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Research Article

THE THEME OF FATE IN *OEDIPUS REX* AND THE STORY OF AJĀTASHATRU

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ABSTRACT

Although Oedipus Rex *and the story of King Ajātashatru have been studied for their plot similarities, they have primarily been interpreted from a content perspective, while textual distinctions often yield clear results only from a structural standpoint. Applying Buddhist criticism through a system of three specialized methods – typology, structural analysis, and cultural – historical analysis – this paper examines the theme of fate in the Greek play (*Oedipus Rex*) and the story of King Ajātashatru in the Buddhist tradition to explain the interesting intersections of fate and certain comparisons from a structural plot perspective. The research results show that Eudipe's plot is more complex, while Ajātashatru's story is clearer in its cause – and – effect relationship; thus, the concept of fate is illuminated through two distinct yet similar thought traditions. These research findings can serve as a reference for comparative structural studies. This is significant as part of the curriculum for Western Literature and Buddhist Literature courses at universities and colleges specializing in Literature and Buddhism throughout Vietnam.*

Keywords: Ajātashatru; Buddhist criticism; fate; narrative structure; *Oedipus Rex*

1. Introduction

It is perhaps no accident that two of antiquity's most haunting stories of patricide – one Greek, one Indian – have so rarely been read alongside each other. Tragedy, as an expressive form of the profound conflict between humanity and fate, holds significant academic value in exploring the reality of human existence across different cultures. Therefore, comparative research on fate – a common theme in the stories of Ajatashatru (Buddhist literature) and *Oedipus Rex* (ancient Greek drama) – stems from three key perspectives, including academic, practical, and educational. Academically, this article contributes to clarifying how different cultures interpret suffering and fate, from the inevitability of prophecy in Greek tragedy to the concept of karma in Buddhist literature.

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From a practical perspective, this cross – cultural comparative research promotes multifaceted understanding in the context of globalization, meeting the need for dialogue between the East and the West. From an educational perspective, this investigation helps the younger generation gain a deeper understanding of moral and philosophical values, encouraging critical thinking and empathy for human adversity, as Aristotle emphasized: "For it is between relatives that tragic events occur... these are the things the poet must seek" (Aristotle, 1895, p.37).

The research history of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the story of King Ajātashatru in Buddhist scriptures, and comparisons between the two works demonstrate an interdisciplinary approach to Greek literature and Buddhist philosophy. Regarding *Oedipus Rex*, Aristotle (350 BCE/1895) considered it a model tragedy with a tight structure and a motif of fate, while Dodds (1966) highlighted the journey of discovering truth leading to a tragic downfall. Thich Thien Hung (2025) focused on the tragedy of Oedipus as a king through the lens of karmic retribution. The story of Ajātashatru was analyzed by Thapar (2002) through a three – stage structure including sin, realization, and atonement to reflect the philosophy of karma and salvation. Comparing the two works, Obeyesekere (1990) and Black (2007) point out similar motifs regarding family sin and the discovery of truth. Notably, Knox (1985) and Doniger (1999) have depicted Oedipus and Ajātashatru as royal figures embodying cautionary lessons about arrogance and ignorance, although Ajātashatru finds liberation through repentance. Suggestive as these parallels are, one notices that none of these scholars pauses to ask why the two traditions resolve the same crisis so differently, and it is precisely that question which this paper takes as its point of departure. Furthermore, cultural imagery and symbols such as light/blindness in *Oedipus Rex* (Vernant & Vidal-Naquet, 1988) and ignorance/enlightenment in the story of Ajātashatru (Bronkhorst, 2011) have been analyzed by Pollock (2006) and McEvilley (2002) to highlight the differences between Greek fate and Buddhist karma. Although direct comparative studies remain limited, hypotheses regarding structure, characters, and symbolism suggest that both works reflect universal humanistic themes within distinct cultural contexts. Current research has pointed out similarities in plot, the noble origins of the characters, and prominent symbolism between the two works. However, no study has yet applied Buddhist criticism to address the relationship between Buddhist and Greek literary texts – that is, to explore, apply, and evaluate the potential of Buddhist literary studies. This paper focuses on the tragedy of Ajātashatru as presented in Buddhist scriptures, including the *Anapanasati Sutta* in *Ekottara Āgama* (2022), the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* in *Dīgha Nikāya* (2015), the *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra* (2017), the tale of Prince Ajātashatru, Queen Vaidehi and the Pure Land Dharma gate (*Buddhist Folk Tales*, 2018), and *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles (497-405 BCE), concerning plot structure, theme of fate, and cultural significance to elucidate the parallels in how these two traditions construct their narratives, thereby affirming the universality and cultural

