat*, August 13, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/the-tangled-history-of-the-tibet-card/>.

18 Hales, “Tangled History.”

19 Kolås, “Tibetan Nationalism,” 52.

20 Human Rights Watch, “China: Events of 2019,” *World Report 2020*, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/china>.

21 Human Rights Watch, “China.”

22 Helen Davidson, “Embrace Communist rule, China tells Tibet on 70th anniversary of invasion,” *The Guardian*, August 20, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/20/embrace-communist-rule-china-tells-tibet-at-70th-anniversary-of-invasion>.

23 Kolås, “Tibetan Nationalism,” 53.

In the remainder of the paper, I articulate how Confucianism has been privileged and deployed to subjugate Tibet. I will also argue that a more inclusive understanding of *sanjiao heyi* offers a philosophical rebuttal to CCP practices. Specifically, I claim that in repressing Tibetan Buddhism, the CCP has willfully ignored the longstanding *sanjiao heyi* tradition at worst and unfairly privileged the governing philosophy of Confucianism at best. To demonstrate this unequal deployment of religious ideology, I will explain Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism with respect to their general principles and then analyze their role in Tibet. I will argue for Buddhism and Daoism as alternative governing philosophies that can generate an anti-oppressive response to CCP practices. Shoring up Buddhist and Daoist resources, which would deviate from longstanding Chinese practice, offers genuine hope for the survival of a truly autonomous Tibetan Buddhism.

IV. CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism argues that the world, made of heaven-earth-humans, is governed by *dao*, or “the way,” in perfect harmony. When the world acts naturally as itself, it is perfect. However, the *dao* is often violated by human beings. As heaven and earth always exist in harmony, we know that when things go wrong, humans have violated *dao*.

Confucius responded to this problem with moral education intended to restore the universe to its moral harmony. Just as stars and planets are virtuous entities, never leaving their proper way, humans should also become virtuous elements of the universe by following *dao*. To accomplish this, each person should become a gentleman or gentlewoman, one who has all the virtues. The primary virtue among these is *yen* or *ren*, a trait that enables one to follow the correct course in every situation.

Mencius refined this philosophy to account for human nature. Mencius noticed that many prosperous people do not observe *dao*, but the unsuccessful do. As such, it was not clear that Confucianism alone generates moral behavior. Mencius argued that Confucian virtues, to flourish, must be developed in the proper society. In a proper state, humans can become gentle; in the wrong state, they remain animals. Consider the famous cups and bowls passage:

Kao Tzu said, “Human nature is like the ch’i willow. Dutifulness is like cups and bowls. To make morality out of human nature is like making cups and bowls out of the willow.” “Can you,” said Mencius, “make cups and bowls by following the nature of the willow? Or must you mutilate the willow before you can make it



into cups and bowls? If you have to mutilate the willow to make it into cups and bowls, must you, then, also mutilate a man to make him moral? Surely it will be these words of yours men in the world will follow in bringing disaster upon morality.”²⁴

Mencius is not arguing that humans are inherently good, but that they have inherent dispositions to become good. Just as a willow tree mutilated into cups and bowls is no longer a willow, a human mutilated to be good is no longer a human. So, if a human can become good, they are already good. A proper state can therefore develop human capacities for Confucian virtue.

These ideas have been distorted within the CCP. Amongst officials concerned with China’s national rejuvenation, a political Confucianism has emerged that suggests Confucianism should serve as a state philosophy with unelected Confucians governing the country.²⁵ Xi Jinping has called Confucianism “the cultural soil that nourishes the Chinese people.”²⁶ Endorsing societal harmony and respect for authority, Confucianism is now a powerful tool for a CCP seeking to maintain its power.²⁷ The concept of *ren*, translated as love, benevolence, compassion, humanity, and man-to-man-ness, is duty-based, and stresses our obligations to others, families, and communities.²⁸ From a governmental perspective, it implies a paternalistic duty to care for the weak and poor.²⁹ In Tibet, Chinese leaders have emphasized poverty and weakness to justify paternalistic policies. The Chinese-appointed regional governor of Tibet has justified Chinese rule by stressing education, housing, and employment gains in Tibet, claiming that Tibet “leapt forward several thousand years.”³⁰

24 Koller and Koller, *Sourcebook*, 477–87.

25 Yi-Huah Jiang, “Confucian Political Theory in Contemporary China,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (2018), 10.1146/annurev-polisci-041916-020230.

