

# Unveiling the Divine Tapestry: A Comparative Analysis of the Devarāja Cult and the European Divine-Right Theory

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## Abstract

*The concept of kingship has a long history, predating recorded history and likely emerging alongside the desire for communal leadership. Political scientists and historians have consistently explored the development of leadership, political, and governance skills in the context of early societies. While the core principles of serving a king have varied across cultures based on communal needs, many have been intertwined with religious and supernatural beliefs. This paper aims to analyze the contrasting notions of kingship held by medieval Europeans and Malays, specifically focusing on the concept of divine right and the associated authority vested in the kingship. This study embarks on a multifaceted exploration of the concept of the divine king, delving into its manifestations within European and Malay societies. The primary objective is to illuminate distinct characteristics that shaped this ideology in these contrasting cultural landscapes. By meticulously dissecting the defining features of the divine king in each civilization, this study aims to shed light on the unique ways in which this belief system legitimized and bolstered royal authority. Secondly, the investigation will delve into the far-reaching consequences of the belief in the divine right of kings. An exploration on how far the ideology permeated various aspects of European and Malay societies, influencing not only political structures but also social order, legal frameworks, and even artistic expressions. By examining the extent of this impact, we can gain a deeper understanding of how the concept of the divine king shaped the historical trajectories of these civilizations. Finally, the study will turn its focus specifically to the "devarāja" cult, a cornerstone of Malay political and religious thought. This unique belief system, serving as a tangible manifestation of the Malay concept of divine kingship, will be meticulously analyzed. This research dissected rituals, symbols, and underlying philosophies associated with the devarāja cult, drawing comparisons and contrasts with the European model of divine right. By unraveling the intricacies of the devarāja, we can gain valuable insights into the Malays' distinctive approach to legitimizing and venerating their rulers. Through this comprehensive comparative analysis, we aim to not only illuminate the common threads that bind the European and Malay concepts of the divine king but also to celebrate the unique tapestry woven by each civilization. This exploration promises to enrich our understanding of the multifaceted ways in which societies have historically constructed and justified absolute power. This study will utilize a comparative historical approach to dissect the concept of the divine king in both medieval Europe and the Malay world. To achieve this, three key objectives will guide the research. First, we aim to identify the distinct characteristics of the divine-king concept within each region. This will involve analyzing literary sources such as European medieval chronicles and related texts which discussing about religion and states particularly on consolidating monarch's political power through divine-king concept. For the Malay perspective, literary manuscripts such as Hikayat Banjar, Hikayat Panji Semirang, Sulalatul-Salatin (Malay Annals), Misa Melayu, Hikayat Sang Boma and descriptions of devarāja rituals through scholarly writing by Coedès, G., Aymonier, E., and Mabbet, I. W. will be scrutinized. The objective of this article is to analyze the concept of the divine king. It foreshadows that the analysis will be based on scholarly works to provide a well-rounded understanding grounded in established research. To achieve this, analyzing the history of medieval European political thought and the development of the divine right theory is crucial. For the Malay world, research will delve into the history of Malay kingdoms and the evolution of the devarāja concept. The study will then move beyond identifying the concept to explore its practical implications. A comparative analysis will be conducted to understand how the belief in divine right impacted both societies. This will involve examining how it solidified the monarch's political power, legitimized their decisions, and shaped their relationships with other power structures. In Europe, this might involve analyzing the influence on the Church, while in the Malay world, the focus would be on monarchical institutions. Furthermore, the research will delve into how divine right impacted the social order, including societal structures, the concept of obedience to the ruler, and the king's perceived role as a moral compass. Finally, the analysis will explore how the belief in divine right justified military campaigns and expansionist policies. To understand the devarāja cult specifically within the Malay world, the study will utilize primary sources documenting the rituals associated with it. These may include descriptions of ceremonies, inscriptions related to specific practices, and accounts of offerings or regalia used in the rituals. Scholarly works on the devarāja concept, its rituals, and its significance within Malay society will also be consulted. If feasible, the research may be further enriched by incorporating interviews with cultural experts or religious figures to gain insights into how the devarāja legacy is understood in the contemporary Malay world. In order to uncover important ideas from the information we collect, this study will use two different analysis methods. The first method, thematic analysis, will help us find repeated ideas and patterns within the data. This will allow for a deeper understanding of the core characteristics of the divine-king concept in both Europe and the Malay world. Secondly, comparative analysis will be employed to highlight similarities and differences between these two regional interpretations. This comparative approach is crucial for revealing the unique nuances of each concept and fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the divine king across cultures. However, it is important to acknowledge potential limitations. The availability of primary sources, particularly for the devarāja cult in the Malay world, may be limited. On the whole, this research sheds light on the*