particularity of Oedipus and Ajātashatru. Therefore, the research tasks include analyzing the structure and tragic meaning through the lens of Buddhist philosophy and Greek dramatic theory, comparing the roles of fate and characters, and evaluating the potential of Buddhist literary criticism in cross – cultural studies. The research model can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1. *Research model*

Research Hypothesis	Characteristics of the Subject	Methodology	Research Methods	Aspects of Research	Research Significance
Structural & plot parallels	Divine fate; familial tragedy		Structural Analysis	Plot structure, fate as a theme	Universality & intercultural value
Noble tragic archetypes	Desire – fate conflict	Buddhist criticism	Socio–Cultural Analysis	Spiritual role, character	Buddhist critical potential
Symbolic tragic system	Prophecy; familial action		Semiotic Analysis	Symbols, action patterns	East–West humanistic insight

2. Research findings

2.1. The concept of fate

In ancient Greek thought, fate was understood as a multifaceted concept encompassing divine command, predestination, and inherent necessity. The term "fate" derives from the Latin words fata (prophecy), fatus (human destiny determined by the gods), and fari (to say, to declare). Socrates emphasized that fate was divinely predetermined, affirming the absolute correctness of the gods and the ignorance of man, thereby advocating for enlightenment– "not one single person can escape fate" (Plato, 1997, p. 856). Plato, conversely, argued that the immortal soul exists in the world of forms, where fate is perceived through memory and causal relationships, understood only by enlightened souls – "This depends directly upon the existence of the ideas as ἀρχαί, or principles of causation. Physical causes explain nothing: at best they are facts, not reasons. For a real cause we must pierce through the phantasmagoria of matter to that invisible essence, of which the sensible universe is the outward expression: we must look for the explanation of each thing in its idea." (Plato, 2008, p.16).

This Platonic distinction, between the causal world of forms and the deceptive flux of matter, maps onto fate in ways that Sophocles seems to have intuited long before philosophy formalized them. Later, Aristotle believed that fate is manifested through unexpected events, interconnected by cause and effect, that alter both nature and quantity: "Such an effect is best produced when the events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time, they follow from one another" (Aristotle, 1895, p.37). Zeno of Citium advocated for harmony with divinely ordained destiny, regardless of mistakes.: "The moon is illumined by the sun. Gods and men are akin... Fate is the cause of things being thus ordered both as a whole and separately" (Diogenes Laertius, 1925, 343). Pre-Socratic philosophers linked fate to natural principles—water (Thales), mathematical cycles

(Pythagoras), and atoms (Democritus) (Kirk et al., 1971). Mythologically, the Moirai goddesses (Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos) personified fate, evolving into Ananke under the rule of Zeus (Hesiod, 1988; Homer, 1991).

