

The Virtues of the Sovereign

By Nigel Jackson

*'When Heaven's Virtue is found, the hills rejoice, the sun and moon shine,
and the four seasons are in line.'*

Chuang Tzu

'A spiritual virtue is nothing other than consciousness of a reality.'

Frithjof Schuon

The profane man of the modern world is unprincipled precisely to the extent that he is divorced or dislocated from the Principle. Accordingly this disconnection from the Center is equivalent to a loss of contact with the authentic principle of one's being, a privative condition which inevitably gives rise to the innumerable vices to which man in his fallen state is susceptible: enslavement to the passional compulsions and attachments of the lower psyche and the multifarious caprices of the ego enthroned as a domineering tyrant characterizes the disorder which prevails in the human individual and in the wider socio-cultural domain.

This state of affairs presents a marked contrast to the sacral concept of sovereignty within a traditional civilization in which the human and societal realms mirror a theocentric pattern, and the 'mandate of Heaven' consecrates and validates the hierarchic order focused upon the figure of the Sovereign as the personification of temporal power in the world. The legitimacy of the true Shah of Iran in the *Shah-nameh* is witnessed by the nimbus or aureole of light which shines from his brow, the *Xvarenab*, and conversely this flaming or solar aureole of glory flees the false or corrupt ruler who transgressing against the Divine Order

(*Aša*—Truth or Righteousness, cognate with the Old Indian *Rtā*) falls victim to the demonic influences of the *Druj*, the Lie. In the Pharaonic theocracy of ancient Egypt the figure of the Pharaoh was sustained by *Maat* the principle of universal justice, truth and rectitude which stands in contrast with *Isfet*—injustice, wickedness, chaos, letting things slide. The linguistic connection between sacral royalty and straightness indicates a primordial metaphysical symbolism evinced by the proto-Indo-European *Reg* ('to rule, to lead straight, to put right'), visible in so many interrelated terms including Persian *Rabst* ('right, correct'), all signifying kingship. René Guénon comments:

The word *rex*, "king", expresses etymologically the "regulatory" function, but ordinarily applied solely from the social point of view.¹

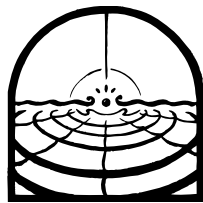
Rectification expresses the same root for the monarchic principle and is always contrasted with crookedness, delusion and falsehood; rectitude, royalty and linear straightness² (noting the literal meaning of the 'ruler') all confirm the symbolic concept of the numinous 'divine ray', the axial 'straight path' (*Sirat al-Mustaqim*). The straight 'royal roads' or 'King's Way' in medieval Europe were processional routes and meridians of numinous power, aligned according to the principles of sacred geography: from the throne of the 'Son of Heaven' in China four straight roads radiated toward each cardinal direction, transmitting the royal *pneuma* to the four quarters of the empire, upholding and sustaining the world; the beneficent influences, the kingly *baraqab* of the divine order, emanate from the hallowed person of the Universal Sovereign enthroned at the symbolic Center.

The symbolic station of sovereignty at the Center reflects the monarchic function as the embodiment of the Primordial Man in the 'abode of immortality', Adam in the Terrestrial Paradise who was the emanated by God in the divine image and likeness as the sacerdotal king of the universe. The sovereign is *homo pontifex*: by his heavenly consecration he personifies, regulates and confirms the equilibrium and order of time and space and is a figure through whose integrity

¹ René Guénon, *The Great Triad*, ch. 17, n. 7

² From the strict viewpoint of traditional metaphysical symbolism the straight ray, representing light and intelligence, corresponds to the priestly function, whereas the undulating, flame-like form, representing fire and love, corresponds to the regal function: here the equation of straightness with kingship refers to the original state of unity and indifferentiation, before the functions of spiritual authority and temporal power had become separated.

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