

A Study on “Plagiarism” in I-Kuan Tao —Citing the “Pure Land of Buddha Amitabha” and the “Right Dharma-Eye Store” as Examples

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Abstract

Through several hundred years, I-Kuan Tao had absorbed concepts from many folk religions and became a faith-based organization. After it was banned in the mainland China, I-Kuan Tao moved to Taiwan, where it has flourished for 70 years and spread internationally. Its central beliefs are: the “Eternal Unborn Mother” is the Genuine Ruler of All Beings; the “Absolute Heaven” is the home of the Buddha’s original sons; during the “three assemblies under the Nāgapuspa tree,” the “Old Buddha Maitreya” governs the heavenly realms in the final kalpa; ... In its tradition and teaching theory, I-Kuan Tao boasts about its syncretism of the three religions, which are linked up to become one unity by an illusory concept, the “Way of Former Heaven”; in modern times, its syncretism is further extended to include the five religions. Superficially, I-Kuan Tao seems to possess a philosophical innovation with its religious experience, which is of “a consistent principle with different elements.” Nevertheless, if we carefully examine its terminology and thought, it is nothing more than “plagiarism.” I-Kuan Tao has plagiarized all renowned religions to adorn itself, yet without the permission of those religions. The plagiarism by I-Kuan Tao has invited refutation from Buddhists or Christians. Although some adherents of I-Kuan Tao have tried to explain it away, their lame explanations or sophistries only add to people’s confusion.

Firstly, according to the transmitted history edited by I-Kuan Tao, the authors point out the facts that, in every transition stage, I-Kuan Tao stole other religious beliefs for its own use to survive in the changing times; it has consistently copied ideas from almost all religions, namely, Daoism, Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism, the Luo sect, Maitreya, the White Lotus sect, and so on, including Jesus Christ and Allah. Thus, stealing and piecing other religious beliefs together to confuse people is the tradition of I-Kuan Tao, and this is the latent and root cause that makes its failure inevitable; that is, it lacks “its own religious experience” and “creative doctrines.” After plagiarizing other religious terminology and doctrines, as well as making further changes, I-Kuan Tao believes itself to

be a latecomer with surpassing achievement. Such dishonest behavior is like that of folk religions, which pieced different beliefs together. Even worse, it continuously belittled the founder and doctrines of every religion after its founding and invented the Ming-Ming-Shang-Ti (the God of Clarity, or the Eternal Unborn Mother) that governs the world, including the five religions, etc. From its fabricated “tradition” and nonsense “doctrines,” we can see that I-Kuan Tao uses plagiarism to prove that its Way unifies all saints and religions. How stupid they are to flagrantly propagate those plagiarized beliefs around. Hence, I-Kuan Tao is consistently “plagiaristic” in nature.

Secondly, citing the two examples, the Pure Land of “Buddha Amitabha” and the “Right Dharma-Eye Store” of the Chan school in Buddhism, which were changed, by false analogy, into the “Absolute Heaven” and the “Aperture of the Mysterious Gate” respectively by I-Kuan Tao, the authors disclose its “plagiarism without the Way.” I-Kuan Tao is like a car theft group, which steals the luxury cars, takes them apart, and then pieces its car together. With its parts from different luxury cars, this reassembled car is likened to a Pere David's deer (nicknamed “the four unlikes”), whose different parts are ill-matched. Before too long, the stolen and reassembled car might break down, which can lead to a traffic accident, or its counterfeit nature will be exposed.

The faith in Amitabha Pure Land is one of the Buddhist dharma-gates. By reciting the name of Buddha Amitabha, one can be reborn in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss after death to continue one's practice in the Buddhahood-Way. In the developmental process of Xiantian Tao [Way of Former Heaven], the forerunner of I-Kuan Tao, Amitabha faith is its important connotation. However, bragging about its Maitreya faith, I-Kuan Tao changed Buddha Amitabha into the Genuine Ruler of All Beings, who governs the heavenly realms; the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss is the birthplace of the Buddha's original sons—the Absolute Heaven. Although the information about the Amitabha faith cannot be found in the existing books of I-Kuan Tao, some traces of it still remain. That is, from Xiantian Tao to I-Kuan Tao, with its imitation of the Amitabha faith changed to the Maitreya faith, those changes prove that I-Kuan Tao has stolen many other beliefs and is essentially plagiaristic.

The “Eternal Unborn Mother,” “Three Stages Final Kalpa,” “To Propagate Tao in the Three Realms,” and “the mind-cultivation method of Three Treasures” are the fundamental doctrines of the present I-Kuan Tao. Among them, the core one is “the mind-cultivation method of Three Treasures,” in which the “Aperture of the Mysterious Gate” is the most exceptional. I-Kuan Tao views the “Aperture of the Mysterious Gate” as the secret meaning that should not be transmitted without careful consideration and even believes that it is precisely the “Right Dharma-Eye Store” of the Chan school. The authors first discuss the true meaning of the Right Dharma-Eye Store in

Buddhism (the true mind Tathagatagarbha); in comparison to the interpretation by I-Kuan Tao, the authors further study whether the “Aperture of the Mysterious Gate” accords with the valid cognition by holy teachings of Right Dharma-Eye Store in orthodox Buddhism and whether it is illusory to claim that the “Aperture of the Mysterious Gate” is the pivot on which one attains enlightenment and sees the Buddha-nature.

Lastly, do the doctrines and practice sequence of I-Kuan Tao stolen from the five religions have the merits and virtues of “transcending births and deaths,” “achieving perfection and returning home,” or “attaining the Way and Buddhahood”? Or does I-Kuan Tao only have the superficial appearance of **advising people to do good** in mundane dharma? If one does self-practice based on its teachings, what achievements could one attain? Concerning the above questions, the conclusions drawn from this study based on orthodox Buddhism are provided for the leaders and believers of I-Kuan Tao to reconsider.

Keywords: Aperture of the Mysterious Gate, transcending births and deaths, Right Dharma-Eye Store, the mind-cultivation method of Three Treasures, Eternal Unborn Mother, Absolute Heaven, Three Stages Final Kalpa, Amitabha faith, Maitreya faith, plagiarism, dharma plagiarism