Fate (fata) is a divine force, often negative, associated with death and inevitability (idealism); destiny (destino) is a positive, self-directed path toward life's purpose (early materialism). “Fate” in Greek mythology emphasizes divine determinism, contrasting with the active role of humans in destiny, as expressed through Stoic acceptance or heroic resistance (Long, 2013). Karma in Buddhism is linked to destiny through individual responsibility in cause and effect, unlike Greek determinism (Harvey, 2013). This shapes Greek tragedies (*Oedipus Rex*) in contrast to Buddhist stories (Ajātashatru); fate here differs from destiny in its divine nature, themes, and autonomy. Therefore, throughout this paper, fate is used exclusively to denote the externally imposed, inescapable destiny of Oedipus within the Greek tragic tradition, while destiny refers to the karmically conditioned, transformable trajectory of Ajātashatru within the Buddhist framework. Religiously, fate varies through communities. Christianity links it to God’s will through Adam’s fall and the Seven Sealed Book (Revelation 5:1, *Holy Bible*); Sunni Islam predetermines it pre-creation, recorded 120 days post-conception and reaffirmed periodically, while Shia allows flexibility (Nasr, 2007); Confucianism’s Mandate of Heaven demands knowledge, harmony, waiting, and reverence (Confucius, 1910); Daoism derives it from Dao’s yin-yang harmony (Laozi, 2011); Buddhism sees it as karma which is an “action” through bodily, verbal, and mental deeds via causes, conditions, and effects (Dalai Lama XIV, 1995). What is striking about this cross – religious survey is less the diversity of answers than the universality of the question. Every major tradition has felt compelled to account for why good people suffer, and why intention so often fails to determine outcome. Fate, thus, appears divinely imposed, naturally arising, or self – created.

Buddhism, via South Asian introspection and anti – Brahmanism, rationalizes fate as perceivable karma causality (Gombrich, 2006) while Greece’s maritime culture and flexible myths made fate unknowable, prompting heroic defiance (Vernant & Vidal-Naquet, 1988). Greek “fate” roots in mythological realism and intervention, whereas Buddhist “karma” stresses agency and moral causality; both confront human limits – unknowability versus introspection – yielding complementary existential views.

2.2. Fate as a tragedy

Tragedy in Buddhist narratives and ancient Greek drama centers on the conflict between ideals and reality. In ancient Indian society, it is linked to karunā (compassion for suffering) and dukkha (Noble Truth of Suffering) in the Four Noble Truths, evoking the idea that life is a sea of suffering, whilst in ancient Greece, tragedy involves death and suffering, where noble characters err and fall. Aristotle pointed out that tragedy “presents men either as better than in real life” (Aristotle, 1895, p. 11), inducing catharsis through fear and pity. Hegel

stated, "In virtue of this principle, tragedy rests primarily on the contemplation of such a conflict and its resolution... it is dramatic poetry alone which is capable of making the entire range and course of tragedy into the principle of a work of art" (Hegel, 1975, 1199). Marx and Engels viewed tragedy's basis as conflicts between historically necessary demands and their practical impossibility (Marx & Engels, 1995). Tragedy, thus, in many traditions revolves around contradictions between good and evil, right and wrong, or desire and destiny.

Fate is central to tragedy but differs between traditions, cultures, and communities. In Buddhism, it ties to karma–vipāka, where actions determine consequences across lifetimes; the *Maha-kammavibhanga Sutta* states: "Having abandoned killing... having right view, one is reborn in a good destination... after death" (2021, p. 547), while the *Kṣitigarbha Sūtra* warns of retribution like Avīci Hell for transgressions. In ancient Greece, fate was seen as an immutable supernatural force, as in the prophecy of Oedipus, evoking pity and fear of human helplessness. Ajātashatru (492 – 460 BCE) in Buddhist tales and Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* are prime examples of fates that leave behind much contemplation for posterity. Ajātashatru, King of Magadha, killed his father Bimbisara (558–491 BCE) and incarcerated his mother Vaidehi for sovereignty, but repented and attained enlightenment, drawn from the *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra* and other tales; his tragedy arises from heedlessness, resolved personally through repentance. Oedipus ignorantly killed his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta despite avoiding prophecy, highlighting humanistic fate. Both are tragic emperors in legends and epics of class – based societies, with power and responsibility yielding cautionary lessons; Ajātashatru stresses on personal ethics, Oedipus's on collective – interest – driven action. What is often overlooked here is the role of the body as a site of fated identity. Oedipus's swollen foot and Ajātashatru's epithet Bāla Rucī (broken finger) both inscribe fate onto the physical self before the protagonist has any capacity for choice.