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*distinct characteristics of divine kingship across cultures. While Western and Malay societies both embraced the concept, their interpretations differed. The Malays, in particular, developed the elaborate devarāja cult, a system of rituals reinforcing their king's divine status. Although the study focuses on the Frankish empire and Malay kingship, it opens a door to understanding the unique ways both civilizations blended secular and spiritual authority within their monarchies. This exploration is valuable for researchers in political science, social history, cultural anthropology, and socio-psychology, offering initial insights into how communities viewed and interacted with their monarchs.*

**Keywords:** *Kingship, Divine-Right, Devarāja, Monarch, Frankish, Malay.*

## Introduction

### *Prelude: Beyond the Throne*

Across various civilizations, the king has historically occupied the highest social rank. This reverence for the ruler's nobility placed them in a special position, often perceived as divinely chosen. In Christian Europe, titles like "sacer" (sacred) and "sanctus" (holy) were bestowed upon monarchs, reflecting a belief in their divinely ordained status. These titles, partly inspired by Byzantine traditions and Roman law, emerged in the early Middle Ages and were further reinforced by theological pronouncements like "gratia Dei" (God's grace). This fusion of biblical and pagan elements likely stemmed from the existing blend of divine worship and imperial power practiced in the Byzantine Empire (Fritz, 1956, 64). In contrast, Malay royalty predates British colonialism. Established around 600-700 CE, the Malay Annals trace the origins of their kingship to a prince from the Palembang and Srivijaya dynasties. This lineage suggests a foundation in Hindu-Buddhist beliefs, with the ruler acting as a central figure of veneration (Kobkua, 2011, p.7). Before fully embracing Islam, the Malays, like ancient Hindus, viewed their king as a "cakravartin(चक्रवर्तिन)," a divinely chosen emperor responsible for both earthly and cosmic order. The Vayu Purana emphasizes the protective role of the cakravartin(चक्रवर्तिन), with successful monarchs possessing "adbhutani aisvarya" (great power) and "prabhusakti" (divine authority), placing them above even gods and sages (Nilakanta Sastri, 1969, p 130-131)

### *Divine Decree Rule*

Throughout history, the concept of kingship has held immense power across cultures. Kings were seen as divinely chosen figures, wielding not only secular power but also a spiritual influence that made them almost sacred (sacrōsanctus). Kings held the central role in a country's success, influencing everything from politics and society to the economy. They were responsible for the land's fertility, ensuring good harvests, and upholding the laws, basically running the entire show. Traditionally, these kings were men who inherited their thrones, like the famous King Henry VIII of England (Oxford Dictionary, 2015).

The idea of monarchy wasn't static. Ancient Greeks, for example, recognized five different types of kingship, ranging from the Spartan model to absolute rule (Saunders, 1981,13). While some, like Aristotle, saw a just absolute king as the ideal leader, others believed monarchy arose from the needs of primitive societies (Saunders, 1981,13). Regardless of the specific form, a successful king's primary duty was to act as a "sustainer," ensuring the basic needs of his people were met. History, according to this view, is filled with examples of dynasties thriving under benevolent kings who kept their subject content. However, absolute power, as seen in pre-revolutionary France with its concept of "French absolutism," could lead to a different dynamic, with the king claiming complete authority.

The concept of absolute kingship found further expression in the political philosophy of French absolutism. French political writings from the 13th century onward, such as those by Jean de Blanot (1255 CE), William Durandus of Mende, and John of Paris (apologist for Philip IV), frequently emphasized the absolute authority of the king. This emphasis on absolute monarchy resonated with the earlier Carolingian Empire (established by the Franks) where the king's role was paramount. Charlemagne's coronation as Roman Emperor in 800 CE not only expanded his earthly dominion but also imbued him with a quasi-

sacred quality (Saunders, 1981, 68). Medieval society, drawing on the Old Testament, viewed obedience to the king as a religious duty. This perception of the king as both secular and religious leader was further reinforced by the coronation ceremony, a practice initiated by Charlemagne's father. Scriptural justifications for such rituals underscored the belief that a king's authority transcended the earthly realm, encompassing both kingly and priestly connotations such as Alquin, drew a direct parallel between Charlemagne and the biblical King David, further reinforcing the association between divinely chosen monarchs and absolute power. (Saunders, 1981, 67).

