Pre-modern Chinese Buddhist Apologetic Thought: A Critical Investigation in the Light of an Annotated Translation of *Hong Ming Ji*

A Thesis Submitted

To

Sikkim University

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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December, 2023

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DECLARATION

I, **Sheetal Pradhan**, hereby declare that the thesis titled, **"Pre-modern Chinese Buddhist Apologetic Thought: A Critical Investigation in the Light of an Annotated Translation of *Hong Ming Ji*"** submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Chinese is my original work. The contents of this thesis did not form any basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree to any University/Institute. This is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Chinese, School of Languages and Literature, Sikkim University.

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CERTIFICATE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge the special roles played by countable persons without whom this research would not have been possible. First and foremost, I am indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Dhriti Roy, Associate Professor, Department of Chinese for her immense support, valuable guidance, critical insights, and all the academic help she has rendered to me during this research, without which this journey would not have been possible.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my family members. My father, Mr. Basu Dev Pradhan has been a colossal pillar of my strength and inspiration,especially during the phase of my research work. My late mother, Rudra Mani Pradhan, provided me with love and care and made me realize the significance of time. Her blessings in my life as a guiding star have kept me moving toward the completion of this thesis. My elder brother, Siddharth Pradhan, and my elder sister Sweata Pradhan for being understanding and supportive. My sincere and deepest appreciation to my friend Chewang Norbu Barfungpa for his care, consideration, and encouragement especially in times when I doubted myself and a few of my scholars and friends who have helped me in one way or the other.

I would also like to express my gratitude towards Sikkim University Teesta-Indus Central Library and all the staff personnel for always providing me with a helping hand and assistance in times of need. Their service is truly appreciated. Lastly, I would like to thank everyone who in one way or the another helped me during my tenure as a research scholar.

Sheetal Pradhan

This Ph.D. thesis is dedicated to

My Buwa

and

My heavenly Muma who left us on 25/08/2023

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NOTES ON ROMANIZATION AND LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The Ph.D. thesis uses the pinyin system of romanization in all places of discussion and analysis.

The following is the list of abbreviations used in various chapters of the thesis

CSZJJ	-	*Chu sanzang ji ji*
GSZ	-	*Gaoseng zhuan*
GHMJ	-	*Guang hong ming ji*
HMJ	-	*Hong ming ji*
HHS	-	*Hou Han Shu*
JS	-	*Jin shu*
LDSBJ	-	*Lidai san bao ji*
MSZ	-	*Ming seng zhuan*
SGZ	-	*San guo zhi*
SSXY	-	*Shi shuo xin yu*
VKNS	-	*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*
XGSZ	-	*Xu Gaoseng zhuan*

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INTRODUCTION

I. Introduction

I.A. Brief Overview of the Conceptual Framework of the Study

Chinese Buddhism offers a unique domain of research investigation for scholars and students of both Sinology and Buddhology. Buddhism in China evolved independent of any direct Indian influence, against the backdrop of its own set of indigenous cultural, social, political environment. Various social, cultural and political factors have been responsible through periods in history in shaping Chinese Buddhism in its current form. There was a long complex process of adaptation, selection, hybridization, acculturation and absorption involved in creating the Sinified version of Indian Buddhism. Buddhism was never transmitted from India to China as an organic whole, with teachings related to any particular Indian school or sect, but rather got disseminated in the form of fragmentary, abbreviated, piecemeal versions of some of the earliest Buddhist teachings related to the concepts of suffering, *karman* (actions), retribution, continuous circle of birth and rebirth.[1] Buddhism is believed to have been transmitted via the overland Central Asian route, Myanmar and overseas route from India to China through trading networks, and itinerant monks, merchants, labourers supposedly played a critical role in introducing some of the earliest Buddhist notions to China. Initially treated as a foreign, imported religion, Buddhism dwelt amongst foreign immigrant families in China, having migrated from the Central Asian states of Parthia, Sogdiana, Bactriana, Kucha, Karashahr. Between the first and second centuries, the subtle philosophical doctrines of Buddhism did not find readership and scholarship in China. Rather Buddha, as is evident from the Buddhist images on Han dynasty tombs, was regarded as an immortal being, a foreign deity,

[1] Tansen Sen. *Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade, The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 7.

capable of granting immortality to dead souls. It was around the middle of the third century that through some of the pioneering translation activities of Chinese Buddhist monks like Zhu Shixing, Zhi Dun, Daoan, Huiyuan that Buddhist Sanskrit concepts started percolating Chinese society and some of the early Chinese Buddhist monastic groups emerged.

I.B. Locating Buddhist Apologetic Thought within the Domain of Chinese Buddhism

Buddhist apologetic thought owes its emergence to the serious conflicts, contradictions and confrontations between Buddhists and non-Buddhists in the political and social arena, and the role played by Chinese intellectuals and the propagators of Buddhism in defence of the foreign faith on Chinese soil. It was around the fourth century, following the shifting of the ethnic Chinese royal house to the southern part of China, with Jiankang (Nanjing) as the capital, that Chinese intellectuals, well versed in Chinese Classics, adept in the *qingtan* 清談 conversations and with some amount of cultural standing became interested in the teachings of Buddhism. The opposition that Buddhism received at the hands of the Confucian ruling officialdom was countered by the 'gentleman-monks', who devised innovative methods and strategies to defend the relevance and significance of Buddhism against criticism and persecution. [2] Buddhist apologetic and propagandistic literature, composed between the fourth and seventh century by both Buddhist monks and lay devotees became the literary canvas depicting the above-mentioned social phenomenon.

[2] E. Zürcher. *The Buddhist Conquest of China, the Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 8-9.

I.C. Mapping the Origin of Chinese Buddhist Apologetic Thought and Literature

The candid trend or casual tendency of placing one's argument in favor of Buddhism in order to prove its relevance and credibility to the foreign socio-cultural milieu of China against the backdrop of the already existing indigenous schools of thought like Confucianism and Daoism might have made its appearance as early as the second century-third century C.E., however, the practice of compiling such argumentative thoughts put forth by individuals from diverse walks of Chinese social life belonging to different periods in time within a well compiled body of texts under the umbrella term "apologetic or propagandistic literature" did not seem to have emerged until around the mid and late fifth century C.E.. As has been pointed out by Erik Zürcher, this particular and distinctively unique kind of literature, called Buddhist apologetic literature (*hujiao bianlun wenxue* 護教辯論) was, first of all, a product of a certain period in time in Chinese history, and, second, was reflective of a new kind of intellectual engagement amongst a newly emerging socio-religious and philosophical group of thinkers in pre-modern China, unseen in the preceding eras.

Factors Responsible for the Emergence of Buddhist Apologetic Thought

Political Environment

Mark Edward Lewis in his scholarly work, *China between Empires: the Northern and Southern Dynasties,* captured the essence of the political and cultural divide between the north and the south of China through the following observation, "south China had a dynasty with no army, while north China had armies but no dynasty". As is obvious from the names of dynasties such as Qin, Han, Sui, Tang, Yuan, Ming and Qing suggesting centuries of apparent stability under their rule in pre-modern China, the northern and southern dynasties, on the contrary, historians suggest, struggled with issues of survival, security and stability, amidst revolt and subversion. The period in

time between the third and the sixth century C.E., therefore, poses tremendous challenge upon scholars of history, having been regarded as one of the most complex and difficult periods to deal with. Towards the beginning of the fourth century, the remnants of the Western Jin dynasty (265-316 C.E.), which had formerly succeeded in once restoring the Han dynasty, were driven to the region south of the River Changjiang by non-Chinese enemies, where they held on to their seat of power for a hundred years, before making way for the Song dynasty founded by Liu Yu, having been succeeded in turn by the Qi, Liang and Chen ruling houses, each lasting for thirty or forty years. In the north, meanwhile, power of governance changed hands between the short-lived armed confederacies, each under a successful leader, only to be finally unified under the Murong clan of the non-Chinese Xianbei/Xianbi ethnic race under the northern Wei dynasty with the cultural base established once again upon the ancient imperial capital of Luoyang. Within the next few years, mutiny broke out in the frontier garrisons, bringing down the government to a ruinous end. Finally, the new Sui dynasty destroyed its rival states in the north and in 589 C.E., crossed over to reach the lower valley of the Changjiang and win over the territory from the southern empire of Chen and restored a brief period of political unity. With the forced exodus towards the cultured south (of China proper) of immigrant families belonging to the once ruling aristocracy and officialdom of the north under the western Jin dynasty, marked by the collapse of most of northern China following continuous spells of political confusion and turmoil often referred to by historians as the “troubles of the *yongjia* era” (永嘉之亂 307-312 C.E.) there resulted free mixing of people and ideas, both factors which had later proved to be decisive in the hybridization of the intellectual and cultural environment of south China, as much as of the Chinese intellectual class. The region located around the lower Changjiang

river valley around the early fourth century C.E. had started to emerge as the new place of refuge for the immigrant members of the royal and gentry families. Between the timeline of the capture of the north by the Xiongnu/Xianbei tribes in 310 C.E. and the fall of Luoyang in 311 C.E., an enormous number of displaced people traveled to the south, until the new site of Jianye came to serve as the nucleus of the new seat of government. Amid the relatively peaceful socio-political conditions thus created at the new southern seat of government, members of some of most distinguished refugee families got the opportunity of interacting with the powerful local southern gentry, well-read literati, itinerant Buddhist monks and influential lay devotees, thus creating scope for metaphysical and ontological speculation, deliberation and in-depth discussion on philosophical tenets and engagement with exegetical study of concepts related to Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism.

Social Environment

The earliest episodes of dissemination of Buddhism from India to China via the intermediary states in central Asia and Ser-India along the trans-continental Silk Route not only led to the transmission of some of the fundamental Buddhist precepts and basic teachings of the dharma, alongside various Buddhist cultural elements, often times adulterated with local beliefs and traditions on its pathway of circulation, but also introduced into China new religious concepts and philosophical tenets, new code of regularized behavior and a new form of socio-religious organization, each of which stood counter to the pre-existing Chinese social, political and religious norms, thereby eventually giving rise to anti-clerical sentiments among the learned Chinese Confucian elite group of officials.

The first of such contradiction arose from the very idea of renouncing one's family/home, severing ties with family members and seeking the path of spiritual emancipation (*jietuo* 解脱). This Buddhist idea of monastic life, although natural and obvious to the Indian socio-religious context, posed a challenge to the already existing Confucian foundational structure for family and society in pre-modern China. Confucianism with its focus upon the founding of an ethical society based upon harmonious social relations had always considered the family to be the core societal unit and the point of social reference for the general Chinese populace. The Confucian Classic on Filial Piety, *Xiaojing* 孝經 advocated the cultivation of unconditional dedication, service and obedience to one's parents, elders in family and society, ancestors, and continues to serve as the most revered (Code of Conduct) and followed by young generation male members from the time of its composition during the Warring States period throughout history till date. Also, intellectual attributes such as benevolence, propriety, righteousness, conscientiousness and altruism, supplemented with the inner virtue of filial piety were perceived as some of the most essential Confucian virtues that an ideal gentleman (*junzi* 君子) needed to cultivate, nurture and abide by. Given this Chinese socio-religious context, Buddhism introduced a new form of social organization, the monastic order (*saṅgha* 僧伽) wherein the individual instead of serving his parents or elders in family was being spiritually trained to leave aside family and social obligations in pursuit of liberation (*nirvāṇa* 涅槃).

The second of such contradiction emerged out of the re-oriented relation and interaction prescribed by Buddhism between the Buddhist clerical community members and the imperial bureaucracy, once again defying the already prevalent Chinese political norms. The Buddhist clergy had a very different nature of

associating with the ruling class in the land of its origin, namely India, much in contrast to that which was expected of in China. In India the Buddhist monastic community had always existed alongside the temporal rulers, never in subservience nor under dominance of the latter, but rather held in deep reverence by the ruling house, where there were instances of the king (*rājan*) paying homage to the monk. In China, the very emergence of the *saṅgha*, as an asocial, economically unproductive body within the state with its demand for autonomy was a unique case, unheard and unseen in the socio-political history of China. The Buddhist monastic Order as a closed and independent religious organization, upon its initial founding in China around the third century, countered the pre-existing Chinese social norm which called for unconditional subservience of any social, cultural or religious organization to the Chinese ruling house. As has been observed by scholars like Ziegler, Buddhism during the rule of non-Chinese ethnic tribes in the north of China ever since the collapse of the Western Jin dynasty witnessed large scale government opposition, as was in the case of Emperor Wu's persecution. While in the south where the seat of government was in the hands of ethnic Chinese rulers, the anti-Buddhist sentiments were reflected in the form of constant conflicts between the Buddhists and the non-Buddhists. This conflict was not just restricted to the intellectual domain only but also spilled over to the social and political arena. The social practice of granting huge donations to Buddhist monasteries in the form of land holdings and material objects, alongside funds for the building of Buddhist temples and pagodas by the Buddhist lay devotees was perceived by the non-Buddhist members of Chinese civil society as a burden upon civil administration and society. Furthermore, instances of Buddhist monks getting involved in secular life or engaging in business activities was also not a

rare phenomenon, which eventually created a lot of misconception and even mistrust in the minds of non-Buddhists towards the real intention of Buddhist clergymen.

Intellectual Environment

The rise of distinct approaches/perspectives/tendencies related to the interpretation of Buddhist doctrines in the light of indigenous Confucian and Daoist philosophical speculations during the sixth century, namely those of *qingtan* (pure and light conversation), *xuanxue* (secretive profound learning) and *mingjiao* (school of logicians) might be attributed to the above-mentioned candid, spontaneous, unrestrained interactions that would presumably take place between intellectuals from all walks of life and strata of pre-modern Chinese society. The intellectual contributions of certain specific personages from the realm of Chinese Buddhist monastic institutions, lay circles, and Chinese scholar-officials during the said interactions, therefore, led to the emergence of a vibrant intellectual environment, marked by the rise of some of the early noticeable trends of argumentative analysis and debate as found in Buddhist apologetic literature. As has been testified by extant textual evidences on the nature and content of Buddhist apologetic literature, it might as well be presumed that such thoughts that emerged in defense of the Buddhist faith, and did so in intermittent phases and in layers. The early phase of the rise of such propagandistic literature was marked by an urgent need to identify similarities or points of convergences between the foreign imported Buddhist faith on the one hand, and the Chinese indigenous systems of philosophy, namely Confucianism and Daoism on the other, with the sole purpose of granting Buddhism, legitimate ground for durable existence, survivability and longevity. At the preliminary level of its transmission, certain fundamental notions related to Indian Buddhism and the Indian social context could not be rightly comprehended and therefore, failed to be accepted

by the Chinese audience. For example, conceptions such as *karman* and retribution, rebirth, universal suffering, impermanence, the cyclic development of the universe in terms of cosmic periods (*kalpa*) and the existence of innumerable worlds (*lokadhātu*) which reflected the general Indian perception of the world and of life beyond the physical realm could not find a counter resonance amongst Chinese population. In none of the indigenous Chinese philosophical systems of thought, philosophical speculation is found to be centering around issues and questions related to any of the above-mentioned Indian Buddhist doctrines and were thus treated as strange innovations, often incompatible with well-established traditional notions of Chinese thought. While orthodox Confucianism with its focus upon ethics, advocated the cultivation of the inner individual virtues of benevolence, altruism, righteousness, propriety and conscientiousness in order to become a perfect gentleman (*jünzi*), and create harmonious social relations with the ultimate purpose of designing the most ideal form of governance and found an ethical society, Daoism with its focus upon metaphysical speculation, propagated the natural, spontaneous disposition of co-existing with the universal, infinite, nameless, formless source of all matter, the Dao in close harmony. But none of these threw light upon topics which formed the core of intellectual discussion in Buddhism. In order to make the Buddhist doctrines palatable for the Chinese audience, the authors of these apologetic treatises on Buddhist propagandistic literature, most often cultured laymen tried to harmonize Buddhist concepts and practices with pre-existing Chinese conceptions. It might be argued that the tactical device of syncretism was perhaps consciously applied to explicate and illuminate the complex doctrinal philosophical concepts of Indian Buddhism to the upper class, Chinese literati elite. Zurcher has argued that this kind of Buddhist propagandistic literature that arose around the pre-modern period in China was

reflective of an extreme case of hybridization that resulted from continuous and indiscriminate borrowing and adaptation. In fact, a critical reading of the text *Hong Ming Ji* brings to light the fact that in many of the cases, perhaps, even the defender of the Buddhist faith authoring these treatises seemed to be only giving a broad and faint outline of the Buddhist teachings, much of which lacked the original representation of the Indian point of view. Buddhist scriptures which were introduced in China during the late second century C.E., emphasized upon the doctrine of lack of self-nature of all things. According to this Buddhist doctrinal philosophy, as had been propagated through the translation of the *Sūtra of Perfect Wisdom* (小品般若經 *Aśṭasāhasrikaprajñāpāramitāsūtra*), a very important Buddhist Mahayana scripture by Lokakṣema 支婁迦鐵 in 179 C.E., and then later by Zhiqian 支谦(fl.222-254) and finally by Kumārajīva 鸠摩罗什 in 408 C.E., none of the things that exist in the world, possess any definitive self-nature (*svabhāva*) and are all contingent on causes and conditions. The culture of the Eastern Jin dynasty (东晋 317-420 C.E.) was dominated by the upper-class elite population, much devoted to academics and literature, and having strong economic foundations and social status. The early interactions between the Buddhist monks and the members of nobility brought to light certain aspects of convergences between the Daoist teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi and the Buddhist concept of emptiness (*Śūnyavāda*), as was embodied in the Buddhist scripture of *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* (weimojing 维摩經) and the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*(bore jing 般若經), and widely read by scholars of traditional Chinese thought system. Thus, was laid the foundation stone of a unique Sinified version of Buddhism, mixed with metaphysical elements, as propounded by the Luoyang Province Schools

of metaphysics (xuanxue 玄學) and pure conversation (qingtan 清談), and flourished into “gentry Buddhism” or “elite/upper class Buddhism”.