26 “How did Confucianism win back the Chinese Communist Party?” *The Economist*, June 23, 2021, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2021/06/23/how-did-confucianism-win-back-the-chinese-communist-party>.

27 “How did Confucianism,” *The Economist*. One historical challenge to this argument is that despite Mao’s distaste for Confucianism, the CCP invaded Tibet in 1949. As always, events have multiple complex causes, and the CCP’s embrace of Confucianism may account for its approach towards Tibet more today than in the past.

28 Baogang He, “Minority Rights: A Confucian Critique of Kymlicka’s Theory of Nonassimilation,” In *The Moral Circle and the Self: Chinese and Western Approaches*, ed. Kim Chong Chong, Sor-Hoon Tan, and C. L. Ten (Chicago: Open Court, 2003), 219–45.

29 He, “Minority Rights,” 234.

30 Michael Martina, “China says 60 years of development saved Tibet from feudalism,” *Reuters*, May 19, 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-tibet/china-says-60-years-of-development-saved-tibet-from-feudalism-idUSTRE74I31T20110519>.

Whether true or false, these claims disempower the Tibetan people by assuming that their development is only possible under Chinese domination. Because Confucianism lacks concepts of rights and regional self-determination, CCP leaders may find it difficult to imagine a world where Tibet develops itself.³¹ Without the inclusion of concepts like autonomy, Confucianism is easily distorted to serve the CCP’s ends.

The central pillars of traditional Confucianism, the extended family and the state, have all likewise been hijacked such that “the history of Confucianism is a tale of powerful central states repeatedly appropriating key Confucian tenets for state ends.”³² Xi Jinping, for instance, has stressed that filial piety and national loyalty are some of the finest Chinese traditions.³³ All in the name of national loyalty, preceding the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the CCP forced monks to sing songs praising the Party, ordinary citizens to hang pictures of leaders on their walls, and Tibetans to attend events promoting the government.³⁴ These practices do a disservice to Tibetans and to ordinary Chinese Confucians who have their religious practices compromised by cynical leaders.³⁵

My claim is not that Confucianism is responsible for the oppression of Tibetans. Confucius, upon being asked how to best serve a prince, replied that one should “Tell him the truth even if it offends him.”³⁶ And Mencius claimed that “The people are the most valuable element in a nation; the Gods of the land and grain are the next; the ruler is the least.”³⁷ Without Daoism’s emphasis on authenticity and Tibetan Buddhism’s concept of interdependence, these remarks can be easily ignored in favor of a politicized Confucianism. As I will explain below, the other pillars of the *sanjiao heyi* may provide an important corrective.

31 He, “Minority Rights,” 234.

32 Hahm Chaibong, “The Ironies of Confucianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 3 (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004): 93–107.

33 “Quotable Quotes: Xi Jinping on love for family, country,” *China Daily*, February 15, 2022, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/20220215/WS620b0f98a310cdd39bc86b0d.html>.

34 Yangdon Demo, “Tibetans Forced to Show ‘Loyalty’ in Run-up to China’s National Day,” trans. Richard Finney, *Radio Free Asia*, September 26, 2019, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/loyalty-09262019160150.html>.

35 As Amartya Sen points out, loyalty to family and loyalty to the state can come into conflict. I would suggest that Tibet is one case of this. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000): 235.

36 36 Sen, *Development*, 234–5

37 Liang Tao, “Political Thought in Early Confucianism,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 5, no. 2 (2010): 212–36.



V. DAOISM

Like Confucianism, Daoism concurs that the universe is governed by *dao* and that we should live according to *dao*. However, the crucial difference is that Daoism says we should live directly according to *dao*. In each human, there is an authentic expression of *dao*. Just as a fish should never be a bird nor a bird a fish, each person should stay true to themselves. By discovering one's authentic identity and living accordingly, one lives according to *dao*.

Daoism may be used to formulate a strong critique of the CCP's Tibet policy. In the *Tao Te Ching*, the most important Daoist text, there is a refusal of outside mediation that stands in contrast to Confucian thought. Whereas Mencius envisioned the state as the cultivator of virtue, the *Tao Te Ching* calls for discovering one's authentic identity and living accordingly without mediation. Living according to simplicity and one's true self is referred to as *wu wei*, meaning non-acting.

State imposition of Confucian virtues, as in Tibet, contravenes Daoism. Since entrance to *dao* for Tibetans is mediated by politics, the CCP is creating a false image of *dao* rather than the thing itself. Instead of intervening to develop virtue, the CCP ought to remain invisible according to Daoist thought. As the following *Tao Te Ching* passage notes:

The best of all rulers is but a shadowy presence to his subjects.