The concept of the divinely-ordained king held sway across numerous civilizations. This notion, evident in the Inca claim to be children of the sun, appears at the very outset of English history as well (Figgis, 1896, 18) While the specifics of a king's supernatural origins often remained shrouded in mystery, these narratives, passed down through generations, enjoyed remarkable public acceptance. Indeed, stories of the king's mysticism and extraordinary power were documented not only in oral traditions but also in written works. In the Malay world, for instance, a rich literary tradition exemplified by the Hikayat Sang Boma and Hikayat Panji Semirang explored themes of divine attributes within the royal bloodline. Many of these narratives depict connections between the king (or queen) and the heavens, suggesting a mandate from above or divine assistance in their leadership.

This belief in divinely sanctioned rule conferred a sense of sacredness upon the king and his office. The *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals) details the founding of the Malacca Sultanate, considered the wellspring of other Malay sultanates, in the early 15th century. Notably, the text discusses the "wa'ad" (social contract) established during the formation of these Malay realms, which aimed to balance the rights of the ruler and the people (Shellabear, 1977, p 19-20). Melaka's founder, through the framework of both Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic traditions, implicitly derived his right to rule from a divinely bestowed lineage. This claim was further bolstered by the legendary social contract between the first ruler and Demang Lebar Daun, a representative of the indigenous population. This agreement stipulated that the ruler would avoid bringing shame upon his people, while the subjects would offer loyalty and obedience as long as the king fulfilled his royal obligations (Kobkua, 2011, 7).

### *Sacrōsanctus—The Emperor Cult*

Across Europe and Southeast Asia, the concept of the king transcended mere earthly rule. He wasn't just a territorial leader; he was seen as a figure imbued with a sacred spirit, a living bridge between the human and divine realms. This belief fostered unwavering loyalty to the king, as his actions were seen as divinely sanctioned. The idea that obedience to the king was a religious duty, even taught by Jesus and his apostles (Kern, 1956, 61), further solidified this connection. This fascinating blend of physical and metaphysical power is exemplified by the blurred lines between Church and state. The king's authority wasn't solely secular; it carried a spiritual weight. This concept is evident in the 11th-century claim by Gregory of Catino, who declared based on scripture that the king was the "head of the church." Similarly, the Old Testament reinforced the notion that kings were more than just governors; they were divinely chosen figures with a sacred purpose (Keen, 1968, 66-67).

The concept of the divine king extended beyond mere reverence to deification – the transformation of the king's physical form into an idol for worship. This practice has roots in ancient times, particularly in the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean, where civilizations like Egypt readily deified their monarchs. An example is the annual Opet festival, where the Egyptian pharaoh symbolically renewed his divine status (Dune, 2016). These practices spread as empires conquered new territories. Greeks and Romans adopted the concept of the "son of God" or "Savior" king from conquered peoples. Although Enlightenment ideals and memories of democratic city-states in Greece resisted such deification, the trend continued, with the Roman emperor-cult mirroring Eastern practices (Kern, 1956, 62). Interestingly, this deification persisted in both Western and Eastern civilizations. In Europe, the rise of papal authority necessitated support for the established monarchy, leading to a sort of continuity with the emperor-cult. Christianity struggled to eradicate these practices. According to Socrates, the Church's compromise with existing traditions after Constantine's rule allowed a "strange survival" of veneration for monarchs. Even after adopting Christianity, provincial priests continued practicing the cult for some time. This highlights the enduring

influence of deification practices and the challenges they posed to the emerging Christian world order (Kern, 1956, 62).