II. Statement of the Research Problem

The study here proceeds from an understanding that Buddhism in China cannot and should not be treated as a history of ideas or a system of philosophy only, but also needs to be viewed as a social phenomenon, wherein Buddhism evolved through a complex dynamic process, from its early years of dissemination to its final years of maturity, and eventually emerged from the status of being a foreign religion in practice amongst members of immigrant families, into becoming a way of life for members of Chinese society. It was the social and official acceptance of Buddhism, through a struggle of over five centuries from the time of its early transmission during the first few decades of the first century, that made it become one of the three major religions of China, sharing recognition at par with China’s indigenous systems of thought, namely Confucianism and Daoism. This transformation in the status of Buddhism would not have been possible, if not for the large-scale propagation of Buddhist apologetic thought and propagandistic literature around the fourth until the seventh centuries of the Common Era, and unfortunately the domain of Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought which played a crucial role in deciding the future of Buddhism in China, still remains to be one of the least studied areas in the history of Chinese Buddhism. The study identifies the following existing inadequacy in the study of Chinese Buddhism and plans to conduct critical research investigation to address the problem. The socio-cultural dimension of Buddhism against which the particular form of Buddhist literature, called apologetic literature emerged, can help re-construct the evolutionary history of Buddhism in China.

This being still an overlooked, neglected, understated area of study, the research investigation conducts a critical examination on this subject. Chinese Buddhist apologetic literature neither embodied hard core Buddhist doctrinal discourses, nor portrayed profound Buddhist philosophical interpretations, but captured the process of penetration of Buddhism from the outer circles of pre-modern Chinese society into the Chinese societal intellectual core, the opposition of Chinese ruling house and the officialdom against the emergence of a new form of social organization, the Chinese Buddhist monastic Order (*saṅgha*), the response of a rising Chinese clergy in defence of the Buddhist faith, all of which eventually contributed towards creating a China specific form of Buddhism. Since these aspects of Chinese Buddhism have still not received adequate scholarly attention, therefore a significant chapter in the evolutionary history of Chinese Buddhism still remains unexplored. Different approaches have so far been adopted for the study of Buddhism in China.

The research investigation observes two discernible approaches associated with the scholarly treatment of Chinese Buddhism. The first being mainstream classical or traditional approach which has been focusing scholarly attention upon the earliest routes of Buddhist dissemination from India, via Central Asian oasis states to China[3], the distinguished Indian missionaries to China[4], doctrinal aspects of Buddhism against the Chinese context[5], accompanied by a critical examination of the Buddhist Canon of translated texts preserved in Chinese, the lives and works of eminent Buddhist

[3] P.C. Bagchi. *India and China, A Thousand Years of Cultural Exchange* (Calcutta: Saraswat Library Press, 1932) 7-10. See also Xinru Liu. *Ancient India and Ancient China, Trade and Religious Exchanges*, AD 1-600 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), 24.
[4]Liu, 1988, 24.
[5] Anukul Chandra Banerjee. *Studies in Chinese Buddhism* (Calcutta: Firma KLP Limited, 1977). See also Jan Nattier. *A Guide to the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Translations*, Texts from the Eastern Han and the Three K Kingdoms Periods (Tokyo: Soka University, 2008).

scholar-monks[6], the indigenous Chinese Buddhist schools of thought[7], and the other being a more contemporary emerging approach which engages in the treatment of the subject of Chinese Buddhism from a sociological, historical and cultural perspective. While in case of the classical approach, there is a tendency of engaging with Buddhism at its near-mature stage in China, in case of the emerging contemporary approach, there is a noticeable tendency of engaging in the investigation of the formative phase of Buddhism, taking into account the sociological, historical, politico-cultural factors which have been responsible in creating a China specific form of Buddhism, which is so distinctively variant from its Indian counterpart[8]. The area of investigation here in this study on pre-modern Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought is a sub-domain of the emerging contemporary study on Chinese Buddhism and it attempts to address the problems stated and discussed above pertaining to the same, underscoring the crucial significance of academic engagement with the so far neglected area of Chinese Buddhism.

III. Central Research Questions

Research investigation of this study centers around the following research questions;

III.A. What was the historical, political, social and cultural backdrop against which pre-modern Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought began to be generated?

III.B. Who were the propagators of Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought and propagandistic literature? Who were the authors of apologetic treatises?

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[6] Latika Lahiri. *Chinese Monks in India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).

[7] W. Pachow. *A Comparative Study of the Pratimoksa, On the Basis of its Chinese, Tibetan, Sanskrit and Pali Versions* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1955, 2000). See also Charles S. Prebish. *Buddhist Monastic Discipline, The Sanskrit Pratimoksa Sutra of the Mahasamghikas and Mulasarvastivadins* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996).

[8] Eric Zurcher. The Buddhist Conquest of China, The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early medieval China (Leiden: Brill, 2007). See also Tansen Sen. Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade, The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400 (Delhi: Manohar, 2004).

III.C. Towards which members of Chinese society was Buddhist apologetic thought directed against?

III.D. How different or unique was Chinese Buddhist apologetic literature in comparison with other Chinese Buddhist compositions in form and content?

III.E. Were the Buddhist apologetic treatises a single homogeneous body of text or did they embody diverse, loosely framed, compiled sections of written responses from lay and monastic devotees of Buddhism in *defence* of the Dharma?

III.F. What critical role did Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought and propagandistic literature play towards consolidating the status of Buddhism in China?

IV. Hypothesis/Main Proposition of the Study

The central argument of the study is that it was neither owing to the availability of complete versions of the Buddhist monastic disciplinary codes (*vinaya*) in Chinese, nor due to the extensive translation projects undertaken for rendering faithful translated versions of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Chinese, nor due to the mutual visits of distinguished Indian and Chinese Buddhist monk-scholars to each other's land that contributed to the consolidation of Buddhism in the foreign soil of China, but rather, more importantly, the consolidation of Buddhism in China owes it to an uninterrupted, continued interaction between Buddhism (still a foreign faith in pre-modern China) and the indigenous Chinese systems of thought, namely Confucianism and Daoism.

On the basis of critical investigation, the study proposes the view that Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought was the outcome of the varied reactions and counter reactions, responses and counter responses between diverse social forcesin pre-

modern China. It emerged as a result of the continued interaction between Buddhism and the other indigenous systems of thought, as also owing to the confrontation between an asocial, apolitical growing Buddhist clergy and the existing official ruling house in power. It is this academically neglected area of pre-modern China's social reaction and engagement with Buddhism which has received scant attention till date and which the research task attempts to address.

The study argues that serious scholarly investigation of fourth-seventh century Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought could open up an unexplored domain of Chinese Buddhist scholarship, dedicated to the study of the evolution of Buddhism, from infancy into its final stage of maturity. While political factors like the north-south divide, the mass exodus of the Chinese ruling house and scholar-officials to the southern region, and the gradual dissemination of Buddhism into the elite social class of intellectuals were crucial in determining the direction of the development of Buddhism, similarly, pre-modern China's ever changing dynamic socio-cultural framework against its indigenous intellectual environment played a critical role in orienting and re-orienting the Buddhist ideological line.

The study proposes that Chinese Buddhist apologetic literature between the fourth-seventh centuries, subtly captures the intellectual struggles, conflicts and contradictions between Buddhism one the one hand and its rival system of philosophy, Confucianism on the other. It also portrays issues such as social reaction, intellectual resistance and bureaucratic opposition towards the foreign faith of Buddhism, as much as it reflects attempts made by propagators of apologetic thought in syncretizing and harmonizing Buddhist concepts, notions and practices with pre-existing Chinese conceptions. Pertinent issues such as the burden of a growing economically non-

productive Buddhist monastic Order upon civil society and state administration, the engagement of large sections of Buddhist monks in secular life activities and business practices, and neglect in the strict observance of monastic codes of discipline raised questions about the legitimacy of the Buddhist monastic institution. Serious research investigation of pre-modern Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought, which could open up avenues of critical study on the abovementioned issues of pre-modern Chinese society, is long overdue and owing to its immense significance, the thesis attempts to illumine those particular aspects of complex interaction between Chinese Buddhist monastic community, Chinese civil society and Chinese officialdom.

The sixth century text, *Hong Ming Ji* 弘明集, compiled by Liang dynasty monk-scholar Sengyou 梁僧祐, probably between 515-518 CE stands out as one of the most representative texts on Chinese Buddhist apologetic and propagandistic thought. Other texts such as *Guang Hong Ming Ji* 廣弘明集, compiled by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667) in and around 664 CE also closely depict the intellectual atmosphere in China, the increasing conflict between the Buddhists and the non-Buddhists, the growing social and political divide between the official ruling house on the one hand and the Chinese Buddhist clergy on the other. The study argues that without an in-depth knowledge of the interplay of intellectual forces in pre-modern China, the evolutionary history of Chinese Buddhism cannot be comprehensively understood and the study of Chinese Buddhism would remain abbreviated. In view of the abovementioned facts, the study proposes the hypothesis that pre-modern Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought played a critical role in firmly rooting Buddhism in the foreign soil of China, in establishing the credibility and legitimacy of the Buddhist monastic Order, despite this new form of social organization being non-subservient to

the ruling house, as was otherwise prescribed by the Confucian hierarchal system of social order, and in deciding the future course of development of Chinese Buddhism, crafting Buddhism in its China-specific mold.

V. Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to bring to light one of the least studied areas within the domain of Chinese Buddhism, which is the social dimension of Buddhism. The study attempts to conduct an interrogation, investigation and evaluation of the influence of pre-modern Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought upon the indigenous Chinese intellectual environment, pre-modern China's philosophical framework and different sections of Chinese society, to map the complex social processes which eventually resulted in the gradual acceptance of Buddhism amongst the Chinese official circle, and its deep grounding in China, emerging as one of the three major religions, alongside Confucianism and Daoism, and to establish the significance of Buddhist apologetic thought in the creation of a China specific form of Buddhism, which has been divergent in tendencies from its Indian counterpart and unique and distinctive in its nature.

The main aim of the study is to bring to light the marginalized academic domain of Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought, most specifically its social aspect, embodying the complex interaction of Buddhism with elite members, intellectuals and Confucian scholar officials in pre-modern China, and map its critical influence in defending the cause of Buddhism against other indigenous propagating faiths. Buddhist apologetic thought finds its voice and representation in Chinese Buddhist propagandistic literature. In order to carry out the research investigation, the study bases itself upon the critical study of apologetic treatises in original Chinese, *Hong Ming Ji* being the

most significant of all, as it encapsulates critical responses to anti-Buddhist discourses from the Eastern Jin dynasty through the second decade of the sixth century. Since there exists a recent complete translation of *Hong Ming Ji* in English but without any critical evaluation of the text, therefore the study here aims to engage in an annotated translation of select fascicles of the sixth century Chinese Buddhist apologetic text *Hong Ming Ji*. The study then subsequently focuses upon the interaction and confrontation of Buddhism with Confucianism and Daoism and in the process investigates how Buddhist apologetic thought, against the indigenous Chinese philosophical environment played a crucial role in consolidating the position of Buddhism in pre-modern China.

VI. Literature Review

After conducting extensive survey of literature on domains broadly related to Chinese Buddhism, Chinese political, social and cultural history, China's ancient and pre-modern systems of thought, and China's intellectual trends, the study identifies the following secondary sources as having been most suitable in framing the conceptual background of the study on Buddhist apologetic thought and propagandistic literature, and also in identifying the research gaps in existing scholarship. The study therefore enlists these limited sources in particular under this section. However, the extensive list of all other sources, both primary and secondary that have been part of task of referencing is enlisted in the section on select bibliography.

VI.A. Erik Zurcher. *The Buddhist Conquest of China, the Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 1959). This is an exemplary work on the formative stages of Chinese Buddhism, and shares a brief discussion on Chinese Buddhist apologetic literature, in the light of the texts *Hong ming ji* 弘明集

and *Guang Hong Ming ji* 廣弘明集. The relevant section on Chinese Buddhist apologetic literature in the book refutes the general conviction that this form of Buddhist literature is of a rather poor literary and philosophical quality and underscores the fact that the importance of Buddhist apologetic thought lies in its profound impact on Chinese medieval thought and society. Zurcher superficially summarizes the content of some of the important treatises of the text *Hong Ming Ji*, namely *Mouzi* 牟子, *Lihuo lun* 理惑論, *Zhengwu lun* 正誣論, *Mingfo lun* 明佛論, *Yu Dao Lun* 喻道論 and so on. The work encourages both Buddhologists and Sinologists to carry out critical examination of apologetic texts and apocryphal literature to be able to fill in the missing gaps that exist in the understanding of the evolution of Buddhism from its early formative stage into its final mature stage. Discussion on apologetic literature is confined to a few pages (Zurcher 1959, 11-17).

VI.B. Tansen Sen. *Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade, The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004). Although there is no direct mention of Chinese Buddhist apologetic and propagandistic thought, this book underscores the importance of reviewing indigenous Chinese social, cultural and intellectual/religious conditions against which Buddhism made its early penetration. The study encourages a detailed examination of the amalgam of Buddhist and Daoist ideas and concepts, Confucian response to Buddhist permeation, bureaucratic reaction to Buddhist monastic institution and so on.

VI.C. Harumi Hirano Ziegler. *The Collection for the Propagation and Clarification of Buddhism,* Volume I and Volume II, Taisho Volume 52, Number 2102 (America: Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, 2015, 2017). This is the first complete translation of the text *Hong Ming Ji* 弘明集, the sixth century apologetic text,

compiled by Sengyou into English. All the fourteen fascicles of the text have been translated into English but the translation is not accompanied by any critical study or analysis. There is a brief translator's note, about four pages, outlining the historical background against which the text was compiled and introducing the general arrangement of the text and its contents.

VI.D. Liu Li Fu 刘立夫. *Hong daoyuming jiao，Hong ming jiao yanjiu* 弘道与明教，弘明集研究 (Beijing 北京: zhongguoshehuikexuechubanshe 中国社会科学出版社, 2004). This work in Chinese is a critique of the sixth century text *Hong Ming ji*, where the author engages in an in-depth study and critical analysis of the text, while admitting the fact that this text has been denied adequate scholarly attention.

VI. E. Li Xiaorong 李小荣. *Hong Ming Ji and Guang Hong Ming Ji shulungao* 弘明集，廣弘明集，述论稿(Chengdu 成都: Bashu shushe 巴蜀书社, 2005). The author, in this work, in Chinese explores the intricate and complicated relationship between the three religions, Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, through a critical study of the texts *Hong Ming Ji* and *Guang Hong Ming Ji*.

VI.F. Martha P.Y. Cheung. *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse on Translation, Volume I: From Earliest Times to the Buddhist Project* (Manchester: Jerome Publishing, 2006). This book deals with the translation in the civil and government context, and with the massive translation project of Buddhist sutra translation. Most of the passages have been translated for the first time in English. One passage in English translation is dedicated to *Mouzi* 牟子 of the text *Hong Ming Ji* 弘明集.