Next comes the ruler they love and praise;

Next comes one they fear

Last comes one they treat with impertinence.

Only when there is not enough faith is there a lack of faith.

Hesitant, he does not utter words lightly.

When his task is accomplished and his work done

The people all say, "It happened to us naturally."³⁸

With a ruler that is a shadowy presence, the *dao* may function without oppressive interference. Instead of attempting to assimilate Tibet, a Daoist might argue that China should let Tibetans live according to their natural abilities. Chinese and Tibetans may still interact, but in each interaction one's authentic *dao* would be respected, and interactions would be mutually beneficial. This is the essence of *wu wei*.

One compelling objection might hold that Daoism cannot generate political action. If *wu wei* is truly followed, then political leaders and political subjects ought to do nothing.³⁹ For this reason, many scholars

take the view that Daoism is "supremely anarchistic."⁴⁰ Yet this argument lacks empirical or textual basis. Empirically, Daoists have participated in government, advised emperors, and remained a significant bloc in Chinese politics for over two thousand years.⁴¹ During the Han dynasty, Daoists actively engaged in politics to develop a political Huang-Lao Daoism, a process we would not expect if Daoism was inherently anarchistic. Textually, the *Tao Te Ching* contains at least forty chapters of a political nature and explicitly considers *wu wei* politically at least six times. In the passage quoted in the preceding paragraph, there is never a rejection of the state.⁴² The text could have claimed the best ruler does not exist, but rather, it simply advocates minimal government interference. Using history and the text as guides, Daoism can and should generate a political response to the CCP in Tibet.

VI. BUDDHISM

There are many varieties of Buddhism, but their "essential unity" lies in the belief that Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) articulated a path from the world of suffering to liberation in the wisdom beyond.⁴³ The human condition, in Buddhist terms, is one where "ignorance and craving are the substratum of the empirical life."⁴⁴ The suffering the Buddha perceived was not physical suffering, but suffering from ignorance, or *avidya*. Failing to realize that we are merely an atomistic bundle of parts, or dharmas, experiencing momentary existence, we crave a sense of security in a world that is fundamentally insecure.

Buddhism offers nirvana, where we abandon our illusory desires, as an alternative. One who reached nirvana would not crave youthfulness or health, for instance, because these are illusory states that we can never reach in a world of constantly changing dharmas. Achieving nirvana ultimately means to "experience the nothingness, the void of the world to get beyond it."⁴⁵ Naturally, this is difficult. Help is available from Bodhisattvas, those who have nearly obtained total nirvana but remain to help other humans obtain nirvana. *The Heart Sutra* expresses eloquent admiration for Bodhisattvas, writing that:

of the Laozi," *Dao* 9, no. 3 (2010): 323–37.

40 Feldt, "Governing Through the Dao," 324.

41 Feldt, "Governing Through the Dao," 327.

42 Feldt, "Governing Through the Dao," 328.

43 Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, "Foreword," in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, ed. P.V. Bapat (New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1956), v–xxiv.

44 Radhakrishnan, "Foreword," ix.

45 Radhakrishnan, "Foreword," xii.

38 Koller and Koller, *Sourcebook*, 445–50.

39 Alex Feldt, "Governing Through the Dao: A Non-Anarchistic Interpretation



Therefore, Sariputra, because Bodhisattvas have no attainment, they depend on and abide in the perfection of wisdom; because their minds are without obstructions, they are without fear. Having completely passed beyond all error they go to the completion of nirvana. All the Buddhas who abide in the three times have been fully awakened into unsurpassed, perfect, complete enlightenment through relying on the perfection of wisdom.⁴⁶

The central point is that Bodhisattvas are non-craving. Aware that they are nothing, they achieve complete enlightenment. Within Tibetan Buddhism, the tradition I will consider, the most important Bodhisattva is the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama's views are central to any discussion of Tibet.

Since the seventeenth century, the Dalai Lama has served as the spiritual and political leader of Tibetan society.⁴⁷ Because Tibetan Buddhism confounds the distinction between sacred and secular or spiritual and temporal, it may be used to generate alternative responses to political challenges.⁴⁸ The Dalai Lama's most famous political proposal, the Five Point Peace Plan, calls for:

1. Transformation of Tibet into a peace zone
2. Abandoning China's population transfer policy
3. Respect for the fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms of Tibetans
4. Restoration and protection of Tibet's natural environment, including the abandonment of Tibet as a zone for nuclear weapons production and waste dumping
5. Earnest negotiations on Tibetan-Chinese relations and Tibet's future⁴⁹

The Dalai Lama defends this plan by arguing that in an "increasingly interdependent" world, peace "can only be achieved if we think in terms of broader interest rather than parochial need."⁵⁰ As I will show below, this philosophy of interdependence is deeply rooted in Buddhist philosophy.