The concept of the divine king wasn't a uniform phenomenon across civilizations, even within monarchies. While some, like India and Southeast Asia, practiced elaborate cults worshipping their rulers as gods, others held more nuanced beliefs. The Romans viewed emperors as demigods (think Julius Caesar) but without specific rituals associating them with deities. Similarly, the Greeks admired their kings for possessing god-like qualities but never deified them. Instead, they focused worship on statues of gods in temples, relying on priests to interpret divine will. This contrast sharply with the East, where rulers in India, Indochina, and the Malay archipelago were indeed worshipped as divine figures. Ultimately, the Greeks saw their kings as divinely-touched mortals, not gods themselves. This unique perspective, reflected in their mythology with relatable gods and the lack of a centralized religious structure, further distinguishes Greek beliefs from those found in the East (Encarta® Online Encyclopedia, 2000)

In the Malay World, the concept of the divine king finds its most prominent expression in the term "devarāja " (Van der Putten, 2008). This compound word, formed from "deva" (god) and "raja" (king), literally translates to "god-king" (DBP, 2008). Understanding the devarāja concept requires examining it through two distinct lenses.

Firstly, devarāja can be viewed from the perspective of the Malay worldview, focusing on the relationship between the king and his earthly domain. Here, the concept suggests a king imbued with divine qualities, even seen as an embodiment of the divine by his subjects (Andaya, 1999). This translates into absolute loyalty and obedience directed towards the king. Secondly, devarāja can also refer to the celestial realm, specifically Lord Indra, the king of the gods residing in Amaravati, the heavenly city atop Mount Meru (Rahim, 2006). However, Malaysian scholar M. Rajantheran offers a different interpretation. He argues that devarāja can encompass not just Indra, but also other Hindu deities like Vishnu and Shiva, as some believe one of these figure reigns supreme (Rajantheran, 2012). This perspective finds support in the discovery of lingas (phallic representations of Shiva) in temples, palaces, and even tombs across Southeast Asia's ancient Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms (Coedès, 1964). Indra, associated with immortality and vengeance against wrongdoers, served as an inspiration for earthly rulers to protect their people from evil (Bonnet, 2000). Therefore, Indra's image became a powerful symbol for legitimizing the king's role as protector and provider for his subjects. There are nuances to the interpretation of "devarāja " depending on context, as highlighted by scholars like I. W. Mabbet (Mabbet, 1977). Mabbet, drawing on the works of Aymonier, Coedès, and Dupont, suggests several possible translations: "god-king," "kings of the gods," "kings and gods," or even "he whose king is a god" (Mabbet, 1977). Aymonier translated it as "roi des dieux" (king of the gods), specifically referring to the Hindu deity Indra (Mabbet, 1977). However, Mabbet argues that in the context of the ancient Khmer, "devarāja " means "dieu royal" or "royal god" (Mabbet, 1977). This contrasts with the interpretations of Coedès and Dupont, who, based on their analysis of stele cults, stayed true to the original Khmer expression, "devarāja " as a "dieu-roi" (god-king) (Mabbet, 1977). In conclusion, "devarāja " can be understood as both "god-king" and "king of gods," with the emphasis shifting depending on the specific context and the scholar's interpretation.

The concept of the devarāja , a god-king, did not originate in the Malay Archipelago, according to Southeast Asian scholars from the 1960s to 1980s (Aymonier, Coedès, Mabbet, Dupont). Through extensive research, they concluded "devarāja " as the appropriate term for this fusion of "deva" (god) and "raja" (king) (Mabbet, 1977). As early as 1904, Aymonier observed a stele at Sdok Kak Thom and described the devarāja cult as "a sort of deification of Brahminical deities, of kings, and even of distinguished figures, men or women, who built temples or contributed in any way to enhancing the worship of these deities" (Aymonier, 1904). While L. Finot in 1915 and Coedès and Dupont in 1946 offered fragmentary historical information (Mabbet, 1977), Coedès' work on royal divinity provided deeper insights (Coedès, various works). Additionally, scholarly analysis of Angkor's architecture and statues revealed a connection between the deified representation of kings and their relatives in art and their attributed titles. These observations by historians and sociologists point towards the devarāja concept's origin in Hindu culture of India. The linga, a symbolic representation of Shiva, likely served a similar purpose in ancient Indian cults, as evidenced by the Harappan civilization (Marshall, 1931). Similarly, the "demons" (yakshas) in Hindu mythology might

represent territorial gods of indigenous communities absorbed into Hinduism. In Southeast Asia, rulers seeking to solidify their power likely adopted the *devarāja* cult with the support of Hindu or Buddhist Brahmins. This eventually led to the institutionalization of the god-king concept within Southeast Asian societies.