Ajātashatru's patricide and imprisonment can be reinterpreted as a process structured by heedlessness, repentance, and awakening, which concludes conflicts between desire and morality, ignorance and enlightenment. Oedipus's acts, despite evasion, pit individual capability against fate. Ajātashatru's adaptable Eastern folktale leads to liberation ("man vs. nature"), while Oedipus's confrontational Western myth shows powerlessness ("man vs. fate"), accentuating Eastern adaptability versus Western confrontation.

Spiritual functionary characters in these stories are completely different. Greek Teiresias entangles tragedy as a divine instrument, declaring, "And yet his fortune brings him little joy; For blind... He shall be proved the brother and the sire…" (Sophocles, 2021, p. 27), affirming immutable fate. Buddha unties it as teacher; to repentant Ajātashatru, he said, "Since Your Majesty has seen this transgression... I accept Your Majesty's repentance" (Thich Minh Chau, 2005, p. 156), guiding mindful overcoming of karma. The comparison between Teiresias' early and unalterable judgments, Buddha's offer of escape and changeability prevails the completely different point of salvation time in each culture and community.

Tragedy's universality manifests in Buddhist karma – thoughts arising from causal conditions create destiny – and Freud's Oedipus complex, formalizing unconscious mythological truths. emphasized Linked to Freud (1856–1939)'s sexuality (libido, displacement via music/religion), Karma derives from tragedy to conscious actions and karmic results; the Oedipus complex traces tragedy to unconscious desires, as in Oedipus-Jocasta ties. Both reflect universal human antinomies.

2.3. Fate as a structural element

Tragic plots in ancient Greek drama and Buddhist revolve around the actions, processes, and development of the central character, beginning with a journey of searching and ultimately achieving enlightenment; specifically, they comprise three main parts – the beginning, the middle (climax), and the end – with two core elements including the knotting (initiation of conflict) and the untying (resolution). This structure highlights the movement of action, internal conflicts, and the character's fate, thereby creating the characteristic philosophical depth of tragedy. The tragic narrative of Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* follows the Aristotelian classical Greek model, where the plot is structured by pivotal points and realizations, and is governed by inevitable fate. Firstly, the exposition of the play originates from Laius and Jocasta's love for their child, but is disrupted by a prophecy. Secondly, complication arises when Oedipus is forsaken with his heel pierced and subsequently adopted by Polybus and Merope in Corinth. In an attempt to avoid killing his father and marrying his mother, Oedipus initiates a climax accidentally killing Laius and marrying Jocasta. Thirdly, amidst the plague in Thebes, Jocasta tries to suppress the truth, but the shepherd's testimony and the inquiry into the murder expose everything. In the climax, Oedipus realizes his guilt; and in the final act, he blinds himself, accepting his inescapable fate and its outcomes.

Table 2. *The Plot Structure of* Oedipus Rex

Exposition	**Parental love**		
Complication	Prophecy	Abandoned in the valley Feet pierced by pins Fled Polybus's house	
Climax	Parricide and incestuous marriage Plague Search for the murderer	Jocasta conceals truth	Shepherd's revelation
Falling Action	Self-recognition as the culprit		
Resolution	Self – blinding		

The tragic narrative of Ajātashatru, King of Magadha, is framed in line with the Buddhist narrative tradition, where karma and enlightenment play central roles. The story's introduction revolves around the desire of King Bimbisara and Queen Vaidehi for a child. The intensifying conflict is marked by "Vaidehi's practice of Pure Land Buddhism" (Thich Minh Chieu, 2018) and the prophecy of the sages, along with Ajātashatru's evil deeds creating evil repercussions. The tragic climax occurs when Ajātashatru, provoked and motivated by a

thirst for power, patricide (Bimbisara), and holds captive his mother (Vaidehi), as described in the *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra* (2017) and the *Anapanasati Sutta* (*Ekottara Āgama*, 2022). In the falling action, Ajātashatru has a child and regrets (Thich Minh Chieu, 2018), signaling an inner awakening. The story concludes with Ajātashatru's repentance and attainment of enlightenment, as recorded in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya*, 2005), demonstrating a path to tragic resolution through awareness and moral improvement.