VI.G. Thomas Julch. "In Defence of the Samgha: The Buddhist Apologetic Mission of the Early Tang Monk Falin" in *The Middle Kingdom and the Dharma Wheel: Aspects of the Relationship between the Buddhist Sangha and the State in Chinese History* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). The author engages in the discussion of monk Falin's apologetic mission with the objective of defending the cause of Buddhism against political threats in the early years of the Tang dynasty. The focus is primarily on two texts *Poxie lun* and *Bianzheng lun* which the author critically examines and tries to map lines of continuity between Falin's apologetic writing and previous Buddhist apologetic writing.

VII. Primary Sources of Research Investigation

With the prime objective of carrying out a critical examination of pre-modern Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought, the research investigation centres around the study of Chinese Buddhist apologetic literature. The study here uses the Chinese *Taisho Tripiṭaka* edition and the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) for referring to the primary sources of investigation. The *Taisho Tripiṭaka*is a definitive edition of the Chinese Buddhist Canon and its Japanese commentaries used by scholars in the twentieth century. The Chinese Buddhist Electronic Tripitaka Association (CBETA) is the electronic version of the Chinese Buddhist *Tripiṭaka*, version April 2009, comprising *Taisho Tripiṭakas* volume numbers 1-55 & 85, *Shinsan Zokuzokyo* (*Xuzangjing*), volume numbers 1-88, select texts from the *Jiaxing* Canon, passages concerning Buddhism from the official histories. The study focuses broadly on the section called *shichuanbulei* 史傳部類(comprising of Taisho Volumes T. 47, 49-52, 54, X02, 53, 75-88), and particularly on volume no. T. 52, sutra numbers T2102-05, 8-18, called *hu jiao bian lun* 護教辯論 (literal meaning

argument/debate regarding the protection of the *dharma*) and makes selected references of some of the relevant Buddhist apologetic texts.

- **T2102-03 弘明集 *Hong ming ji*** This text serves as the most important primary source of investigation. Select fascicles from all fourteen chapters is translation and critically annotated. The following Buddhist Chinese apologetic treatises are used for reference.

- **T2104-05 佛道論衡 *Fodao lun heng* (5 卷/chapters)**

- **T2109 破邪論 *Poxie lun* (2 卷/chapters)**

- **T2110 辯正論 *Bian zheng lun* (8 卷/chapters)**

- **T2111 十門辯惑論 *Shimen bianhuo lun* (3 卷/chapters)**

- **T2114 護法論 *Hu fa lun* (1 卷/chapter)**

- **T2117 三教平心論 *Sanjiao ping xin lun* (2 卷/chapters)**

In order to map the complex interaction between Buddhism on the one hand, and Daoism and Confucianism on the other, the researcher makes a critical study of other relevant primary sources, those pertaining to the domain of *qingtan* (pure conversation) and *xuanxue*, namely 庄子 *Zhuangzi*, 道德經 *Dao de jing* and Confucian classics, *Shijing* 诗經, *Lunyu* 論语 and any other relevant source found suitable in the course of research investigation.

VIII. Methods and Tools

The task of research investigation in this study involves an interdisciplinary approach, while integrating research tools and methods of translation studies, history and historiography. The central task of the research initiative is primary textual source investigation, involving a firsthand translation and annotation of the text *Hong Ming Ji*, by employing tools and techniques related to translation studies.

Reference of other relevant primary source documents under the domain of *hu jiao bian lun* or argumentative literature in defence of the dharma, official Chinese historical records, Confucian and Daoist Classics, involves textual analysis. Having to deal with ancient manuscripts, documents and classical texts, the study aims towards identifying the veracity of the content therein. The technique that the study employs to this end is the historical method, consisting of external and internal criticism. While external criticism determines the authorship, place and time of the composition of the document, internal and interpretative criticism investigates the authenticity of the facts mentioned in the documents.

A critical investigation of Chinese Buddhist apologetic and propagandistic thought as contained in the *hu jiao bian lun* also employs the dialectical method in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the different stand points and divergent views expressed in this form of literary and philosophical compositions with the desire of establishing the truth through reasoned arguments.

Treating Buddhism, not as a mere history of ideas, but more importantly in the Chinese context, as a social phenomenon, requires careful mapping of the social equations between Buddhists and non-Buddhists in pre-modern China, the response of the Chinese official royal house towards the rise of a new asocial, apolitical

organization in a highly hierarchal Chinese society, and the gradual change in perception of the intellectuals towards Buddhism as a foreign, imported system of thought. In order to carry out the above task, the study employs a hermeneutic approach in order to examine the interpretation and understanding of social events from a China specific historical, social and cultural context.

IX. Arrangement of Chapters

The study arranges the research work according to the following chapters;

Introduction: This chapter outlines the fundamental components of the PhD thesis, namely; the theoretical and conceptual framework, backdrop of study, statement of the research problem, central research questions, hypothesis, objective of the study, literature review, primary sources of research investigation, research methods and tools, and an afterthought.

Chapter One: An Annotated Translation of Select Fascicles of *Hong Ming Ji*

In this chapter, the study presents an original translation along with annotation of select fascicles of the sixth century apologetic text, *Hong Ming Ji* which seem to bear greater relevance to the objective and main proposition of the study.

Chapter Two: Monks, Laymen and Chinese Intelligentsia: A Critical Study of the Impact of Buddhist Apologetic Thought upon the Intellectual Environment of Pre-modern Chinese Society

In this chapter, the study critically investigates the linkages of interconnectivity between Buddhist monks, laity, and the members of the intellectual class upon pre-modern Chinese society, and maps their mutual influence upon the creation and propagation of Buddhist apologetic thought.

Chapter Three: *Mingjiao, Xuanxue* and *Qingtan*: Buddhism as a Socio-cultural Phenomenon in Pre-modern China

In this chapter, the study discusses the parallel emergence of certain intellectual trends in pre-modern China which played a crucial role in shaping Chinese Buddhism in a specific Sinified mould.

Chapter Four: The Ruling House and the Buddhist Clergy: A Critique of Chinese Political Response to a Growing Buddhist Monastic Order

This chapter retraces the nature of association between the Chinese ruling house and the Buddhist monastic community between the first and fourth century C.E., and then further investigates closely the political response of the Chinese bureaucracy towards an emerging asocial, apolitical organization such as the Buddhist monastic Order (*saṅgha*).

Conclusion: This section sums up the major findings of the study and throws light upon future possible avenues of research in yet another related, yet unexplored domain of Chinese Buddhism.

X. Afterthought

The study attempts to chart out the evolutionary history of Buddhism in China, and map the trajectory along which it traveled from the outer circles of society, comprising of foreign immigrant families into the innermost intellectual and official core. The history of repeated official persecution of Buddhism, the informal and formal intellectual attack, confrontation and conflict between Buddhism and the other Chinese indigenous systems of thought, that preceded the final acceptance of Buddhism is reconstructed through the research work here. The journey of Buddhism in China, evolving from being a foreign religion into becoming one of the three major

religions of China, issues such as the appropriation and absorption of Indian Buddhism and its gradual Sinification, giving rise to a Sinicized form of Buddhism, the rise of Chinese indigenous schools of Buddhism and the use and misuse of Buddhism by Chinese rulers for legitimizing their political rule is portrayed through the critical examination and survey in this study.

CHAPTER ONE

AN ANNOTATED TRANSLATION OF SELECT FASCICLES OF *HONG MING JI*

1.1. Chinese Buddhist Apologetic Thought in the Context of Chinese Buddhist Literature

The entire domain of Buddhist thought and Buddhist philosophical doctrines is largely preserved within the Buddhist Canon, known as the Buddhist *Tripiṭaka*. Although India had been the origin of Buddhism, most of the original Indian Buddhist literary texts, which were recorded in Pāli and Sanskrit were lost in its own homeland but remained preserved beyond the frontiers of India, in Ceylon, Burma and Siam, some in the inhospitable terrains of the valley of Nepal or amid the ruins of Buddhist grottoes in Afghanistan, or even hidden away in the dilapidated remnants of mountain cave monasteries in central Asia which once dotted the northern and the southern fringes of the trans-continental Silk Road.

Archaeologists and historians have claimed that most of the present-day surviving Sanskrit manuscripts of Buddhist texts are the ones that have been preserved in Nepal, arguably dating from the tenth century C.E., or later. Pāli manuscripts are believed to have been disseminated around the nineteenth century to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, while several fragmentary sections of manuscripts dating from a time, little earlier around the sixth century C.E. written in the Gāndhārī language and Kharoṣṭhī script, have been preserved in Afghanistan. None of these preserved versions of Buddhist manuscripts pre-date the Chinese translated versions with regard to their time of origin.

The Chinese Buddhist *Tripiṭaka* (三藏) is by and large, a faithful rendition of the original Indian Sanskrit source. There are various editions of it available, out of which the Japanese edition of the collection of the Chinese Buddhist Canon is considered to be the most popular and authentic. The latest Japanese edition of the Buddhist *Tripiṭaka* collection enlists a total of two thousand one hundred and eighty-four texts spanning across seven thousand chapters. These include both non-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna*sūtras*, *jātaka*tales, didactic verses, *abhidharma* texts and scriptures on meditation. Some of these texts have been categorized as commentaries, while others as explanatory, annotated texts, lexicons and dictionaries known to have been authored by Chinese Buddhist scholars. However, the bulk of it comprises of the Chinese translations of the original versions of Indian texts, most of which are no longer extant. These aforementioned Chinese renditions of the Buddhist *Tripiṭaka* and their collection of commentaries date from around the Eastern Han Dynasty (20-220 C.E.) and the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280 C.E.) and extend up to the reign of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 C.E.) of the 13th century.

In the very recent times, the Japanese Taisho *Tripiṭaka* edition of the entire corpus of the Chinese Buddhist Canon (*Da Zheng Xin Xiu Da Zang Jing* 大正新脩大藏經) is regarded as the most authentic version and enlists a total number of five thousand three hundred and twenty individual texts in eighty five volumes, out of which volume numbers 56-84 comprise Japanese Buddhist literature, composed in classical Chinese, volume numbers 86-97 consist of a collection of illustrations and visual representations related to Buddhist motifs and themes, while volume numbers 98-100 contain texts of different indexes of Buddhist literature.

Within the entire corpus of Chinese Buddhist Canon, there is a section, titled, *shichuanbu lei* 史傳部類, under the category of histories and biographies. This includes Taisho *Tripiṭaka* volume numbers, T.47, 49-52, 53, 54, X02, 75-78. Out of these, the sections under Taisho volume number T.52 and *sūtra* numbers T.2102-05 and 8-18 bear the title, *hu jiao bian lun* 護教辯論, meaning literature that concerns itself with argument or debate in protection of the *dharma*. Ideally, *Hong Ming Ji*, the most important primary source document used in the thesis comes under the abovementioned category of Buddhist literature that was composed in defence of the Buddhist system of thought in China. While most of the Chinese scholars have used the connotation *hu jiao bian lun* 護教辯論 to refer to *Hong Ming Ji* 弘明集 and a similar work of later century *Guang Hong Ming Ji* 廣弘明集, western Buddhologists or those historians with a western perspective have used the term 'apologetic' or 'propagandistic' literature to define the nature of the said texts. The thesis here does not argue about the legitimacy of the Chinese or non-Chinese use of the word, 'apologetic', and uses it uniformly throughout the discussion along with the term 'propagandistic' to define this specific genre of Buddhist literature that was compiled and widely circulated in order to defend and justify the credibility of Buddhist doctrinal philosophy and practices against rising accusations levied by the Daoist non-supporters and Confucian opponents of Buddhism.

Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought thus refer to the entire spectrum of ideas that were generated, formulated, explained, and propagated through the compositions of such apologetic treatises for removing all doubts and providing clarifications for allegations that were levied against Buddhism.

1.2. *Hong Ming Ji*: A Background Study

Hong Ming Ji 弘明集(*The Collection of the Propagation and Clarification of Buddhism*), Taisho *Tripiṭaka* volume number 52, *sūtra* number2102, (1a3-96b3) is a Buddhist apologetic text compiled by one of the most distinguished Vinaya masters of China, Shi Sengyou (445-518 C.E.) of the Liang dynasty (502-557 C.E.) and comprising mostly of Buddhist discourses, critical responses to anti-Buddhist sentiments in the form of debates and arguments, correspondence, written reports to emperor, family codes, written appeals by Buddhist laypeople and monks, mostly composed around the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-420 C.E.) and circulated till the second decade of the sixth century. HMJ as a Buddhist text belongs to the category of literature under the section *Hujiaobianlun* (debates/arguments in protection of the dharma) and is unique to the Chinese corpus of Buddhist literature with apparently no such Indian counterpart.

The primary objective and motivation behind the compilation of *HMJ* was to defend the legitimacy and the credibility of the *dharma* [Buddhism] on the foreign soil of China against repeated and continued attacks from the proponents of the indigenous Confucian and Daoist schools of philosophy on the one hand and the political bureaucratic circles on the other. The secondary objective was to promulgate Buddhism. Shi Sengyou, a distinguished scholar-monk and the compiler of the text *HMJ* identified the prime cause behind the then prevalent anti-Buddhist sentiment to be misinformation and delusions regarding the fundamental tenets and practices of Buddhism, the legitimacy and worthiness of the historical Buddha as a philosopher from beyond the frontier lands, and also the actions of the members of the Buddhist monastic community both at the individual and institutional level. In the concluding section of the collection, *HMJ,* Shi Sengyou enlisted six different categories of doubts

or delusions about Buddhism that were seen doing rounds around the late fifth and mid-sixth centuries, which were as follows: a) that the teachings expounded by the Buddhist scriptures were accused of being preposterous and unverifiable; b) That the Buddhist concept of one's spirit to transmigrate to the three periods of existence was found to put to challenge the Chinese indigenous belief system of the spirit perishing with death; c) that the historicity of Buddha was accused of being doubtful, and of his teachings possessing no utilitarian value to the act of governance; d) that the teachings of the *dharma* were of much recent origin, emerging only during the Han period, as compared to the words of the Chinese sages of ancient times; e) that the Buddhist teachings were to be adhered to by the people dwelling in the regions of the western tribes, and was declared unworthy for the people of the Land of the Han; f) that the *dharma* was hardly practiced during the Han and Wei times and only came to be flourished during the Jin period.

Shi Sengyou compiled the *HMJ* by collecting literary works from eminent scholars of previous ages that were intended to dispel wrong views towards the Buddhist faith. These included expressions to protect Buddhism and helped to consolidate the status of Buddhism in China.

1.3. Form, Content, Characteristics and Significance of *Hong Ming Ji*

Zürcher has argued that the early works of Chinese Buddhist apologetic and propagandistic literature, despite lacking in philosophical and literary quality, stand out as valuable sources for mapping the impact of Buddhism on Chinese medieval thought and society. Buddhist apologetic literature was the product of intense philosophical speculation and spontaneous intellectual enquiry of Buddhist concepts by gentry circles who were already well versed in traditional Chinese Confucian

Classics and Daoist Classics. The treatises in the *Hong Ming Ji* portray a certain essence of hybridization and syncretism between certain fundamental Buddhist concepts and the indigenous pre-existing Chinese notions, as contained in the Chinese Classics of *Zhuangzi* 庄子 and *Daodejing* 道德經, resulting out of a general process of selective borrowing and adaptation. The authors of these individual passages perhaps belonged to both the Chinese laity and monastic community, but were over and above, cultured laymen who tried to equate to a great extent Buddhist notions and practices with Confucian and Daoist concepts, which the Chinese commoners were already acquainted with. This observation is based upon the series of arguments and justification that were used by the individual authors of *HMJ* and its compiler Shi Sengyou by drawing references from and allusions to *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi* and the *Yijing* 易經.

Shi Dao'an (312-385 C.E.), the eminent *Vinaya* master of third-century China is known to have authorized his close disciple, Huiyuan to refer to the Daoist Classic, *Zhuangzi* in explaining the meaning of certain Buddhist terms. Zürcher names this practice as *geyi*, indicating the elucidation of Buddhist terms with the help of notions that were indigenous to traditional Chinese philosophy. Citing the case of the Buddhist monk-scholar Huiyuan, Russian Sinologue, J. Scuckij underscored the fact that this practice of equating Buddhist fundamental doctrines with the teachings of indigenous Chinese Classics might have been a well-thought-of tactical devise used by the authors of *HMJ* and by other proponents of Buddhist apologetic thought to elucidate the foreign doctrine of Buddhism to the literate Chinese audience by drawing parallels with traditional Chinese philosophy and literature. It has also been argued that often times lack of profound and in-depth understanding and clarity on

many of the original Buddhist philosophical doctrines was responsible for the essence of syncretism as displayed in the content of the *HMJ* fascicles.