The concept of *devaraja*, though interpreted differently across Southeast Asia, served a unifying purpose: to solidify the power of kings. In the Malay world, particularly during the Srivijayan and Majapahit empires, *devaraja* became institutionalized (Andaya, 1999). This development coincided with the Indianization period (2nd to 7th centuries AD) that fostered cultural exchange between the Malays and empires like the Khmer and Siamese (Miksic, 2013, 15). The *devaraja* cult, prominent in Angkorian Cambodia, began to take root in the Malay Archipelago (Andaya, 1999). But how did this foreign concept become ingrained in Malay society? The answer lies in its ability to connect with existing cultural practices. *Devaraja* rituals and the veneration of the king served as tangible expressions of the people's evolving belief systems (Andaya, 1999). Prior to the arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism, the Malays practiced animism, worshipping spirits and natural objects like the sun and sky. The *devaraja* cult, therefore, provided a framework for integrating these existing beliefs with the incoming Hindu-Buddhist ideas, resulting in a unique Malay interpretation of the divine king.

The *devarāja* concept wasn't just an abstract belief; it manifested in tangible ways that reinforced the king's divinely-ordained status (Mabbet, 1977). Southeast Asian societies employed various forms of material culture to portray their king as a figure infused with supernatural power. This included inscriptions, sculptures, royal regalia, palaces, statues, tombs, and anything that could be used to elevate the king's image beyond the realm of the ordinary (Bouchier, 1996). For instance, a Sanskrit inscription found in Sdok Kak Thom describes King Jayavarman II of Angkor as a "*devarāja*" (Mabbet, 1977). The inscription, translated by Mabbet, reads "*man vrah pāda parameśvara pratiṣṭhā kamrateñ jagat-ta raja naunagara śrīmāhendraparvata,*" indicating the community's belief in the king's divine attributes (Mabbet, 1977). This reflects a unique Southeast Asian worldview that placed the king on a pedestal far above ordinary people. This reverence continues to some extent even today, with Malay royalty and their descendants still receiving special treatment. The absolute monarch was traditionally seen as above the law. Certain regalia associated with the king and the palace itself were believed to possess sacred power. For example, the king's posture on the throne symbolized his elevated status, as did the practice of carrying him in a palanquin (Bouchier, 1996). This tangible cultural expression left no doubt about the high esteem in which the king was held. However, Mabbet cautions us not to oversimplify the *devarāja* cult (Mabbet, 1977). He argues that while rituals undoubtedly played a role in sacralizing the king, the evidence may not always support the grand pronouncements found in inscriptions like the one from Sdok Kak Thom (Mabbet, 1977). Ultimately, the *devarāja* cult served as a royal one, not a public veneration of a god-king statue. Here, parallels can be drawn to the Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, which emphasizes the king's god-like status (Bouchier, 1996). The text instructs subjects to obey the king as a manifestation of a "Great God" (*Mahabharata* 12.68.40).

### *Celestial Lineage*

The concept of a sacred king has existed for millennia, even predating the formalization of the state. This tradition stretches back to ancient times, with leadership structures evolving from chieftains to divinely ordained monarchs. Even in non-monarchical societies, a supreme ruler, often an emperor, held ultimate authority. Sir Frederick Pollock argues that while the 17th-century articulation of the sacred king theory addressed contemporary needs, it also reflected a deep-seated human sentiment of loyalty (Pollock, 1903). This concept is further exemplified by the *devarāja* cult in Southeast Asia and the English monarchs who claimed descent from the god Woden, both demonstrating the enduring belief in the divine bloodline of kings.

The concept of a divinely-ordained king extended beyond Southeast Asia to Europe, with Roman emperors claiming divine ancestry and guidance by the Holy Spirit (Baldwin 1953). Similar to the Southeast Asian connection to the god Indra, the Romans associated their emperors with Jupiter, the sun god. This connection to the sun is also found in the Malay world, where kings were believed to descend from the

solar race, echoing the Indian Rāghu dynasty described in the Hindu scripture, Rāghuvamśa (Moreshwar, 1992). The Vishṇu-Purāna and Ramayana further solidified this connection in Indian tradition (Moreshwar, 1992). The Malay Annals, a historical text, narrates the story of the first Malay king, Sang Sapurba, who was said to be thrown from a cow – a sacred animal in Hinduism – and descended from Alexander the Great. The claim of Alexander the Great descendant persists even today among some Malay royalty, highlighting the enduring influence of these intertwined cultural and religious beliefs in shaping Malay conceptions of kingship.