Both Oedipus and Ajātashatru conform to a five-part tragic plot structure; however, their development of action and tragic meaning reflect distinct cultural distinctions. In the case of Oedipus, the tragedy stems from otherworldly fate, where prophecy governs all actions, from exposure to parental murder and incestuous marriage; Oedipus's conflict is inevitable, and the cooling – down (realization of truth) leads to the tragic ending (self – blinding), thereby emphasizing the inexorability of fate in Greek culture. In contrast, Ajātashatru's tragedy emerges from personal craving and heedlessness, but is resolved through repentance and enlightenment; as a result, Ajātashatru's cooling – down (repentance, having a child) and ending (remorse, enlightenment) demonstrate the non-rigidity of Buddhism, where individuals can overcome karmic obstacles through moral awareness. This also means that people can change their destiny.

Table 3. *The plot structure of Ajātashatru*

Exposition	Desire for a child	Sources
Complication	Evil deeds – evil consequences, prophecy	Queen Vaidehi's practice of Pure Land Buddhism (Thich Minh Chieu, 2018).
Climax	Desire for kingship and instigation, Ajātashatru kills his father and imprisons his mother.	*Anapanasati Sutta* (*Ekottara Āgama*, 2022); *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra* (2017); *Prince Ajātashatru* (Thich Minh Chieu, 2018)
Falling Action	Ajātashatru experiences remorse and has a child.	*Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra* (2017); *Prince Ajātashatru* (Thich Minh Chieu, 2018)
Resolution	Ajātashatru repents and attains enlightenment.	*Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya*, 2005)

The tragic narrative structures of Oedipus and Ajātashatru not only depict actions but also reflect differing philosophical conceptions of fate and causality. In Greek drama, Oedipus's structure highlights the conflict between man and fate, with the tragic climax being the painful recognition of a fate. In Buddhism, Ajātashatru's structure demonstrates the path from delusion to enlightenment, where conflicts are resolved through remorse and spiritual guidance. Both narratives, despite their cultural differences, utilize five plot elements to depict character development, from an auspicious beginning to a climax of suffering, and finally to realization or resolution, thereby providing a powerful moral lesson and humanistic value. What strikes the reader most when juxtaposing these two structures is not their formal similarity but the fact that the plots move in opposite directions. Oedipus descends from knowledge to blindness, whereas Ajātashatru ascends from blindness to knowledge.

3. Discussion

The comparison proposed here is not without its risks because one might object that yoking a Greek tragedy to a Buddhist canonical narrative does more violence than justice to both. This paper takes that objection seriously and argues that the structural parallels are precisely what make the cultural divergences legible. Both narratives about Ajātashatru and Oedipus orbit around fate/destiny, yet the approach and resolution of fate within each tradition reflect significant cultural differences. The divergence in terminology – fate for Oedipus, destiny for Ajātashatru – is not merely semantic; it reflects the structural difference between a closed tragic universe and an open karmic one. The tragedy of Ajātashatru is reconciled in a peaceful interlude when he meets the Buddha and gains a clear understanding of karma and its karmic consequences. Ajātashatru's progression of remorse demonstrates the possibility of overcoming destiny through enlightenment, thereby highlighting the flexibility of Eastern philosophy, specifically the Buddhist principle of dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda), opening up the possibility of liberation through inner transformation. Nevertheless, in ancient Greek drama, the tragedy of Oedipus, who unintentionally killed his father (Laius) and married his mother (Jocasta), has no way out. Oedipus cannot regret or ignore his transgressions, and his tragedy is ascribed to divine will without a clear fundamental cause, demonstrating human impotence in the face of fate. Oedipus's tragedy, therefore, is antagonistic and insoluble, matching the Western concept of fixed fate. Both tragedies share commonalities in that fate is triggered by divine declarations and unfolds within a family context, where intimate relationships lead to calamity. As Aristotle emphasized, "But when the tragic incident occurs between those who are near or dear to one another – if, for example, a brother kills, or intends to kill, a brother, a son his father, a mother her son, a son his mother, or any other deed of the kind is done – here we have the situations which should be sought by the poet." (Aristotle, 1895, p.47).