There is a unique style of argumentation that runs through all of the fascicles of this text, wherein there is a reported conversation between an anti-Buddhist opponent who levies accusations or expresses doubts about diverse features of Buddhism and a pro-Buddhist defender of the Buddhist faith, either featuring through direct oral communication or through the exchange of letters.

1.4. Select Fascicles of *Hong Ming Ji*

The complete extant version of the Buddhist apologetic text, *Hong Ming Ji* consists of a total of fourteen fascicles or scrolls. Due to paucity of space, although the study here extensively critiques all of the fourteen fascicles, it translates and annotates only few select fascicles which seemed to be less repetitive, relevant and profound in the art and skill of argumentative analysis.

The following are the headings of the fascicles which have been translated herewith;

a. *Fascicle One-Mouzi Lihuo Lun* 牟子理惑論

b. *Fascicle Two-Ming Fo Lun* 明佛論

c. *Fascicle Three-Yudao Lun* 喻道論

d. Fascicle Five

- *Shen Bu Mie Lun* 神不滅論
- *Shamen Bu Jing Wang Zhe Lun* 沙門不敬王者論
- *Shamen Tan Fu Lun* 沙門袒服論
- *He Zhen Nan Nan* 何鎮南難

e. *Fascicle Six-Shibo Lun* 释駁論

f. *Fascicle Seven-Rong Hua Lun* 戎華論

g. *Fascicle Nine-Da Liang Huangdi Li Shen Ming Cheng Fo Yi Ji* 大梁皇帝立神明成佛義記

h. *Fascicle Eleven*-Lu Shan Hui Yuan Fashi Da Huan Xuan Quan Ba Dao Shu 廬山慧遠法師答桓玄勸罷道書

Fascicle One: *Mouzi Lihuolun*

The Grand [Illustrious] Way is that of *wuwei*[1]無為, which is neither what the common masses comprehend it to be, nor something which may have its value appreciated through admiration, nor have its value depreciated by defamation. Whether this particular principle shall be utilized or not is up to the Will of Heaven, whether this particular principle shall be followed or not is up to the turn of time, and whether this particular principle shall be trusted upon depends upon fate.

An opponent opines, "You elucidate and match the Buddha's teachings with those of the Classics and their respective Commentaries[2]. Your phrases of narration are of high quality and there is clarity in their meanings. Your renditions are vibrant with detailed explanations. Is this not because of your eloquence rather than because they abound in truth?" Mouzi defends this by saying, "No, this is not the case. Since I have a holistic view and comprehensive understanding of events, I am neither biased nor confused.

The opponent asks, "How is it that you could manage to develop a broader perspective of things?

[1]This refers to the Daoist concept of 'non-action', or 'not taking any action against the course of nature.' It further denotes a simple, tranquil and passive state of existence.

[2] The opponent challenges the approach of Mouzi regarding the use of indigenous Chineseconcepts related to Confucian Classics in explaining Buddhist notions and ideas.

Mouzi replies, “By reading thoroughly and understanding the Buddhist scriptures. When I was not fully aware of the Buddhist teachings, I was more confused than you are. Even though I had intensively studied the Five Classics, I just found them to be over-ornamental and had not really understood the truth underlying therein. Now I come to notice that the doctrines embedded in the Buddhist corpus mention the core teachings of the （*Laozi* 老子）*Daodejing*[3], follow closely the essence of tranquility by forsaking worldly desires, and deliberate deeply upon the practice of *wuwei.* When I look back to review the cycle of events of the world, I feel I am stealthily looking at a deep gorge below from high above the surface, or it feels as though I am ascending Mount Song or Mount Dai, overlooking from high above, the small foothills down below. The Five Classics resemble the five flavours and Buddhism resembles the five grains.[4]” Since I heard the teachings of the (Way), it felt to me as though the clouds are clearing up to open up the space for the sun or like entering into a dark room having lit a torch.

One of the other opponent enquires, “If Buddhist scriptures as you mention, are truly as deep as the great water bodies and if their words are really as beautiful as exotic as (fine) embroidered (materials), then why do you answer my questions through constant and continuous references from the Confucian Classics (*The Book of Odes*) and (*The Book of History*), instead of citing the Buddhist philosophical treatises (themselves)? Do you aim to integrate the edification of these various categories and (merge) them into one tradition?”

Mouzi responds as follows, “A man who is thirsty does not require a large water body to satiate his thirst, likewise, a man who is hungry does not require the (entire)

[3]*Laozi* is the term used for the Daoist Classic, *Daodejing*, attributed to the philosopher, Laozi himself.
[4] Both the Five Classics and the Buddhist Canon are being referred to here as staple intellectual inputs, comparable to staple food items.

storehouse of Mount Ao to overcome his hunger, the (Way) is laid down for people who are wise, debate is organized for people who possess in-depth knowledge, books are circulated for people who possess an understanding of them, and things are clarified for people who possess a deep level of cognizance. I cite the passages contained in the Classics, since I believe that you (easily) recognize the meanings of the verses here. If I were to explain or elucidate (my views) by using words from the Buddhist scriptures and discuss the fundamental core principles of *wuwei*[5], it would be like trying to describe the five different colours to the blind or like playing the five notes of ancient classical Chinese music for the deaf. Even though the music maestro, Kuang, of the State of Jin was immensely talented, yet he could not strum the Chinese zither in the absence of the strings". Although the furs of fox and badger are warm, they cannot heat up the body of the dead…

An opponent asked, "Some of the dedicated followers of the Way [of the Immortals] refrain from the consumption of grains and, yet, they consume alcohol and meat. Furthermore, they claim this to be the Path of the (Dao) as expounded by Laozi. (On the contrary), in Buddhism consuming both meat and wine refer to some of the worst possible defiance of the Buddhist precepts, and yet Buddhists donot consume grain. (If the Way of Laozi and that of Buddhism were to be the same), then why do they seem to stand in opposition to each other?"

Mouzi responds thus, "There are in existence a total of more than ninety-six varied propositions, but amongst those that discuss concepts such as non-engagement in worldly affairs and *wuwei*, there is none more reverential than Buddhism. I have

[5] Here Mouzi himself seems to acknowledge the fact that many of the critics of Buddhism who claimed to be well versed in the Chinese Classics, were equally deficient in Daoist philosophy and Daoist concepts.

thoroughly investigated the dual collections of the *Laozi* (*Daodejing*) and have noted that this Classic prohibits the five flavours, but there is no such phrase that forbids the consumption of five main grains. (Confucius), the sage collated the writings of the Seven Classics in which there is no prohibition against consuming grain. Yet, in Laozi's [*Five Thousand Words*] *Dao de Jing* there is yet again no mention of abstaining from grains…[6]"

A certain person enquires, "Those who follow the Way (of the Immortals)[7] claim that they can ward off diseases and donot generally fall ill, and that if at all they suffer from any illness they can regain health without acupuncture and traditional medicines. Why do then the Buddhists insist upon the use of acupuncture and (traditional) medicine (to cure) somebody of illness?" In reply, Mouzi said, "In the words of Laozi, when any matter reaches its maturation point, it starts to age. This may be seen as a departure from the Way. Anything that departs from the Path (of nature) is bound to come to an end. Only those of who have followed the Path to Buddhism, shall not be reborn. Not being reborn, thus, they will also not reach the state of maturation (of their age), not reaching the state of maturation, they shall also not age, not aging therefore, they shall not fall sick. Since they shall no longer fall sick, they shall also not decay. Owing to this reason, Laozi said that to possess a body is to invite a great misfortune. When King Wu took to bed (due to illness), Duke of Zhou implored to grant him longevity (in life) and when Confucius fell sick, Zilu[8] requested for leave in order to offer prayers for him. I observe that all sages have succumbed to illness,

[6]The phrase suggests that there is no apparent contradiction between Daoism and Buddhism, Mouzi was trying to use the strategy of 'geyi'.
[7]The Way of the Immortals refers to the Huang-Lao cult.
[8] Zilu was a disciple of Master Kongfuzi.

(rather in no occasion) have sages not fallen ill. Shen Nong[9] had experienced the taste of the various grasses and was about to die on several occasions. The Yellow Emperor had (also) surrendered himself and had received acupuncture from Qibo[10]. How could these three sages have held s subservient position lower to that of the Daoist practitioners of the current age? When I analyse and interrogate these specific issues, your words (seem only to be) fit for rejection."

A person asked, "(If) all teachings are the same in relation to the (discourse) on *wuwei*, then why do you arrange them separately and differentiate between them. Moreover, you lead the followers into suspicion. I fear this to be of no value." Mouzi responded thus, "Although we use the common term 'grass' for each of its kind, the nature of the different variety of grasses cannot be distinctively explained. We name all of them 'metal', but the nature of the different varieties of metals cannot be properly defined. Even with things under the same group, their nature might (sometimes) differ. (If this) holds true for all things, then why can it not be for the teachings as well. In former times, Yang (Zhu)[11] and Mo (Di)[12] had blockaded the pathway of a group of Confucianists. Their carts could not proceed and people could not advance either. It was not until (the time) when Mencius had once again blazed open the trail[13], that the people became aware of which teaching to abide by…Observing that both jade and stone were housed in the same casket, Yi Dun had turned blanch and had lost his senses. Noting that the colour purple remained dominant over vermilion when mixed together, Confucius had [also] heaved a sigh in utter disappointment. The sun and the

[9] Shen Nong was a legendary ruler of ancient China who was revered as a deity in ancient Chinese folk religion.
[10]Qibo arguably another legendary protagonist in ancient Chinese Classic.
[11] Yang Zhu, also known by the alternative name Yangzi was a prominent philosopher of the Warring States Period, who stood in direct opposition to the teachings of Kongfuzi and Mozi.
[12] Mo Di was arguably the ancient philosopher, Mozi, the founder father of the Mohist school of philosophy.
[13] Mengzi was a fifth-generation disciple of Kongfuzi [Confucius] and is known to have re-interpreted the principal teachings of Confucius.

moon are both bright and still (their light) is sometimes hidden out by numerous clouds. Buddhism is not faulty, but various other private teachings conceal its principles of egality and impartiality. (For this very reason), I always draw up a clear distinction between Buddhism from other teachings."

One other person said, "I once travelled through the kingdom of Khotan[14] where I happened to interact with sramanas and Buddhist followers, whom I defeated in debate through my references to the Confucian doctrines. None of them could reply and they all surrendered. Many of them (even) reformed their commitment and altered their affiliation. Then why only you find it difficult to reorient yourself?" Mouzi replied thus, "When light feathers encounter a high wind above, then they are blown apart, when small pebbles come into the way of a flowing mountain stream, they are dragged down the stream. It is only Mount Tai which remains unmovable and cannot be dislodged even by a whirlwind. Huge boulders are never swept away by a forceful current. When plum trees are affected by the frost, they lose their leaves, but the (leaves) of pines and cypresses hardly fall off. The Buddhist followers whom you encountered (at Khotan) lacked profound experience and in-depth knowledge, they also did not possess extensive ability of observation and analysis. Therefore, these Buddhists had engaged in humble submission. [You] shall not be able to defeat even a dull witted person as myself, leave alone defeating those of who are well trained in the (Buddhist Way)…I have never heard of Confucius having (ever) followed the infamous robber Zhi nor of that of King Tang (of the Yin Dynasty) and King Wu (of

[14] Khotan was an ancient oasis state kingdom formerly located along the northern fringes of the trans-continental Silk Road. This was known to have been a flourishing centre of Buddhism as per records of Chinese pilgrim-monk-scholars.

the Zhou Dynasty) who have been renowned sages, to have drawn influence from the despotic tyrants, King Jie of the Xia dynasty and King Zhou (of the Yin Dynasty)[15].

A person intervened thus, "Your interpretation is near about flawless! Definitely, it is not what we can (easily) comprehend. I ponder, however, why your responses are sequenced in thirty-seven sections. Is your arrangement designed as per any specific model?" Mouzi replied, (by drawing inspiration from) rolling mugwort, wheels were created, and (by watching closely the floating) driftwood, (the design and operation of) boats and oars were conceived[16]. Spiders' webs generated the idea of the invention of nets for (catching birds). (By keenly observing birds' footprints), the Chinese written script was created. Therefore, it is effortless to accomplish something when there is a model to emulate, and it is challenging to achieve something when there is no such model. I thoroughly studied the core principles of the Buddhist scriptures which enumerate thirty-seven elements (for enlightenment)[17]. The Laozi Daodejing also comprises thirty-seven chapters[18]. Thereupon, I structured my (answers)(based upon) these samples and specimens. Then the people who were misled so far upon hearing (Mouzi's explanation) became reverential and anxious. Their faces lost colour. They rose and folded their hands (as a gesture of respect). They paused briefly and thereupon prostrated themselves, saying, "We are unenlightened, having been born in an uneducated community. We took the risk of making foolish observations, without having taking into account the pros and cons. Now having heard your teachings, all of our doubts and delusions have been cleared, just in the same manner in which hot

[15] Zhi robber and King Tang of the Yin Dynasty, King Wu of the Zhou dynasty, King Jie of the Xia dynasty, King Zhou of the Yin Dynasty.
[16] Please see Huainanzi, Shuoshan Xun. The idea of building boats by drawing inspiration from floating driftwood and the invention of wheels by seeking inspiration from rolling mugwort have been testified by Zieglar, note no. 102, p. 295.
[17]Buddhist scriptures refer to the existence of 37 elements of enlightenment, referring to sapta-trimsad bodhi-paksa.
[18]The Daoist Classic, Daodejing comprises initial 37 sections, termed as Daojing, and latter 40 sections, termed as Dejing.

water melts snow. We could (assure) you now that we will be able to identify our errors, free our minds from this misunderstanding. We express our earnest, sincere wish to accept the five precepts[19] and become Buddhist lay devotees."

Fascicle Two: *Ming Folun* by Zong Bing of the Jin Dynasty

The most profound and delicate Way needs to be unconditionally respected as it (aims) to lead all people to the (path) of virtue. A large number of people of the world, however, perceive Buddhism as being illogical and unreasonable. One presumes that he cannot (engage) in self-examination (in the present form of existence) and also has no time to think about himself as part of his later form of existence. People are of the opinion that anything which is at a distance of ten thousand li from here is too far away (in space) and any event which is due to happen a hundred years from the present time line is far away (in time), and are thus all unpredictable and indefinite. (Therefore), even less certain are the following suppositions, that Mount Sumeru is majestic, that the Buddha's realm is far from the ordinary, that our spirits donot cease to exist (even after death), that people can reach the state of buddhahood, that the mind generates all kinds of phenomena, that all matters of the world are temporary and passing, and that the conditions arising through former existences continue to remain functional for another one hundred million *kalpa* and result in retribution. (Nevertheless)each of these are extraordinary, marvellous, well-reasoned out, logical, clearly discernible, real phenomena…The gentlemen of the Middle Kingdom are well acquainted with the domains of ritual and uprightness[20]. But they are untrained in

[19] The Five Precepts in Buddhism refer to the five kinds of oath that is required to be undertaken by Buddhist lay devotees. The purpose of this reference was to attract Chinese common masses, affluent mercantile community members and elite class population to the lay devotion of Buddhism and to help patronize the Dharma.

[20] This refers to the training of Chinese elite population in Confucian Classical Education.

recognizing and understanding the human mind[21]. How could they then understand the mind of the Buddha?

The Buddhist scriptures abound in the principal virtues (as may be found) in the Five Classics. The (value and virtue of the Buddhist teachings) are increased manifold with profound reality. They propound (the concept) of void (*xu*) as promoted by Laozi and Zhuangzi[22], and they underscore the core teaching that all phenomena are empty (*kong*). With exalted words and impressively elevated principles, the (Buddhist philosophical renditions) touch deeply one's spirit with a sense of reverence. They shine as brilliantly as the sun and they are as pure as the wind. Except for one who is a sage, who (else) can elucidate them? I shall faithfully examine the opinions of the people of the world, superimpose these viewpoints with Buddhist doctrines and then explain the teachings of Buddhism.