### *Ecclesiastical Partnership: Priests, Brahmin & The King*

In Europe, the Frankish rulers sought papal authority to legitimize their power. For example, Pepin the Short, initially deposed, was re-crowned king with the help of Pope Stephen II. This alliance not only secured Pepin's throne but also established the Papal States (Baldwin 1953). Similarly, in Southeast Asia, the clergy played a crucial role in forging a connection between the king and the commoners. Prior to Islam, Malay kingdoms heavily influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism relied on Brahmin priests. The "cult of the king" involved rituals that reinforced the relationship between the king, the priests, and the people. This concept of "Royal Power" derived from the Sanskrit word "Rajya," emphasizing the king's divinely ordained role (Mabbet 1969). These elaborate rituals served to showcase the king's sovereignty and ensure the continuation of the god-king lineage. Historically, empires like Cambodia and Majapahit institutionalized this cult, and its influence, along with the cooperation between kings and priests, spread the ideology of the god-king throughout Southeast Asia (Mabbet 1969). This symbiotic relationship between the king and the clergy thrived until the arrival of Islam, leaving a lasting impact on the region's perception of kingship.

The devarāja cult in Southeast Asia wasn't just a symbolic notion; it was a carefully constructed system reinforced by the king's relationship with the clergy. Kings, seen as living gods, actively cultivated ties with priests to maintain their divine status and ensure the cult's continuity. These priests, often referred to as Brahmins, acted as intermediaries, employing rituals and symbols like regalia and palace to solidify the king's god-like image among the people. This strengthened the king's legitimacy and fostered loyalty from his subjects. In turn, priests enjoyed high positions as advisors, mirroring the role of figures like Kautilya in ancient India. This symbiotic relationship between kings and religious figures wasn't new. Maintaining religious institutions, like Kautilya's role in Chandragupta's Mauryan Empire, had a long historical precedent (Nilakanta Sastri 1978). The arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism in Southeast Asia can even be seen as a politically motivated strategy, with the legacy of these religious institutions continuing to shape the region's political landscape. This enduring interdependence between political and religious power demonstrates the lasting impact of the devarāja cult on Southeast Asia.

### *Qualities of a King*

Contrary to the perception of absolute power, the concept of a just ruler was central to the divine-king theory (Holdsworth, 1924, 102). This social contract, whether oral or written, formed the bedrock of the king's legitimacy. Historical examples like Henry II's Assize of Clarendon in England demonstrate how a king's duty involved upholding justice through enforcing the law (Holdsworth, 1924, 102). The law itself was ideally a product of consent from the people, ensuring its fair implementation. Indeed, history shows instances where unjust rulers faced dethronement, highlighting the importance of just laws. The king, therefore, appointed officials like justices based on their legal knowledge and commitment to enforcing established laws, not the king's whims (Holdsworth, 1924, 103). This system aimed to achieve a harmony between the ruler and the law, with the king acting as an enforcer of the people's consent (Holdsworth, 1924, 103).

While the concept of absolute monarchy existed, limitations on a king's power emerged in practice. Medieval Europe serves as an example where monarchs, though seemingly absolute, were bound by the law in theory (Holdsworth, 1924, 104). However, the practical enforcement of these limitations remained less clear-cut (Holdsworth, 1924, 104). Ideally, the king's actions aligned with the law and the people's sense of justice, with no formal mechanisms for challenging the king's decisions (Holdsworth, 1924, 104). The

Christian tradition, however, offered a challenge to absolute power by portraying the king as God's representative, subject only to divine judgment (Holdsworth, 1924, 105). This ideology emphasized the king's duty to uphold justice, with his legitimacy ultimately hinging on his ability to do so (Holdsworth, 1924, 105).

The Malay world echoed this connection between just rule and divine kingship. The "wa'ad" agreement between Demang Lebar Daun and Sang Sapurba explicitly linked the king's promise of just rule to the people's loyalty. Furthermore, the concept of *devarāja*, the god-king, in the Indianized Malay tradition tied the king's divinity to his adherence to *dharma*, the universal law (Gonda, 1973, 12). A true king, a "*dharmātman*," embodied this law, ensuring fairness and justice, and only then would he be revered as a god (Gonda, 1973, 12). Similar to European regalia, specific symbols like the crown reinforced the god-king's image in the Malay world.