However, the plot structures of the two tragedies differ, as presented in the comparative table below:

Table 4. *Comparison of the Plot Structures of* Oedipus Rex *and Ajātashatru*

	Oedipus Rex	**Ajātashatru Narrative**
Exposition	Parental love	Desire for a child
Complication	Prophecy	Divine pronouncement
Climax	Parricide and incestuous marriage	Parricide and maternal imprisonment
Falling Action	Recognition of the culprit	Remorse
Resolution	Self-blinding	Repentance

The plot of Ajātashatru appears earlier in history (5th century BCE) than Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, but both converge at the starting point of a prophecy or divine pronouncement, leading to tragic family actions. This aligns with the fragmented nature of ancient Greek drama from mythology and the religious thinking of ancient Indians, who asserted that life was determined by principles transcending the individual. However, the difference lies in how the two tragedies are resolved; while Ajātashatru finds salvation through repentance, Oedipus is left with only self – punishment by gouging out his own eyes – an act that doesn't truly resolve

the tragedy but reveals that universal reason in ancient Greek society had reached its limits. Aristotle examined the dramatic structure of tragedies through the concepts of "reversal," "recognition," and "catharsis," thereby classifying the plot into simple and complex ones. He defined it as: "A simple action is a continuous and unified action in the sense stated, in which the change of fate occurs without reversal of circumstances and without recognition" (Aristotle, 1895, p. 33). As Aristotle put it, and the point bears repeating in a cross – cultural context, recognition is not merely a dramatic device but an epistemological event. The moment a character discovers what the audience has long known. Hence, the plot of Ajātashatru is considered simple, with a sequential development from sin to repentance and awakening, focusing on the individual journey, while the plot of Oedipus is complex, with elements of peripeteia (killing the father, marrying the mother) and recognition (discovering the truth), creating a strong catharsis effect on the viewer. It clearly shows that the details do not have meaning in themselves, but depend on the plot structure containing them. Therefore, Oedipus' tragedy becomes a prototypical and enduring model of tragedy due to its complexity and scale that surpasses human aspects, while affirming that tragedy is not just an event, but a way in which knowledge arises within the narrative structure, whereas Ajātashatru's tragedy is personal and ethical, encompassing the process of transformation. Another crucial distinction lies in how the two tragedies manage the falling action or denouement. In typical Greek tragedies, such as Medea, who kills her own child after being deceived by Jason, the ending usually relies on the character's own actions, without divine interference. However, Oedipus's tragedy surpasses the human dimension; it is ascribed to divine will, a premise that prompted Freud's psychoanalytic interpretation through the analysis of the Oedipus complex using scientific and rational arguments. In contrast, Ajātashatru attains its resolution through the Buddha's instruction in a non-supernatural way, different from Greek divinity, but rather through the opening of spiritual enlightenment, thereby underscoring the human capacity to overcome destiny through consciousness. Literary texts, therefore, not only express worldviews but also establish two essential models of subjectivity; one determined by supernatural forces, the other competent of self – liberation through consciousness.

4. Conclusion

The contrastive study of the Buddhist tragedy of Ajātashatru and the tragedy of Oedipus in ancient Greek drama has illuminated the similarities and divergences in fate, plot structure, and cultural significance. This confirms the hypothesis that these two tragedies reflect universal human struggles viewed through the prism of Eastern and Western cultures. Interesting resemblances, such as the origins of the names of Oedipus (swollen foot) and Ajātashatru (also known as Bāla Rucī – broken finger), suggest remnants of human psychological trauma, revealing similar narrative motifs despite geographical and cultural differences. Both tragedies derive from divine prophecies, take place within a family setting, and portray noble characters facing the conflict between desire and fate. However, differences in meaning (ignorance versus enlightenment in Ajātashatru; humanity versus fate in Oedipus),