Buddhists propagate the existence of three thousand suns and moons, and the presence of another twelve thousand worlds set in order in the universe. They regard countries as being as numerous as there are particles of sand in the River Ganges and arrange in sequence as many *kalpa* as there are dispersed grains of dust. They widely disseminate what the profound treatises contain, and perceive minute things as beings similar to those that are inexhaustible. Why do non-Buddhists then bear apprehensions about the other side (Buddhists), while being satisfied with their own (conduct)? If a very tiny object is positioned over the backdrop of the wide blue sea, then although the two differ from each other in size (by a great degree), but there is still a certain amount of limitation in it. When the core principles of human

[21] The phrase, 'untrained in recognizing the human mind' occurs in Zhuangzi, Dianzifang. Also see James Legge, Daodejing ji zhuangziquan ji, p. 483, note no. 2.
[22] Concept of 'xu' referring to voidness, as propounded by Daoist philosophers, Laozi and Zhuangzi. The Daosit concept of 'xu' is being euated here with the Buddhist concept of sunyavada or emptiness.

relationships (as advocated by Confucianism) are combined with that of the Grand Void (*taixu*)(of Buddhism), how can we express the difference between them? Therefore, that which the ordinary people regard to be major is (however) that which the Buddhist Way otherwise considers to be minor. That which the people think to be far, is what Heaven regards as being near. When it is said that the time preceding the Era of Xuanyuan (ie. The Yellow Emperor) lies in remote antiquity[23], it probably appears to be as proximal in time as if it were like yesterday, to all of those who have trained their intellect in understanding the Way of Heaven.

Fascicle Three: The Discourse Clarifying the Path of Buddhism [*Yudaolun*] by Sun Chuo

There was someone who was suspicious of the Way of the highest ideals (ie. Buddhism), I clarified to him the ideals of the path in the following words; the universe is (infinitely) vast and bountiful of a numerous variety of things, where they all exist in great abundance and a continuous process of variegated changes continue to lead them into a state of perfect harmony. Thus, those possessing narrow, finite depths of knowledge, interpret the emergence of all things in accordance with their limited views. This can be compared to the state of (aquatic animals) like fish and molluscs who donot realize about the life of animals on marshy lands, and also of those animals which have body fur and feathers, but fail to recognize the power of a stream or the strength of the waves. Those of who feel unmoved even while being caught up in a trap, are doubtful of the competence of those who are able to swim in the ocean. (Likewise) those of who can only fly up to a height of only a few ren, disbelieve that there are some who can actually fly to a great height.

[23] This phrase occurs in Shiji, Fascicle 117, found in the section titled, Sima Xiangru Liezhuan.

People whose knowledge and understanding are restricted by worldly teaching and those of who confine themselves to the traces (of the teachings) of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius argue out that the zenith of virtue ended with [the names of Yao and Shun] and that words in the state of ultimate purity could only (be found) in the texts (*Daodejing*) and the (*Yijing, Book of Changes*)[24]. How could (those very people) then perceive the outstanding tendency of the supernatural world and comprehend that which brightens up the darkness? It is quite a deplorable state of affairs!

The Confucian head gear, termed as zhangfu is disowned by people who traditionally donot wear clothes, similarly Emperor Shun's musical composition (called Dashao) and Emperor Yu's Daxia are overlooked by the rural masses. The ultimate truth is often negated through uncoordinated and disorganized practices and the lofty path is often overlooked by scholars of myopic view. If such people (as is often the case) are misled and their thoughts (cannot be rectified) then they shall not be moved by clarifications and expositions. (Still) I shall attempt to elucidate the teachings of Buddhism, hoping that there shall be someone in due course of time shall be enlightened.

The Buddha is the spiritually Awakened One who has attained the final path. This final path is that which guides all sentient beings. It responds to the feelings of the mind and leads them by pursuing them (to follow the path of the dharma)[25]. "It does not perform any action, (and yet) there is no action that remains unaccomplished. Since it does not engage in any action, it is free of any preoccupied thoughts, it is (thus) tranquil and spontaneous. Since there is hardly anything that it does not attain

[24] This seems to be a direct attack on the indigenous Chinese philosophical systems of Confucianism and Daoism.
[25] This is a frequently recurring expression, where resemblance can be noted between the Buddhist concept of 'consciousness only' and the Daoist notion of 'abiding by the principle of nature'.

or achieve, it therefore, spiritually leads all beings. (Taking into consideration) what all beings search for attainment, there is the (distinct) difference of high and low. Likewise, with regard to the transmission of the teachings, the methods employed are sometimes precise while at other times less accurate. The foundation of the teaching is offered to those of who are endowed with superior faculty. Ill-luck befalls those of who do not abide by the teaching. Those of who indulge in drinking alcohol are sanctioned penalty, while those of who commit adultery are subjected to severe punishment. These are in accordance with the criminal laws established by the three dynasties (Xia, Yin and Zhou) and also in pursuance of the five penalties.

An opponent opined thus, "Both Confucius and the Duke of Zhou trained people to take life at a well-suited, appropriate time, but the Buddha called for refraining from all killings at one go. How can we then bring the cruel men to justice, restrict the actions of the evil people and yet, wield influence among the common masses?" I replied, "This is not the case. The Duke of Zhou and Confucius are no different in identity from the Buddha, while the Buddha is no different in identity from the Duke of Zhou and Confucius[26]. In all probability, these are mere varied designations for non-Buddhism (wai) and Buddhism (nei). (Therefore, it might thus be said) one who holds the reigns of the Distinguished One is so himself, while one who has occupied the throne of a king is a king himself.

"Buddha' is a term in Sanskrit language and its translation into Chinese might be rendered as *jue*[27]. The term *jue* means to awaken or illuminate the masses. It might be compared to the (idea as propagated) by Mencius, who considered those (masters) as

[26] By drawing a common identity between the Duke of Zhou and Confucius on the one hand, and Buddha on the other, attempt is being made here to falsely testify to their proposed common origin. This tactic or strategy was used to blur the differences between the indigenous philosophical concepts and the imported Buddhist faith, and even between the founder fathers of the two philosophical schools.
[27] The Chinese term jue means arousing of consciousness.

sages, who first got (spiritually awakened) themselves and later enlightened other people[28]. The message propagated by the Buddha is the same as those of the sages. These exist as responses to the (requirements) of the outside world and (stand out) as a model in serving the interests of the people, in compliance with time. (The edifications) of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius serve to treat the intensely corrupt society, while the teachings of the Buddha explain the core principles (in order to liberate the corrupt world). (Both of these teachings) are compatible and they do not deviate (from each other) in their final pursuit. (It is to say) that the philosophers of non-Buddhism vary in the depths of their actions. During the reign periods of Yao and Shun, the world was tranquil. Hence (under noble intentions) the said rulers had abdicated their thrones. Since the ruling eras of King Tang and King Wu were (troubled), both rulers commanded troops into battle (for winning over the throne). There is thus a (discernible) difference between the actions of these people, where one of them silently renounces his rights over the throne, the other uses force to win over the rights of the throne.

An opponent pointed out, "As per the teachings of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius, filial piety is regarded as the foundation stone. Filial piety is considered as the pinnacle of all virtues and the most fundamental of all deeds. When this bedrock is laid down, the way/path defining (all) human relations arise[29], and the highest ideal of filial piety[30] converges into spiritual insight and understanding. As a consequence, in such matters where children attend to their parents, they do so(with reverence and devotion) when they are alive and pay obeisance to them when they die. Out of the

[28] The term jue, the Sanskrit Buddhist term has been likened here to the idea of liberation as propagated by Mencius. However, this seems to be a forced proposition by the proponent, as neither the Confucian Classics nor the Book of Mencius talk about issues related to spiritual awakening or liberation.
[29] This phrase occurs in Lunyu under the section Xue Er. Also refer to the translation of James Legge, the Chinese Classics, vol. 1, p. 139.
[30] The concept of filial piety is found in the Xiaojing, [Classic of Filial Piety].

enlisted three thousand sins, there is nothing more serious than not bearing a child[31]. Our physical bodies are all inherited from our ancestors and parents, and we must not (even think) of inflicting any harm or injury to them. Thus, Yuezheng (Zi Chun) who wounded his leg, bore this shame [in his heart] for the rest of his life[32]. However, the path of the *śramaṇa* is to renounce his family and ancestral home, to leave behind his parents, to dwell with strangers, to shave his hair and beard, to distort his physical appearance, to suggest no apparent signs of catering to the needs of his parents (when they are alive) and to abandon the ritual of ancestor worship after they die, and to regard his own parents to be no different from any other passer-by. Such actions that go against virtues and hurt the feelings of others, nothing can be considered worse than anything else. (Still) the Buddhists insist that we need to promulgate the (Buddhist Way), disseminate the virtue of benevolence and sincerely act towards saving all sentient beings. How is this different from cutting off the roots and branches of a tree and then stating that the tree shall be distinguished in its appearance and grow up to be tall and thick? I have no experience of any such thing. If there would be no skin present, (then) how would the hair attach itself to it? This highly refutes the worldly teaching. How are you going to (justify) this phenomenon?" In response I said, "This is a major mis-conception and an error of an extreme vile nature. Unfortunately, I cannot remain reticent. Parents and their children possess the same body (elements), and they together produce their (next generation traits). Therefore, if a mother injures her finger, then the child immediately feels a sensation in his heart, even though he might not share physical proximity with her. It is because the common entwining element in them causes the child to feel his mother's pain and accordingly makes him respond to it. Their interconnectedness does not allow any space to exist

[31] Such references are frequent occurrences in the passages of Xiaojing, Mengzi, Lilou Shang.
[32] This phrase occurs in the Liji, Jiyi. Also see Muller (ed.) The Sacred Books of the East, vol. 28, p. 228, note no. 14.

between (the mother and son). Therefore, to be touched/moved/stimulated by one's parents' situation can be said to be filial piety of the highest degree. If a father occupies a respectable position, his son shall also become distinguished, (likewise) if a son attains high rank, then the father shall win accolades. Therefore, the virtue of filial piety is a much treasured (attribute). It is valuable because it helps us attain a respectable position in [society/world], (educates us) to abide by the way that leads to humanity and bring glory to our parents for a long period of time[33]. Even if we were to offer ourselves by lying flat on the ground in front our parents, esteem and revere them, and arrange for them the best of meals comprising three different kinds of meat (beef, mutton, pork) everyday, we would still not be able to motivate and influence all people to shower their reverence upon us. On the other hand, if we have accomplishments great enough to be revered by the rest of the world] then that could be seen as winning over prestige for our parents.

Fascicle Five: The Discourse on the Immortality of the Spirit (*shenbumie lun*) by Zheng Daozi (364-427)

Most (people) bear the notion that body and spirit disintegrate at the same time and that the functionality of the spirit (zhao) and consciousness cease to exist along with the ceasing of (the physical body). Can the reason for this be elucidated further? All inhabitants of (China Proper)[34] generally consider the discourses (edified) by the Duke of Zhou and Confucius to be ultimate and unswerving. The (concepts of) benevolence, righteousness and ethics-based education were first conceived of by them through in-depth deliberation and realization. The (fundamental concept related

[33] Please refer to the Xiaojing [Classic of Filial Piety]. Also see Rosemont, The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence, p. 105.
[34]China Proper here refers to Mainland China, in and around the basins of River Changjiang and River Huang He.

to) spiritual consciousness, however, was never mentioned[35]. (Therefore), in their discourses, actions related to sensory perceptions are all confined within a well-structured space. The Buddha delivers wisdom of profound significance, but (unfortunately) ordinary masses have no faith or trust in him. At a young age, I was under misconceptions, but I decided to discard all of those and commit myself to the understanding of the essence of the spirit. I came to acknowledge that the (principle) is much more extraordinary than the (corporeal body) and that the (essence) is much more abstruse than the principle itself. From the appearance of all matter, I will disseminate my psychological orientations and cite the following as evidence. I sincerely expect that this will illuminate all of those who shall be enlightened by it and shall help eradicate the persistent doubts and mis-conceptions.

Spirit and body remain intermingled in close association, and arise in unison, but even though they coexist when a person is alive, (it is to be noted that) just as coarseness and refinement in relation to their origins, stand in contrast to each other, there is also (clear)distinction between the material or physical and non-material or spiritual. On what ground do I propose this? (It is because) a body is made up of the five internal organs (lungs, heart, liver, spleen and kidneys), the six entrails (bladder, gall, stomach, the three parts of the abdominal cavity, lower intestine and small intestine), the limbs and the seven openings in the head (nostrils, eyes, ears and mouth), where each of these (separate entities) are connected constituting the whole body. (It is because of these), that a person remains alive. Right at the moment of one's birth, each person is endowed with the five primary elements, but in a manner that is different, distinct and

[35]It is important to note that the Confucian school of philosophy all along emphasized upon the founding of an ethical society based upon harmonious social relations and family ties through the cultivation of inner virtues such as benevolence, righteousness, propriety, conscientiousness and altruism. Issues related to metaphysical speculation or ontological enquiry remained outside of the purview of Confucianism. Buddhism on the other hand focused upon issues such as consciousness.

unique to himself. Hence, some people are born crippled, while some miss having ears and eyes. But, this too does not prove to be detrimental for the concerned person. If this is the case with the physical body, then it is even more so with the essence of life which keeps shimmering on mysteriously. It is thus the spirit which regulates and controls all the (functions of the body). (Just as) the body and breath stay and move in close connection, so also the spirit and the consciousness merge in the same flow. Although the body (function and movement) and the spirit (representing tranquility]) balance each other out, yet refinement and coarseness differ along their points of emergence.

Looking at the structural framework of the body, we find that muscles and bones carry stimulations sensations of pain and tingling, while, nails and hair lack sensations (Why does this happen?) (Is it not because)of the fact that while bones and muscles are the core components of life, nails and hair do not comprise the same. When life rests at the core, then there exists stimulation, when life rests along the sideline, then there is no stimulation. (For the body to operate optimally), it is to be guided (both by the core and the borderline extremity), and their presence can be compared to the cycle/wave of simultaneous rise and fall. The essence with its abstruse origin is also the foundation of life. How could then the essence of life exhaust itself and perish away along with the ceasing of existence of a seven *chi* tall body and their sense organs of perception, which can be likened to the doors and windows? Thus, the truth elucidated above leads to the inference that the essence (as the vital energy of life) is immortal and unceasing.

The Discourse on why *Śramaṇas* donot bow to the Sovereign [*Shamen bujing wangzhelun*] by Dharma Master Huiyuan

During the ruling years of Emperor Cheng (reign period 337-342) and that of Emperor Kang (reign period 342-344) of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, the General In-charge of Chariot and Horse, Yu Bing (296-344) expressed his apprehensions about the fact that sramanas look upon the emperor as their equals and refrain from performing any prescribed ritual (of honor) towards him. (Yu Bing) provided a possible explanation for this, while Cavalry General He Chong added his response further[36]. Later during the Yuanxing reign period of Emperor An (402-404), Chief Defense General, Lord Huan Xuan supported Yu Bing's argument. Furthermore, pointing out at certain inadequacies, he also submitted a letter to the eight executives, where he wrote thus, "Even though the Buddha's teaching is both infinitely deep and broad, and advocates perceiving the world by transcending sensory perception, the said teachings solely rest upon the foundation of respect which is at its core. In this regard, there is not much distinction between the Buddhist monastic members and the lay followers. I understand that their aspirations in life differ from each other but this cannot justify the abolishment of respect towards the sovereign.

In the *Book of Laozi* [*Dao De Jing*], sons of rulers are treated at par [in dignity and respect] to the three great elements [Heaven, Earth and the Way][37]. When we speculate the reason behind their state of such approved honor, we find that it owes to the fact that they support the growth of all things and contribute to the unhindered, ceaseless movement of all heavenly bodies. If that be not the case, then how could they be granted a status of equal significance with the two extreme polarities, one

[36] This reference is seen once again in fascicle 12 of Hong Ming Ji.

[37] This analogy also occurs in a passage in Yijing [Classic of Changes]. The sentence here likens the sons of rulers to the three significant cosmic elements, Heaven, Earth and the Way, since the former like the latter are responsible for maintaining life on this planet.

being Heaven and the other being Earth, and not certainly because of the only reason that sage kings are at the helm of power. Citing the *Classic of Changes* [*Yijing*], it can be said that the profound integrity of Heaven and Earth is what is designated as life. The intrinsic quality of being able to support all life within the boundary of one's country and the virtuous task of making proper arrangement of all things are both entrusted with the supreme ruler of any country. Hence, we revere the throne and express our sincere courtesy to it. How could then we respect and honor the ruler in vain? The significance of all of this lies in the fact that only the sovereigns administer over all phenomena, matters and occurrence. The prime factor that allows sramanas are to continue with their lineage or to be able to survive on the daily support provided to them is also because they enjoy the privileges of the ordinances issued by the sovereigns. How could it then be justified for the *śramaṇa* to enjoy the privileges granted to them by the sovereigns and yet, refrain from expressing their courtesy of honour towards them, or (in certain terms) to extract benefit from the benevolent attitude of the sovereigns and yet, overlook the act of propriety of paying obeisance to them…

I feel that the Noble *Dharma* would be gradually forgotten and I also fear the old warning which admonishes that one should not forget the former lessons as they serve as exemplars for the future[38]. Hence, I prepared an explanation in five segments, in which I have tried to put forth my modest intentions to clarify certain mis-conceptions. How could I claim that Buddhism which is as deep as a gorge would require my statement of support or justification, which is (otherwise) as inefficacious as the morning dew. Yet, I would like to commit my seamless mind to the cause of Buddhism. I wish that among followers of Buddhism belonging to posterity, there

[38] A similar reference as this occurs in the Confucian Classic of Zhan Guo Ce and Zhao Ce.

shall be some of who would be reading my explanations and commentaries stated below with care and concern.