Reinforcing the concept of the divinely-ordained king, elaborate regalia played a crucial role in both Southeast Asian and European cultures. These symbolic items served as visual reminders of the king's divinely sanctioned authority. During coronations, specific objects imbued the ceremony with deeper meaning. For instance, in Europe, the ring symbolized the lawful establishment of a reign, signifying a divinely sanctioned contract between the king and his people (Holdsworth, 1924, 106). Another important item, the crozier, resembled a shepherd's staff, an ancient symbol of leadership and care for the people, echoing the king's role as a protector. Crowns, of course, were a ubiquitous symbol of royalty, and the coronation ceremony itself, heavily influenced by Byzantine traditions, centered around the placement of the crown (Holdsworth, 1924, 106). Interestingly, an older custom of fitting a shoe to the king had been discontinued by the time of George II (Holdsworth, 1924, 106). The sword, brandished three times during Western coronations, held a spiritual significance, representing the king's duty to defend not just his realm but also the faith (Holdsworth, 1924, 106). Finally, the anointing oil, a practice continuing to this day in British coronations, served as a sacred anointment, highlighting the king's divinely chosen status (Holdsworth, 1924, 106). The specific recipe for this oil, with ingredients like orange and rose, further emphasized the sanctity of the ceremony (Holdsworth, 1924, 106). Through these rich visual and symbolic elements, regalia solidified the image of the king as a divinely-ordained ruler, responsible for protecting and leading his people. Beyond the concept of a divinely-ordained king, specific symbols further emphasized his exclusive status in Southeast Asia, drawing inspiration from Indian traditions. The book of *Manu* details these symbols, associating the king with celestial bodies like the sun and moon, natural forces like wind, and even fire (*agni*) (Gonda 1969). He was seen as a bridge between heaven and earth, embodying immense wealth, especially symbolized by gold. These ideas manifested in the five core items of Malay royalty: the white umbrella, fly-whisk, sandals, turbans, and throne (*singgahsana*). Additionally, a wider range of objects including vehicles, clothing, jewelry, and even palaces, served to distinguish the king and his family.

The influence of Buddhism further enriched Malay royal symbolism. The concept of the *cakravartin* (चक्रवर्तिन), a universal emperor, introduced the notion of seven essential objects (*ratnani*) (Gonda 1969). These included wheels symbolizing the vastness of the emperor's domain, elephants and horses as his majestic vehicles, precious gemstones believed to possess protective powers, an empress by his side, overflowing wealth, and wise advisors. Each element carried a specific meaning, reinforcing the king's power and divine connection. The use of these symbols during royal ceremonies (*upacara*) further elevated their significance.

The king's dwelling place also held symbolic weight. The *prasada*, a tiered platform, served as his residence, mirroring its use as a dwelling for gods according to the *Amarakoṣa* text (Gonda 1969). In processions, the king rode elephants, a majestic choice believed to ward off evil spirits with the accompaniment of chants. The common people, on the other hand, participated in these displays of reverence by scattering rice (a symbol of prosperity) and offering water (*arghya*) to the king to wash his feet and mouth, signifying his purity and elevated status. Through this elaborate system of symbolism, Southeast Asian societies created a visual language that reinforced the divinity and absolute power associated with their monarchs.

The coronation ceremony served as a powerful ritual that reinforced the concept of the divinely-ordained king in Europe (McIntyre, 1978, 121). Drawing inspiration from the Old Testament, the anointing of the king with holy oil mirrored the anointing of priests and prophets, signifying his selection by God as ruler (McIntyre, 1978, 121). The symbolism extended beyond the oil, with the staff and ring presented to the king resembling those used in episcopal consecrations, emphasizing the king's dual role as a spiritual and secular leader (McIntyre, 1978, 122). This concept was further visually depicted in artwork. For instance, a 1022 manuscript portrayed Henry II enthroned, wearing garments similar to an archbishop's, while a dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit descended upon him (McIntyre, 1978, 122). Another image depicted Otto II with his feet resting on the Earth, but his head above the clouds, signifying his authority that transcended the earthly realm (McIntyre, 1978, 122). While earlier traditions of royal consecration existed in the East and Byzantium, it was the Old Testament narrative that provided the West with a clear model for this ritual, solidifying the connection between the king and the divine (McIntyre, 1978, 123).