type (simple versus complex plot), structure of action (repentance versus self – punishment), and cultural context (Eastern flexibility versus Western antagonism) have highlighted the diversity in how cultures interpret suffering and fate. The comparative intercultural research method, integrated with Buddhist criticism, has proven fruitful in exploring these two works with many commonalities. Buddhist criticism, focusing on concepts such as karma, compassion (karunā), and the Four Noble Truths, etc., has provided potential guidance for elucidating the tragedy of Ajātashatru; meanwhile, theories from Aristotle, Hegel, and Freudian psychoanalysis support the analysis of *Oedipus Rex*. The principle of comparing resemblances to clarify and explain divergences has helped to shed light not only on points of convergences but also on the distinct nuances of each cultural and intellectual tradition. The application of Buddhist criticism to comparative literary study not only enhances the approach but also expands the potential for discovering shared humanistic values between cultures, as evidenced by the promising trend of comparative intercultural research today.

However, owing to its restricted scope, this study still has some constraints. Firstly, depending on primarily on classical texts and plays may not fully represent the broader socio – cultural context of the two ideological systems, such as the folk versions of the Ajātashatru story or other interpretations of Oedipus in Greek literature. Secondly, the comparison mainly concentrates on the two main characters without exploring supporting characters (such as Queen Vaidehi or Jocasta) or the role of the community in the tragedy, thus failing to present the interactions between the different character arcs. Finally, the analytical scope is limited to only two main traditions, not extending to other cultures such as Hinduism and Islam, which could offer fresh perspectives in the future. In future research, this study could be extended in the following ways. Firstly, interdisciplinary analytical methods, such as cultural anthropology and semiotic analysis, could be incorporated to deepen the cross – cultural comparison. Secondly, similar tragic narratives in other traditions, including Hinduism, Daoism, and ancient Middle Eastern literature, could be explored to construct a more comprehensive and holistic theoretical framework. Thirdly, Buddhist criticism could be applied to contemporary literary genres such as novels and films, thereby testing the method's applicability in modern contexts. In sum, these scholarly directions not only strengthen the significance of Buddhist criticism in the field of comparative literature study, but also advance in reinforcing the potential of cross – cultural research in exploring the profound nature of humanity in the face of fate and suffering.

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CHỦ ĐỀ ĐỊNH MỆNH TRONG *EUDIPE LÀM VUA* VÀ *AJĀTASHATRU*

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TÓM TẮT

Eudipe làm vua và câu chuyện về vua Ajātashatru tuy đã được quan tâm nghiên cứu vì sự tương đồng cốt truyện nhưng chủ yếu được lí giải từ góc độ nội dung, trong khi những phân lập về văn bản thường chỉ có thể tìm thấy kết quả rõ ràng trên phương diện cấu trúc. Vận dụng hướng tiếp cận phê bình Phật học thông qua hệ thống ba phương pháp chuyên ngành gồm: loại hình, phân tích cấu trúc và văn hóa – lịch sử, bài viết này khảo sát chủ đề định mệnh trong vở kịch Hi Lạp Eudipe làm vua *và câu chuyện về vua Ajātashatru trong truyền thống Phật giáo để lí giải những giao thoa thú vị về định mệnh cũng như các đối sánh nhất định từ góc độ cấu trúc cốt truyện. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy cốt truyện Eudipe phức tạp hơn trong khi câu chuyện Ajātashatru lại rõ ràng về lí nhân – quả; qua đó quan điểm định mệnh cũng được soi chiếu qua hai truyền thống tư tưởng khác biệt nhưng lại có nhiều nét tương đồng. Kết quả nghiên cứu này có thể trở thành tài liệu tham khảo về nghiên cứu so sánh cấu trúc; có ý nghĩa như nội dung giảng dạy học phần Văn học phương Tây, Văn học Phật giáo ở các đơn vị đào tạo đại học, cao đẳng về Văn học, Phật học trong cả nước.*

***Từ khóa*:** Ajātashatru; phê bình Phật học; định mệnh; cấu trúc cốt truyện; *Eudipe làm vua*