Section One: Buddhist Laity

When we speculate deep into the Buddhist doctrines, we find that the concept of forsaking the mundane world stands out as unique and distinctive from other edifications. In general, there are four different classes of people who have abandoned family ties and their mortal world of human relationship, they are *bhikṣu*, *bhiksuṇī*, *śramaṇera* and *śramaṇerika*. In disseminating the *dharma* and in enlightening the masses, their contribution is comparable with that of the supreme rulers, and their spiritual guidance stands at par with the strategy of statecraft. If we speak of the (ideal/perfect) time to enlighten the masses, then there is none. But during the period when Buddhism is gradually permeating into society, Buddhists may either reach out to the masses and educate them, or they might withdraw into the state of self-cultivation. Therefore, with the subsequent rise and fall of the world, the Buddhist teachings become either relevant or irrelevant…

Those of who are home dwellers and yet, reverentially practice the *Dharma* are the ones who also abide by the sovereign's edicts, they are the same as the general population and their lifestyle bears resemblance to the non-Buddhists. As a consequence, they are intimately attached to their kith and kin, and pay obeisance to their rulers. Propriety and honour are the foundation stones which house people's feelings. Subsequently, we find that the edification is based upon this foundation stone. When we examine the source of the said foundation of (propriety and honour), we find that the achievement has been derived from the time and space of the ancients. Therefore, by preaching the virtue of love and compassion based upon the feeling of

closeness, we shall enable the masses to recognize and acknowledge the presence of spontaneous benevolence everywhere. Again, by preaching the virtue of respect based upon strict and meticulous behaviour, we shall enable the masses to become conscious of the fact that this is a natural disposition of human behaviour. The dual issues pertaining to the relationship between parents and children, and between the supreme ruler and subjects all emerge from the concept of reward and retribution from the world beyond and far[39]. Reward and retribution do not arise from one's present life, one must investigate about their source. Therefore, as per the teachings of Buddhism, retribution against any wrong doing is seen as punishment. Buddhism creates a sense of fear towards retribution among its followers and delivers strict caution for their later stages of existence. To be reborn in heaven is considered to be a holy reward and Buddhism delivers joy to people and makes them perform acts of goodness (to secure) their later phases of existence…

Again, if one engages in maintaining his life with generosity, then, he actually is provoking a conflict or contest between the self and the other, he is creating confusion for himself, an irritant deeply roots inside of him, and he solely pays attention to sustaining his life meaningfully. He perceives all forms of physical desire as a garden of sensual pleasure and treats good music and the company of women to be as exciting as a joyride. He is wrongly attached to worldly desires from which he fails to escape on his own. Therefore, the Buddhist teaching trains a lay person to caution restraint over his sensual desires through the application of the law of reward and retribution. Only the law of reward and retribution alone is expounded as the

[39] The first part of this phrase with its focus upon relationship between parents and children find references in the Confucian Classic of Xiaojing [Classic of Filial Piety]. While initial part of the phrase refers to the unconditional love between father and son as has been advocated in the Rule of Five Golden Relationships by Confucius, the latter part of the phrase outlines the strict orders that a son needs to abide by as his commitment towards the virtue of filial piety.

foundational Buddhist law for all lay Buddhists, and nothing further is clarified. Since nothing further is required to be clarified as part of the Buddhist doctrinal discourse for lay devotees, they are similar to the common masses in paying obeisance to the sovereign and his edicts and laws. Therefore, it is absolutely unbelievable that having received the sense of virtue from their parents and the sovereign, the lay Buddhists would fail to express their reverence (as per the norms of propriety) to them, or having gained benefit from their parents and sovereign, they would fail to express their gratitude for them. As a consequence, lay Buddhist devotees who take profound interest in the teachings of Sakyamuni have an equal sense of admiration for both their parents and their supreme ruler.

When anyone (desires to) renounce one's family and thereafter their secular life, and decides to accept the tonsure, he needs to wait for the consent to arrive (from both the parents and the sovereign) and act in accordance with their orders[40]. If the sovereign or their parents reserve their opinions about abandoning secular life, then the (seeker of monkhood) would have to take a step back, enquire of their plan and purpose, and wait until the time when the decision of his parents or sovereign would be aligned with his own. This is the fundamental reason why Buddhism is known to be particularly insistent upon sustaining the lives and livelihoods of the people, and also in assisting the sovereign in training the masses so that he could fulfil the duty of putting in place the right form of administration…

Section Two: The Buddhist Clergy

The Buddhist monastic members are residents from outside of this mundane world. Their way of life is (also therefore) not in alignment with the dwellers of this mortal

[40] The conversation in this section underscores the importance of filial piety for the Chinese audience even with regard to permission for affiliating oneself formally to the Buddhist monastic Order [Samgha]. The same would also hold true for the Buddhist lay followers.

world. The *Dharma* teaching that mostly applies to them is that the presence of physical body invites affliction and the absence of physical body ends all affliction. Also, another essential teaching for them is that the phenomenon of the cycle of life, one after another, emerges from the principle of transmutation/metamorphosis between birth and death, and the sole purpose of the Buddhist awakening is to gain pursuit of the terminal absolute law of nature by not getting attached to the said principle of transmutation. Since they are guided to pursue the ultimate principle of Nature by un-following the transmutation between birth and death, they donot esteem the patronage of a sovereign who administers the movement of Earth and Heaven. Since they themselves put a stop to the course of affliction by not conserving the body, they donot consider the sovereign's act of welfare towards the masses as a privilege for them. This suggests that forms and principles donot correspond to each other and that monks and secular people stand much in contrast to one another. A monastic member takes an oath by accepting the tonsure at the initial stage and reveals his indomitable determination by replacing his everyday clothes with that of the monk's garments. In accordance with the above, all members of the Buddhist monastic Order abandon their family ties and the associations with the mundane world in pursuit of their spiritual quest. Since they stand apart from the secular masses, their dress code cannot and need not follow the dressing norm of the secular people. Since they renounce the mortal world, they ought to practice a life of superior ideals. Buddhist monastic members are of this nature. Therefore, they are able to deliver ordinary people from the depths of the stream of constant metamorphosis from birth to death, and vice-versa, rip out their penetrating roots of karma for a multitude of *kalpas*, lead them with utmost sincerity to the junction of the three vehicles, and open up for them the broad vista that lead to the realms of human and supra-human beings.

If a person fulfils the virtuous acts of a monk, the Dharma showers positive influence over his kith and kin, extending onwards to his six forms of relations, and the good karma, [as a result] thus disseminates across to the entire population. Although monks are not treated at par with the princes in either rank or social stature, their path of the Dharma matches with the manner in which the sovereign governs all under Heaven, and they can allow the people to remain the way they choose to be. As a matter of fact, while in private, [the monks] might resist to accept their family's fond engagement with them and become monastic members, they [still] would not fail to abide by the virtues of filial piety. While they may not engage in paying courtesy to the sovereign within the public sphere, he shall also not, under any circumstance, be impudent [to the sovereign].

The Discourse on the Sramana's Robe Worn with a Bare Shoulder (*Shaman Tanfulun*) by Master Huiyuan

A certain critic asked, "The *śramaṇa's* robe (*kāsāya*) that puts to display an uncovered right shoulder is drawn in from the Buddha's teaching. Does (this clothing style) adhere to the proper code of conduct?" I replied, "Sure, certainly it does conform." He enquired further, "The three dynasties (i.e. Xia, Yin and Zhou) had varied systems of administration, with their own set of decorum, rules and regulations, in some cases, these were plain, while in some other cases, these were adorned. These have all been mentioned in great detail in ancient records, but the code of conduct formulated under Buddhism remains excluded from those. Most critics have their apprehensions about it[41].

[41] This clearly signifies the critics' view that the prescribed dress code for all Buddhist monastic members do not conform to the customs of dressing as had been prevalent among the Chinese population during the early formative years of Chinese societal structure, namely the Xia, Shang and Zhou times. This is the Confucian critics' open challenge to Buddhist norms.

If there is a deep insight that governs the Buddhist principle, then, I shall be obliged to receive your elucidations about the same.

I answered to him in the following words, "People of antiquity have been recognized for their simplicity and their code of conduct remained unadorned. Ever since the three rulers, namely King Yu of Xia, King Tang of Yin, and King Wu of Zhou set upon their reigns under Heaven and (and founded their own codes), (the regulations of the following ages) altered with passing time. Based upon the above (observation) what the critics, including you, uphold as the preconceived notion is that the words of the ancient kings regulating the secular domain of ethical education. How do I infer all of this? What is not indigenous to the Middle Kingdom (China) might be received (and accepted) as customs practiced in the other countries. Since local residents of these distant regions have not witnessed changes, their way (traditional code of contact) has not been destroyed (and exists in continuum with their former times). Hence as per the specified etiquette in the Indian tradition, when it concerns paying obeisance to the glorious ones or to the gods, they do so by keeping one part of the body uncovered. The (Book of Rites) seems to have held this (manner of clothing) as the highest degree of unadornment[42]. Although the written records that elucidate (this style/manner of dressing) have not been much in transmission and circulation, however, it seems as though the proper significance of this style of clothing was known during (the initial phase when it was first conceived of and put into practice).

The Buddha emerged in the mortal world and founded his teachings upon traditional Indian culture and custom. He threw light upon the fact that since virtuous acts in conformity to the *dharma* (donotharbour evil practices nor wrong intentions) the right

[42] Refer to a passage in Liji. Also see Muller ed., the Sacred Books of the East, vol. 27, p. 169, note no. 29.

shoulder should be kept unclothed. But why was this put into the Buddhist practice? (It is seemingly because) the honourable aristocrats and the modest masses need to be differentiated (from one another) in their social standing. If noble ones are upgraded to a superior rank, the mind to eulogize and commend the virtuous ones shall also emerge accordingly. Therefore, sramanas rise above reputation and rank in order to abolish the (set customary traditions) of the period in concern. They retreat and never yearn to take any step involving worldly affairs. Most people are right-handed. (In such a case), if we donot abide by the principle of right handedness in performing acts and deeds, we will encounter trouble.

The body comprises of two sides, the right and the left, and principles comprise of two sections, correct and incorrect. To strike up a balance between these two issues (right and left in relation to the body and right and wrong concerning the fundamental principles), one must delve deep into the foundation. If the foundational base remains blocked and the blockade is not eliminated, then the demand for response to the (various changes) of the phenomenal world continues to increase. As a result, if the physical body and the core principles balance out each other, the pathway of the foundation would remain indefinite and abstruse. If the worldly customs fail to alter, then it becomes difficult to respond to the abstruse way of foundation. Once the custom of wearing a robe with one’s bare shoulder is promulgated, then we shall also incorporate and apply the same (tradition) to ourselves, and seek to understand the principle behind the custom. Thus we (exhibit a certain trait) of conforming to nature and exhibit a sense of sincerity. "Hence, by wearing a robe with one shoulder, unclothed, the World-honoured One (Skt, Bhagavat) strengthened the spirit of sincerity and cast away all evil, (in this way) he matched names with reality, causing respect and laxness not to be combined. Later the World-honoured One set open the

path (for all sentient beings) seeking enlightenment. He guided all of those who have been confused for long towards the true essence, he also made every effort to enable (the wise men) who are stuck in the mundane world and fear having no hope of liberation and he encouraged those of who proceed along the path of Buddhism not to retreat in doubt or fear or delusion ever.

Dharma Teacher Huiyuan's Response to [He] Wuji for his Criticism

I probed into the intention of your question with (due respect). (Your statement) may break open the path of lofty ideals, elucidate that which I have not yet explained, result in (both) the refined and the coarse to abide by the (law of nature) simultaneously, and have Buddhism and Confucianism to be unified and merged. I meticulously read through your instructions on this quite a few times and became aware of several issues. I am of the opinion that with regard to the edification of Sakyamuni and discourses (as advocated by Confucianism), by Confucius and the Duke of Zhou, although the process of indoctrinating the common masses (in the abovementioned ideologies) vary with the individual philosopher, they seemingly share a common association. The difference between them arises only with regard to the matter concerning the renunciation of the world (as in the first case of Buddhism) or remaining attached and performing obligations to it (as in the second case of Confucianism), but in principle they are (fundamentally) the same. The implicit signs of the profound teachings of the Chinese wise thinkers remain subtly hidden in the lifestyle of the people, it is deep (on the one hand) and, yet, hard to pursue (on the other). (With the passage of time), the significant teachings of the sages were hindered from reaching the masses by the edifications of other (schools of philosophy), and this resulted in the followers of (Buddhism and Confucianism) to wrongly identify them as distinctively different.

That which people around (attach importance to) is all about survival. When they manage to survive long for many years (under certain circumstances), they either bend or straighten out, proceed or turn back. This is (in the nature) of the world (of lay people). The concept that advocates (the right decorum and the proper code of dressing can be established) generally or specifically in accordance with what is internal(ie. Domestic governance or statecraft) and external (i.e. Religion) in this world of phenomena, emerges from this very point. *Śramaṇas* are (exceptions to this prescribed societal norm of decorum and dressing code), they donot engage in self-interest and yet donot refrain from being humble in the phenomenal world. If the time doesnot favour them, they relegate to a humble position. (To administer oneself) by taking up a humble position is called modesty, (just as) to place oneself is to be recognized as obedience. If we do not ignore modesty and obedience as the (essential fundamentals), then it becomes effortless to gather the merit (of attaining *wuwei*)[43], and it might be possible to discover joy on the path, while escaping from delusions and attaining enlightenment. Therefore, owing to this reason, the (*śramaṇa*) lives in seclusion, refuses to adhere to glory and regulates his conduct, contrary to the general ways of (the secular world).

Fascicle Six: The Discourse to Elucidate the Refutation (*Shibolun*) by Shi Daoheng (346-417)

During the Yixi reign period (405-418 CE) under the Jin Dynasty, according to hearsay, there were (reportedly) two wise men of the Jiangsu area, one called Yuan and the other called He, both of who collaborated to prepare a discourse on domestic governance, and were critical and cynical of the existing administration. Although, I

[43] Here in translating the expression, 'attainment of wuwei becoming effortless' the researchers deviates from the translation of James Legge who renders this phrase as 'reducing day by day to attain wuwer'.

could not have the privilege (personally) glance through this composition, its (underlying) objective and subtle agenda seems to be to ridicule the drawbacks of the governing system, (drawing in reference) from the chapter, entitled, "*Five Kinds of Vermin*", in the Han Feizi[44] and further issuing the *Discourse on the Five Kinds of Perversions*. *Śramaṇas,* however did not take any step against this discourse and it undermined their case to a considerable extent. I fear that the discourse thus authored and edited by (Yuan and He)would misguide people of the world and cause them to be submerged into a state of serious misgiving and misconception. I (cannot bear to withstand) the extreme (reactions) of resentment and remorse. Therefore, I wish to explain and illuminate this (through the form of a question and an answer session) between the opponent critic and the propagator of faith.