The *devarāja* cult, linking kings to the divine, manifested in elaborate rituals across Southeast Asia. In Bali, Hinduism provided the framework for this ideology. The Balinese king, seen as an embodiment of a Hindu god, became the center of worship (Geertz, 1973, 189). Anthropologist Clifford Geertz described the cremation ritual (*sati*) where the king's wives and concubines were cremated alongside him, signifying their union with him in the afterlife (Geertz, 1973, 189). This practice, viewed as an honor suicide, reflected the deep-seated belief in the king's divinity and the desire to join him in the spiritual realm (Geertz, 1973, 189). Land ownership also played a crucial role in establishing the king's power. Across civilizations, conquering new territories served as a way to expand landholdings, thus solidifying a king's authority (Holdsworth, 1924, 110). In Europe, the king was not just the national representative but also the ultimate landowner, with all land ultimately belonging to him (Holdsworth, 1924, 110). This concept, as John Figgis noted, laid the foundation for territorial sovereignty and mirrored inheritance laws for fiefs (Holdsworth, 1924, 110). The Malay world also followed this pattern. In Bali, for instance, land ownership was referred to as "*druwé*," signifying possession of property and wealth (Geertz, 1973, 190). Geertz argued that the king essentially controlled everything within his domain, owning not just land but also, in a sense, the people themselves (Geertz, 1973, 190). This absolute ownership ("*druwé*") symbolized the king's ultimate power. Furthermore, as the head of customs, the king was seen as the "owner" of nature itself (Geertz, 1973, 190). Similar to a god, he was responsible for ensuring bountiful harvests, land productivity, and the well-being of his people, including protection from natural disasters (Geertz, 1973, 190). This responsibility to maintain social order and natural harmony further solidified his role as the ultimate authority. However, this power came with the caveat of fair rule. Abusing his authority would ultimately weaken his administration and lead to the kingdom's downfall (Geertz, 1973, 190).

Across various monarchies, the concept of a sacred lineage played a crucial role in legitimizing the king's rule (Holdsworth, 1924, 112). Marriages were carefully controlled to ensure the purity of the royal bloodline, and succession typically followed a hereditary pattern, with the throne passing from father to son or the closest heir. The scholars of the thirteenth century even argued that only God could determine the rightful heir, further strengthening the notion of hereditary succession as divinely ordained (Holdsworth, 1924, 112). This belief placed hereditary succession above the seemingly more human method of electing a ruler. The birth of an heir was seen as a divine judgment, carrying the same weight as an ordeal or the drawing of lots (Holdsworth, 1924, 112). While the mystical belief emphasized the king's divinely chosen lineage, a more practical rationale also existed. Having a ruler from the same family ensured continuity and potentially smoother transitions, as the father could advise and guide his son in the art of governance. In Malay tradition, this hereditary system was a customary practice. The king's eldest son, often holding titles like *Raja Muda* or *Tengku Mahkota*, was typically designated as the heir apparent, expected to succeed his father upon his passing.

The concept of absolute sovereignty, divinely bestowed upon the king, formed the bedrock of social order in many civilizations (Holdsworth, 1924, 108). Disobeying the king's will was often perceived as a sin, as he was seen as God's representative on Earth. In Europe, for instance, authorities like John Selden stressed that "kings and all in authority were the vicars of God" and resisting them was a grave offense (Holdsworth, 1924, 108). This ideology likely stemmed from a desire to strengthen the Church's authority. A similar



pattern emerged in Malay kingdoms, where collaboration between spiritual leaders (Brahmins) and the king (the state) reinforced their respective powers. The king's divinity, linked to his absolute sovereignty, extended to prohibitions against disrespect. Laws existed in medieval times, for example, that outlawed even cursing the king in thought (Holdsworth, 1924, 108). This concept, with its emphasis on divine origin, alliance with religious authorities, and the demand for absolute respect, reveals a remarkable cross-cultural similarity. While the Malay world termed this concept "devarāja," its core principle mirrored those found elsewhere, reflecting a universal human tendency to use religious belief to legitimize and solidify the concept of a powerful sovereign. Even if some might view the idea of a divine king as naive, if it served as an effective tool for ensuring societal order and good governance, its implementation held a certain pragmatic logic. However, beneath this shared belief in the divine king, variations existed in the specific rituals and cults practiced, reflecting the diverse cultural and religious contexts that shaped these societies. Ultimately, the concept of the divine king, despite its regional variations, served to create a unique worldview that promoted a particular style of governance, one believed to be divinely ordained.

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