Fundamental to Buddhism is the view that "every functioning thing we perceive arises (and ceases) in dependence on its causes and

conditions, its parts, and the minds that perceive it."⁵¹ Since dharmas are merely sense-and-data-giving impressions, existence is momentary because dharmas are constantly changing. The implication is that reality, including the self, has no essential nature because it can be broken down into simpler dharmas. As such, any distinction between self and others or subjects and objects is merely artificial. All matter, including human individuals, can be broken down into dharmas that are constantly interacting.

As such, any perceived distinction between China and Tibet is false. China and Tibet, and Chinese and Tibetan people, exist in a networked reality that cannot be broken by CCP policy. By attempting to subjugate Tibetans and refusing negotiations, the CCP perpetuates an illusory separation between China and Tibet. Under a Buddhist philosophy of interdependence, the CCP would be compelled to recognize inextricable linkages between China and Tibet and attempt to live peacefully to create a more just society for all.

Against this perspective, one might argue that using Daoism and Buddhism to critique the CCP is incoherent. Whereas Daoism stresses authentic expression of *dao*, a Buddhist philosopher might argue that authenticity is only momentary, and thus, an illusion. This is a difficult objection, for it implies that the two cannot stand together in the *sanjiao heyi*. Addressing it requires clarification of the Buddhist position. The Heart Sutra states that, "all phenomena in their own-being are empty," not that "all phenomena are empty."⁵² This distinction is critical because it implies interdependence rather than nonexistence.⁵³ Daoist thinkers have corroborated this perspective, viewing *dao* as an interdependent existence of body, community/environment, and the cosmos.⁵⁴ In fact, some viewed Buddhism as an Indian version of Daoism when it was first introduced in China, and dharma was often translated as *dao*.⁵⁵ It is therefore possible to reconcile a Daoist emphasis on authenticity with the Buddhist attention to the fragility and interdependence of the human condition.

51 William J. Long, "Radical Interdependence: Buddhist Philosophical Foundations for Social Theory," in *A Buddhist Approach to International Relations* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 19–33.

52 Lee Clarke, "Dharma and the Tao: how Buddhism and Daoism have influenced each other; Why Zen and Taoism can be complementary," *Buddha Weekly*, <https://buddhaweekly.com/dharma-and-the-tao-how-buddhism-and-daoism-have-influenced-each-other-why-zen-and-taoism-can-be-complementary/>.

53 Clarke, "Dharma and the Tao."

54 Darla Schumm and Michael Stolz, "Beyond Models: Some Tentative Daoist Contributions to Disability Studies," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 3/4 (2010).

55 Clarke, "Dharma and the Tao."

46 Koller and Koller, *Sourcebook*, 253–57.

47 José Ignacio Cabezón, "Buddhist principles in the Tibetan liberation movement," in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 295–320.

48 Kolås, "Tibet Nationalism," 52.

49 Cabezón, "Buddhist Principles," 298.

50 Cabezón, "Buddhist Principles," 301.



VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I posited that China's approach towards Tibet has ignored the longstanding *sanjiao heyi* tradition. Instead of crafting policy based on input from all three teachings, Xi's CCP has privileged a particular interpretation of Confucianism that legitimates political authoritarianism. To resuscitate the *sanjiao heyi*, I introduced anti-authoritarian Daoist and Buddhist beliefs. Because the optimal Daoist ruler is but a shadowy presence, Daoism resists imposition of Confucian virtues on Tibet. Buddhism contains a philosophy of interdependence which is expressed in the Dalai Lama's Five Point Peace Plan.

Taken together, these three philosophies provide an important corrective to the CCP's interpretation of Confucianism. By focusing on social harmony within the state, the CCP has lost sight of individual authenticity and the interdependencies of peoples. Through their insistence on *wu wei* and momentary existence, respectively, Daoism and Buddhism remind us that individuals also matter, but we should not assume that any individual or state has permanence. With this acknowledgement of fragility embedded within social harmony, the *sanjiao heyi* may provide a superior path to peace.



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