"There was a well-read scholar-gentleman, (deeply) influenced by Confucianism, dwelling in the eastern end of the metropolis, who cross-examined a rude opponent in an odd place (somewhere to the west). He said thus, "I have come to hear that the Buddhist doctrines are too profound to be discussed (in line with) Confucianism, that its (manner of edification) is also too deep to be discerned through the application of physical methods, that it is too pure and polished, simple (in presentation), non-interfering(in approach) and too distinctive to get compared and connected(with common knowledge), it is too mystic and transcends all existence, and it cannot be grasped by ordinary thought. As a consequence, the Buddhist teachings are revered

[44] Please refer to fascicle no. 49 in the Chinese Classic of Han Feizi. The said fascicle refers to five kinds of perverted acts that are possibly prevalent in any kingdom with supposed disorder. The first is that of the educated elite class who admire the ways of the former sovereigns and tend to emulate their proposed model of benevolent and righteous living. Second includes the act of the grand orators who engage in false claims, serve their personal interest and act against the welfare of the state. Third refer to the actions of the armed swordsmen who command of a large following but themselves disrespect the admonitions of the government official bureau. Fourth include the acts of elite members of society, who out of their suspicious attitude towards the state military, tend to bribe private individuals. Fifth, include the actions of those mercantile community members who tend to produce commodities of less practical consumption and yet, yearn for large profits.

and followed by the great rulers of the times, appreciated and commended by the officialdom, while trusted and followed by the common people. All of them express their unconditional praise for the (virtue of the Buddha). They say, “if we inculcate the (sophisticated teaching of the Buddha), we shall be able to (comprehend) the subtlety of its inner profound meaning, if we (equip) ourselves with the refinement of the doctrine, we shall be miraculously in perfect harmony and balance with the function of the spirit, we shall(be able to)discard the corruptions of the mind, free ourselves from the bondage of the physical form of existence, we will (be able to) go beyond the (trivialities) of everyday secular life, and also [be able to] refrain from worldly obligations.

Now, however when I take careful note of the conduct of *śramaṇas*, I find that (most of them) are deficient in talent, they live an extrovert life, and are unrefined in demeanour. I have not witnessed (anyone) extraordinary among them. They (appear to be) disoriented and identical, resembling a river in which the (filthy water) of River Jing and the (clear water) of River Wei have been fused together. They lack order, just in the same manner in which perfume and *you*, (the foul-smelling water plant)are placed in the same casket. If the fountain head of the water source is clean, then (the stream) shall also be pure and clear, if the plant is deep rooted, then the branches and leaves shall also be green and lush. While keenly observing and reading through the speech and conduct of the (*śramaṇas*), (one finds them) far from rational at times, while investigating their entire way (of living and being), (one finds that) there is no match for their confusion.

Why are they never tired of seeking (reputation and gain), they are (mostly)agitated, lacking even the transient state of tranquility and peace of mind. Some of the

(*śramaṇas*) claim back their pieces of land to till it for agricultural purposes, living off the land just like farmers, while some of the others engage in petty business and commercial activities, contesting and contending with the rest for monetary gain. Some deal in medical practice and treat illness in haste (without diligent examination) with the mere application of heat and cold[45], while some others draw up new strategies (in accompaniment) with heretics, in order to reap in profit for their occupation. Some put into practice divination (in accordance with)the prescribed formulae, while speaking (meaninglessly) about the auspicious and inauspicious. Some deviate from the Way, while some occupy positions of authority and win favours for themselves, yet some others accumulate in excess, only with the aim of nourishing and sustaining themselves. Some others (make prophecies) through palm reading and live off the common man's labour without having to move from place to place for food or shelter. The reason is that the (*śramaṇa*) lack virtues and their demeanour often stands as opposed to the *Dharma*. Even though they may, temporarily display (certain positive aspects) of their behaviour, how much could this contribute to improve their name and fame? They should discard their behaviours on their own and regulate and homogenize their customs. Their present conduct of conduct (proves to be inefficacious)for political governance of the times, and detrimental to the practice of the (Way). Virtuous people detest this to a great extent, and this is also that which most rulers of the state deliberate upon. Moreover, there are five kinds of degeneracy, and being a (*śramaṇa*) is one of them. The reason behind this could be clarified as thus, that the *śramaṇa* (intelligently) devise their own methods and strategies to mould uneducated secular people; one simple way of their engagement is to employ parables to induct the common people to the teachings of

[45] This refers to an ancient medical treatment, as suggested by Harumi Hirano Zieglar.

Buddhism and the other way is to use force in order to convince the common masses. (Śramaṇas) propound the following idea, “If you engage in evil activities, you shall certainly experience mishap, tragedy and adversity for successive *kalpas,* while if you engage in noble and kind acts, then you shall be eternally blessed. They insist (upon the fact) that those of who shall (engage in sinful acts) shall be put to test in hell, while those of shall cultivate merit shall be assisted and guided by deities. The (*śramaṇa*) in utmost sincerity urge people to do what they ordinarily cannot do. As a consequence, (under the worst-case scenario) an ordinary person would have to reduce his obligation of subsistence and maintenance of his parents, and (under a scenario less bad than the above), an ordinary person would have to curtail the maintenance cost of one’s wife and children. (However, when it comes to satisfying their own desire for food and living), in a gathering of monks, the (*śramaṇa*) entertain themselves to a grand feast, and the Buddhist monastic establishments reflect magnificence.

(*Śramaṇas*) flaunt other people’s precious goods (as if they were their own), they spend extravagantly and resources on useless things, they utilize other people’s individual annual savings, they also lead to a shortage of funds for both the (administration) and the army. Much in vain, the *śramaṇas,* voice their opinion for the times ahead, they (go in search of) the formless, even before it manifests itself. When we hear their (teachings), they all seem to be profound and they overwhelm us, when we witness their appearance, they all seem to be indifferent. If you have any better source of information on this, may I humbly request you to share the same. (Even if I)am able to attain awareness/consciousness at least for the time being, I shall be able to discard all forms of obstacles.

The proponent of the *dharma* was disappointed with the critic's narration and (attitude towards the dharma). After brief contemplation, he sighed and said, "What a peculiar narrative you have put forth and how very disappointing is your account. The prime factor that prevents a person of less intellectual ability to be able to elucidate the profound teachings of the (Great Way) is because his understanding is blurred due to the external appearance of things. The reason why it is difficult to explicate the fundamental teachings of the (Ultimate Way)to such confused people is that it is only these very people who attach extreme importance to the letters (of the Classics or Scriptures and donot delve deep into the content depicted therein). Here, I shall present a brief interpretation of one small section of the larger discourse[46], so that you contemplate yourself and seek refuge in the (Great/Ultimate Way). When the Master (Buddha) would preach, (he would do so) in accordance with the receptive capacity (of the follower). Since any particular individual's receptive capacity is limited, therefore the (pace of edification) is also sometimes gradual. Conscience is (significant) even if it is as (insignificant as) the tip of a hair. A narrow (frame of) mind is overlooked even if it is as massive as a hill or gorge. Even an insignificant act of virtue becomes one's eternal attribute. Even a temporary act of benevolence results in (an object) of mystery emerging at the ultimate point[47].

Loving one's parents and bestowing one's affection upon one's wife and children are clinging of the mind, for people (who) have not reached the ultimate state of Enlightenment, but *śramaṇas* discard these, similar to a state when they remove their shoes. Reputation, social standing, wealth and sensual and bodily pleasure are valued by all people of the world, but *śramaṇas* (have no regard for them], and treat them as

[46] This passage seems to have a common rendition in the Confucian Classic of Lunyu, Section on Shu Er.

[47] A similar expression is found in the Confucian Analects, section titled, Zi Han, where Confucius is seen stating that each person responds to the demand or need of an action based upon his own capacity.

being useless, much like rice bran. It might be well assumed then, that what [other people cannot leave behind is what the sramanas donot tolerate or adhere to[48].

The Discourse to Rectify the Argument on the Two Teachings [*Zheng Erjiao Lun*] by Ming Zhengjun

There lives a Daoist monk who authored the treatise titled, the Discourse on the Chinese and the non-Chinese (teachings). Following it, I thus composed this discourse to rectify the (former's) argumentative stand (Ming zhengjun, Sengshao).

I became aware that the extraordinary discourse composed of intense words already had a well-grounded reputation. As because I fear that the sage (Buddha) might be inappropriately and incorrectly charged, I therefore would like to shed light upon the objectives (of Buddhism and Daoism). At the outset, I shall elucidate the phrases from both the treatises that the (Daoist monk) has used as reference and then rectify (his mis-interpretation). I sincerely hope that everyone shall be able to comprehend each of the two philosophical teachings. The Debate states, "It is mentioned in a certain Daoist Classic that Laozi had arrived at Guanzhong (present da Shanxi province) and had departed from there on an onward journey to Kapilavāstu in India, where the king's consort was known to have been living by the name Māyā (Qingmiao). As Māyā was taking a nap, Laozi, by imbibing the radiance of the sun, had entered into Māyā's mouth. The following year, during the midnight on the eighth day of the fourth month, he had ruptured Māyā's right armpit and had taken birth[49]. The moment he had touched upon the (surface of the) earth during birth, he had taken seven steps

[48]James Legge in his translation, The Chinese Classics, vol. 1, p. 188 state that Confucius in the Lunyu, Taibo underscores the fact that talent is a rare attribute to find in people. The fact that the Buddhist sramanas take up a life that is not easy to live and discard all worldly obligations can be likened to the statement that Confucius made about human talents being rare.

[49]The Daoist classic here seems to misuse/misquote the Buddha's birth story to justify Laozi's reincarnation as the historical Buddha.

in the forward direction. Then raising his right hand and pointing to the sky he had said, “I alone am the Holy One throughout all Heaven and Earth. The three domains of existence are marked by absolute suffering. How could then we be in bliss?” It is from this very point that the Buddhist philosophical doctrine emerged. This phenomena finds mention in the treatise titled, “Inner Segment of the Mystifying and Sublime (Xuanmiao Neipian), a reliable composition dating back to the Han times, and not to be counted as a rare collection.

I have rectified this above-mentioned discourse by arguing thus, “The Daoist perspective propounded here is founded upon Laozi’ s philosophical treatise in two chapters (namely, *Laozi Daodejing*) The interpretation about the mystifying and the exalted (teaching) lie embedded within the seven chapters of the “Inner Segment” of the *Zhuangzi*. The principal Daoist doctrine is to realize the ‘absolute one’ and to master thoroughly the Law of the (nameless, formless) Void. There is not much to hear about the miracles associated with the transformation of the body. It appears in the text of *Zhuangzi*, that a certain legendary administrator by the name of Pengzu, who is believed to have lived on for eight hundred years share the same span of life as a child who had met with premature death[50]. I cannot therefore confirm that this text in anyway advocates the concept of immortality. Those of who are in balance with Heaven and the cosmic forces of (*yin* and *yang*) donot attempt to alter the natural course of events and are acceptable and receptive of the time and space allotted to them in due accordance with the Heavenly Order. Why would they then pursue a long life? If Laozi had (actually) imbibed the energy of the sun and had (really) placed himself into Māyā’s mouth, had ruptured her right armpit and had taken birth thereof, then (it needs to be pointed out that) there is a mismatch between the time of the

[50]The passage is found in the Classic of Zhuangzi, Qiwulun. Please refer to James Legge, translation of Dao De Jing Ji Zhuangzi Quan Ji, p. 236, note no. 6.

occurrence of the event and the event in itself. This is a fantastic narration that weaves together different tales (belonging to different periods in time and space) and (erroneously) projects it to be a miracle. (The Daoist Classic authored during the Han times) narrates an imaginary fantastic story and with certain elements of absurdity advocates deification. These ridiculous arguments and analyses made during the Qin and Han times have come down up until the Wei-Jin periods. The argument put forth in this Daoist Classic does not comply with the (Law of the ancient sages). How can you then claim it to be a genuine treatise after all?"

Fascicle Seven: ***The Discourse on the western Tribe and China (Rong Hualun), Negating the Daoist Gu's Discourse on the Non-Chinese and the Chinese by Shi Sengmin at Guanglin***

In former times, Vimalakīrti (sought to follow) the (path of high spiritual ideals) while dwelling in this world (of mortals) and exhibited merits (of virtue) that would (transcend) the world (of phenomena). He (physically) dwelt in the secular surroundings and concealed his spiritual talent, while revealing his aspirations only within the depths of the sea (of profound Buddhist learning). He (seemed to have) sprinkled (elements) of his spiritual knowledge in all the ten (different) directions and he organized and (rectified) the world. Therefore, the remnants (of his spiritual grace) emerged in the western land (India) where along with other (Masters) he engaged in the dissemination of the glorious philosophical tenet. Speaking of his mystic supernatural ability, he was able to turn Heaven and Earth upside down, or inflate or shrink anything, as he wished to. Speaking of his inherent qualities of mind and character, he intently focused upon the state of keeping silent. People of this stature

can be designated as a Buddhist laity [*jushi*, gṛhapati][51]. I have not quite understood the reason behind you referring yourself as a lay Buddhist…

I investigated your objective behind propounding the Discourse on the Chinese and the Non-Chinese. Regarding your comments on the same (Discourse on the non-Chinese and the Chinese), it is devoid of any elegance of composition, profundity of thought and intellectual engagement. The amount of benefit (that could be reaped from it) would be even less than the moisture in a drop of dew. It is lacking in a thousand different ways. Of what significance would it finally be? Upholding ideas that are obscure, and founding your observations upon a mental frame that is improperly laid out, you seem to play around with (light strokes) of ink and brush, and create (unfounded) suppositions about the sages' intentions, you sometimes mix up (ideas related to) Daoism and Buddhism and state that they are the same, while at other times by reading into the depths of their teachings, you again suggest that there are differences between them, you speak of the different realms of spirituality and position them one above the other, and yet again you defame them in saying that there is falsehood in the otherwise unsoiled, cleansed, honest state (of Buddhist enlightenment) [52] …I will now elucidate the differences between Buddhism and Daoism in both terminology and meaning. The Buddha is the alternate name for a spiritual divine being of perfect enlightenment. The term Way is a general reference for one hundred paths. Laozi refers to a (spiritual man of deep wisdom) who

[51]Vimalakīrti was reportedly one of the most distinguished Mahayana Buddhist *upāsaka* [lay devotees] who was arguably a contemporary of the historical Buddha and featured as the central character of the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*. His depiction as an affluent, devoted chief lay patron of Buddhism in India time and again has inspired and influenced the emergence and growth of lay Buddhism in premodern sixth century Chinese society. The reference here is being used as a strategy to invite larger Chinese elite class members for seeking patronage and acceptance for the Buddhist monastic institutions in their struggle for survival against the rising tides of intolerance projected by the Confucian and Daoist followers.

[52] Attempt is being made here by the author to explain the clear distinctions between the philosophical tenets of Buddhism and Daoism, and the historical personages and founder fathers, the historical Siddharth Gautama and the Laozi.

propounded one particular aspect of phenomenon, while the Buddha propounded the (complexity) of myriad phenomena. In Daoism, the (act of transcendence) is (regarded) holy, while in Buddhism, the depletion of corrupt and defile tendencies is (perceived) as (virtuous). In the case of the (Daoist practitioner) of transcendence, there is a thousand-year lifespan, in the case of the (Buddhist practitioner) the cleansing of defilement, there is the (emergence) of a spiritual divine being. Since the Buddhist divine spiritual being is eternal, it is also extraordinary and profound. Since the (Daoist practitioner) has a life span of a thousand years, he mounts on the dragon and regulates the (movement) of the clouds. To mount on a dragon and regulate the movement of the clouds is for those of who are (willing to undertake the cycle of birth and death).

The majestic spiritual being of light is in a (state of) permanent bliss and eternal purity. Now, given this state of affairs, the Heavenly phenomenon of movement responded and remnants of the eternal spiritual being of light (Śakyamuṇī Buddha) came down to the capital. He silently developed a strong aversion to the palace with surrounding watchtowers and forsake the place permanently. He renounced his worldly attachments and vowed to transcend into the three (realms) of emptiness. Like a flying dragon, he perched himself over the (marvelous house) of the (*dharma*) and created a vehicle to visit the (sacred) site where he reached the state of ultimate enlightenment. Soon after, he propounded his first sermon at the Deer Park (*Mṛgadāva*), followed by an assembly conducted at the palace quarters of the *Trāyatriṃśa* Heaven. There he expounded the teachings of the dharma at the Vulture Peak Mountain (*Gṛdhrakuṭa*) and finally extolled the teachings along the banks of the Hiranyavati River (alternately termed Ajitavati River). As a consequence, soon after, the bright light of the *dharma* (seemed to) shine over far off distant lands, the sun

seemed to (take a break) from spreading its radiance, the beautiful carriages which belonged to all those of who had gathered to listen to the sermon of the *dharma* set out in all the four directions, a vehicle ridden by the king of the Brahma Heaven descended, while divine beings of the nine heavens sang eulogies of the Buddha's virtues, many recluses attained the opportunity for spiritual realization, among those of the population who were courageous enough to accept and follow the Buddhist Way, there was not even one who did not assemble like floating clouds and sought refuge in the (*dharma*).

However, the Zhou dynasty emperor, one of the supreme rulers of the borderland regions did not aspire for the (*dharma*). Therefore, the *Tathāgata* made arrangements for Samatabhadra to put to practice the Buddha's supreme presence in the western regions (i.e. India) and to have the three sages (*Kong Fuzi*, *Yan Hui* and *Laozi*) to accept leadership of the people in the eastern metropolis (i.e. China). Thus, Laozi is known to have guided and mentored the Zhou times with his refined and profound teachings (preserved) in the *Five Thousand Words* (*Laozi Daodejing*), and later returned to India since his task of edification in China had been rendered complete. It is owing to this reason that there is the (popular) legend of Laozi leaving Guan and traveling beyond the frontier regions to the remote west. Based upon this legend, the Chinese composed the *Scripture on Laozi who Educated the Barbarians* (*Laozi huahujing*) which causes those people with limited knowledge and understanding to extol China. You are still unaware of the intricacies of the profound *dharma*, then why do you insist that the Buddha and the Laozi are one and the same.

Fascicle Nine: The Record that the Emperor of the Great Liang Dynasty Sets Forth the Right Logic for the Spiritual Intelligence and the Attainment of Buddhahood, together with the Preface and Annotation Authored by Shen Ji of Wuxing

The sage ruler Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty was endowed with an auspicious blessing and (henceforth) administers over the entire nation from the seat of his throne. He is conscious of the fact that he should in advance grant the law of Heaven and provide the instructions for the common masses to observe. He is of the apprehension that the use of flowery, clever and yet, false arguments might create its own logical explanation and thus become widespread. Who then shall be able to bring back order through detailed account and representation of the complex remnants? The corpus of literature (on the teachings of the Buddha) left behind by Śakyamuṇī are in future about to be lost. Therefore, Emperor Wu authored the following insightful discussions with the purpose of patronizing the most profound teachings.

Myself, Ji, have entertained the idea from the early years in life that my physical body is void. I, thus, imbibed the Buddhist teaching deep into my mind and most often appreciated the words of the dharma. Because of my (deep involvement with the Buddhist teachings), I often lost track of eating and sleeping exercises. Still (despite my engagement) due to my dull-witted temperament, I find it difficult to comprehend the (teaching) to the fullest. Every time I confront the doctrine (of the Buddha), I encounter numerous questions (running through my mind) With regard to the meaning of the true Buddha-nature, I would often lose my ground and remain confused and deluded in my thought. Since the account of the emperor have permeated deep and far into both space and time, all the people (dwelling near and far) have experienced equal solace. The multitude of nights have all drawn to a close and

an eternal dawn has arrived to eliminate the darkness. There is greater clarity on various issues of concern, as I proceed to understand them completely. On a personal note, I think that phenomena closely accompany principles. If nothing exists, then nothing is to be recognized. Function accompanies the way and matches up to it. How can the mind fail to acknowledge this?

With limited knowledge and incomplete understanding, I make an attempt to respectfully offer this annotation. This might be looked upon as a venture to view the source head of the inner most section of heaven through a small aperture. In all probability, I am most probably deluded, thus, I put forth the following explanation. (The practice of the Buddhist Way depends upon the founding of trust).

Myself, Ji, pronounce that, “People who are ignorant often produce intellectually stimulating works. The emergence of intelligence is not a sudden phenomenon, it requires practice. Practice is not to be perfected for its own value, but to be perfected based upon faith. Faith is (the inclination of) the mind which relies upon a teacher and abides by rationale by refraining from disobedience. Therefore, the five fundamentals that underline complete entity (*pañcaindriya*) take up faith as the chief foundation, and faith in turn in the four objects (*sixin*) is what is to be regarded as primary. Since the foundation of faith is well laid out, a multitude of deeds can be performed with ease and natural spontaneity. To be able to perform ethical deeds and to arrive at the ultimate level of maturation is called practice.” Faith can only be founded upon right understanding.

Myself, Ji, says, “If we are unable to distinguish between right and wrong, then how can we achieve the state of ultimate faith? As a consequence, the foundation of trust and surrender can only be strengthened by right understanding.” In the presence of

right understanding, external false views (non-Buddhist teachings) shall not be able to delude us any longer.

Myself, Ji, I say, "If the mind is (guided) by right thoughts, then all other numerous wrong concepts and ideas are naturally exterminated. From the above it can be discerned that when we adhere to right views, the external false views fail to disorient our thoughts." When faith is strongly grounded, then no delusions can blurr the consciousness.

Myself, Ji, I pronounce thus, "Consciousness is the mind[53]. Therefore, the *Chengshi lun* (Discourse on the Achievement of Reality) advocates that the mind, thought and consciousness are all similar in terms of their intrinsic quality and nature, although they vary in their names. Given the fact that the mind bears faith, what is it that we are suspect?" Even then, the foundation upon which faith and understanding rest is deep.

Myself, Ji, I declare, "The term chana (implying an instant or very brief moment in time) is the Chinese transliterated rendition of the Indian [*kṣaṇa*], which corresponds to a very brief span of time."

Therefore, (as per the teachings of the dharma) when any being originates and then gradually dies out, how could there be any possibility of staying back? With this view in mind, Vimalakīrtilamented thus, "O bhiksus, we take birth, we age, and then pass away in an instant[54]. If the mind was to be influenced by an external factor, then the consciousness of the previous existence would ideally differ from the consciousness of the latter. Given this case, (the mind) would be accompanied closely by the (external circumstance). Who then would be able to attain Buddhahood?

[53] The concept of consciousness being the mind is also present in the Chengshi lun, T. 1646.32: 274e19.
[54] See Weimojie Suoshuojing, T. 475.14: 542b5.

Fascicle Eleven: The Letter of Dharma Teacher Hui Yuan of Mount Lu in Response to Huan Xuan's Letter in Which he Urges that Hui Yuan be Removed from the Buddhist Way

Huan Xuan's [369-403 C.E.] Letter

The Ultimate Path is distantly remote. The Buddhist fundamental concepts are deep and rather abstruse. How could this be suited to the requirement of the ordinary people who waste their time in an idle fashion? A *śramaṇa* renounces his affectionate ties with his family of six close relatives, deforms his outwardly appearance, refrains from tasty food, puts on clothes of coarse fabric tied together with a rope belt, dwells in a mountain (cave), with his head resting on a rock bed, severing himself eternally from all worldly matters, with the long-awaited expectation that he might just approach that moment (in time to attain ultimate liberation) for a hundred generations to come. However, Buddhist monastic clergymen and members of the present times, despite their non-attachment to physical appearance and their family ties, (seem to) possess greater mundane desires than the secular masses. The conversation that they engage in is a fine line of distinction between the Buddhist monastic community and the secular population. These (Buddhist monks) may be likened to that person who once had tried to learn the exotic art of walking at Handan, but eventually forgot his original way of walking and finally had to crawl back home from there[55]. A sage from the previous era is known to have pointed out, thus, "Without knowing life, how can you even understand death?"[56](Buddhist monks), however, inflict pain and suffering to their bodies and minds throughout their entire life span in pursuit of the ultimate, in unperceivable joy of the otherworldly. This again is nothing but a rather limited

[55] This expression occurs in Zhuangzi, Qiushui, James Legge draws our attention to the text Daodejing ji Zhuangzi quanji, p. 437-438.
[56] The expression occurs in Lunyu, Xianjin. Please see James Legge, The Chinese Classics, vol. 1, p. 241.

perspective. They still have not acquired the expertise in the process of great elucidation.

CHAPTER TWO

MONKS, LAYMEN, AND CHINESE INTELLIGENTSIA: A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF BUDDHIST APOLOGETIC THOUGHT UPON THE INTELLECTUAL ENVIRONMENT OF PRE-MODERN CHINESE SOCIETY

2.1. Approach and Objective of the Study

The main objective of study under this chapter is to critically examine the influence exerted by Buddhist apologetic thought upon the intellectual environment of pre-modern Chinese society, with special focus upon three of its significant stakeholders, the Chinese Buddhist monastic community members, the lay devotees, and the Chinese intelligentsia, and also to simultaneously retrace the nature of the role played by each of these said societal members, in whatever capacity, upon popularizing the Buddhist faith and consolidating its position on the foreign soil of China. The present chapter also attempts to map the various responses and reactions, both in terms of pro-Buddhist and anti-Buddhist attitudes prevalent amongst the Chinese intelligentsia towards the foreign faith of Buddhism. The argument behind selecting these three particular stakeholders of Chinese society has been the fact that sixth century C.E., which happens to be the period of examination in this thesis, and also is arguably the time of the compilation of the main text under investigation here, the compilation time line of the *Hong Ming Ji*, had witnessed a rather complex intellectual environment which had grown out of the historical context of the preceding two centuries, pertaining to political chaos, social instability and intellectual flux.

2.2. Monks, Laymen, and Chinese Intelligentsia: A Study of their Complex Identity

The late fourth and early fifth century in pre-modern China witnessed the emergence of a novel social class, which was, by far, heterogeneous in its composition, consisting of a complex combination of Buddhist clergymen, scholar-officials, lay members, and intellectuals, all well-read in ancient Chinese classics, and yet, owing to their open, candid and receptive human nature, they also equally seemed to have been deeply interested in the study, comprehension, and, in some of the cases, even assimilation of Buddhist philosophical doctrines into their psychological framework, and every day religious practices. Investigation of this heterogenous social group is of significance to this thesis, owing to the fact that these very members, were, on the one hand, influenced by the rise of the first wave of Buddhist popularity within elite social circles, and, on the other, were themselves widely instrumental in propagating the Buddhist faith among the highest strata of premodern Chinese society. These very members were also the authors of many of the apologetic treatises composed around the time of the fourth to sixth century, which had later been compiled in the apologetic texts, namely *Hong Ming Ji* and *Guang Hong Ji*.

In the light of the heterogeneity of the social group under consideration, the study in this chapter identifies certain discernible characteristics to classify these members into three different categories, namely those that belonged to the social group of Buddhist clergy (monks), then of Buddhist laity, and, finally of the Chinese intelligentsia. Interestingly, the characteristic features of each of these societal members also shared overlaps and convergences in the nature of their association with Buddhism.

The Chinese monks or members of clergy that the study here have selected for investigation were particularly those, who had been trained in both the northern and southern tradition of Buddhism, with the former tradition focusing upon strict monastic practices and regulations of meditation (*dhyāna*), and the latter focusing upon the study of exegetical texts (*prajñā)* with emphasis upon the Buddhist *prajñāparamitā* philosophy, and engaging in ontological speculation. Furthermore, these members of Buddhist clergy have been termed as the "cultured" or "gentry" monks by scholars like Erik Zürcher[1] and Jinhua Chen[2], as their biographies testify that most of them had been trained in the study of Chinese Classics, both Confucian and Daoist, that they belonged to humble, yet, scholarly families of some social standing, and that they were keen to withdraw themselves from worldly affairs. Opting for the Buddhist Way of engaging with both monastic and scholastic practices, was, perhaps, then, not out of any desperation, but rather inspired closely by their intense zeal for philosophical speculation.

The lay Buddhist followers, that the study here explores, were those that were no longer representative of the illiterate or semiliterate class of non-Han societal members, dating between the first and the third centuries, presumably belonging to the family of early immigrant traders from Bactriana, Sogdiana, and the other central Asian oasis states, possessing fragmentary information about the newly transmitted Buddhist teachings, but, rather those of who were affluent residents of the southern Eastern Jin capital at Jiankang (Jianye, modern day Nanjing), dating from around the early fourth century, belonging to the elite class provincial families there, or to have been members of the ruling aristocracy of the north, who had immigrated to the south

[1]E.Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden:Brill, 2007), 6-7. Also see Jinhua Chen, *Monks and Monarchs, Kinship and Kingship: Tanqian in Sui Buddhism and Politics* (Kyoto: ScuolaItaliana di Studi sull'Asia Orientale, 2002).
[2] Jinhua Chen, 2002.

during the mass exodus after the collapse of the western Jin dynasty (265-317 C.E.) and the coming to power of the non-Han Tuoba ruling clan, dating from the late third century onwards. Both of these groups of elite upper class societal members, despite their training in Classical Chinese scholarship were also drawn towards the philosophical aspects of Buddhist teachings, and motivated by the Buddhist concept of reaping spiritual gains and receiving merits by serving the Buddhist monastic Order, and were, therefore, reportedly engaged in the propagation of the Buddhist faith by building Buddhist monasteries, offering lavish donations of land and material goods to the Buddhist monastic community, and often times assisting members of the Buddhist clergy and *ācāryas* in their task of rendering Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. The Chinese Buddhist laity of the fourth-fifth century pre-modern China were therefore the chief benefactors (*dānapati)* of Buddhism, whose material and intellectual contribution made it possible for the Buddhist monastic community to survive against the odds of the times. These Chinese Buddhist lay followers also played a crucial role in promoting Buddhism to the inner most core circles of the Chinese aristocratic rulers, as many of the lay *upāsakas* were known to have been in-service officials and ministers, bailiffs, military commanders and military generals themselves.

The third social group pertaining to those of the Chinese intelligentsia being studied here in this chapter, comprised those members of the Chinese intellectual class, who have been termed as "retired" gentlemen (*jushi* 居士) or scholar-officials by Buddhologists like Jan Nattier and Yifa[3], who due to the ongoing social unrest of the times, took the conscious decision of withdrawing themselves from the political life

[3]Jan Nattier. *A Guide to the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Translations: Texts form the Eastern Han "Dong Han" and the Three Kingdoms "San Guo"Periods* (International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology: Soka University, 2008). Also refer to Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China* (University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

and social obligations, to train their minds to the spontaneous task of assimilating the Buddhist concepts of emptiness (*śunyavāda*) with the Daoist notion of void (*xu* 虛) into creating an intellectual experience of ontological speculation. Many of these Chinese intellectuals were acclaimed painters, calligraphers, poets, lyricists, composers in their own rights, who, on account of their scholastic inclination and intellectual fervor could successfully blend their knowledge of the Chinese Classics with their fresh interpretations of the subtle Buddhist philosophical doctrines contained in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, the *Suraṅgamasamādhi Sūtra* and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*.

Further, it is to be noted that the fine line of distinction of identity between Buddhist laity, scholar-officials and Chinese intellectuals within the intellectual matrix of premodern China was often not very well demarcated. Members of the Buddhist monastic community in particular, were both highly motivated and intellectually stimulated by their continuous, unrestricted, open and candid interactions with the members of high-ranking provincial family members, formally educated scholar officials, and Daoist recluses. As has been testified by the biographies of eminent monks in the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, the intellectual milieu in sixth century C.E., especially in the central and southern part of present-day China, functioned as the chief catalytic agent, responsible for synthesizing Buddhist doctrines with indigenous Chinese Confucian teachings, and Daoist metaphysical speculation, leading to the creation of a syncretic version of Chinese Buddhism. It was owing to the close association between these monastic members of the cultured Buddhist clergy circles and members of the Chinese aristocratic families, that Buddhism succeeded in penetrating the inner most core structure of medieval China's societal structure, most

importantly the Chinese ruling house, and therefore, as a consequence, could not only manage to survive incessant attacks from adherents of the indigenous Chinese Confucian and Daoist systems of thought, but also flourish alongside the two, and later emerge as one of the three major philosophical systems of China.

The Chinese intellectual class comprised members possessing mixed reactions and responses towards the foreign doctrines of Buddhism. There were some of who were ardent supporters of the Buddhist cause, while there were also few others, who were fierce critics of Buddhism, opposing some of its features on intellectual, social, political and cultural grounds. It was because of the growing conflict of interest, and contradiction of principles between such pro-Buddhist and anti-Buddhist proponents within the Chinese intellectual milieu of the pre-modern period, that resulted in the rise of propagandistic, apologetic thought[4] in defense of the *dharma*. It was in order to win over the trust of the non-supporters of Buddhism, and to contend many of the accusations levied by them upon members of the Buddhist monastic institutions, that arguments were devised to treat those accusations as false, unfounded and misconstrued. The novel strategy undertaken here by the sympathizers of the Buddhist faith was to align Buddhist concepts with already prevalent Chinese traditional indigenous Confucian and Daoist doctrines so that the former would be easily palatable to the ethnic Chinese population.

2.2.1. Chinese Monk-Scholars and their Role in the Popularization of Buddhism in Pre-modern Chinese Society

This sub-section attempts to understand how and why quite a few of the Chinese Buddhist monks of premodern China, belonging to the period in time from the late

[4]Harumi Hirano Zieglar, *The Collection for the Clarification and Propagation of Buddhism*, Volume 1 (BukkyōDendōKyōkai America, 2015), xv-xvi. Also see Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 254-255.

fourth till the sixth century C.E., were more instrumental in promoting and popularizing Buddhism among the upper class cultured societal sphere than the others. The abovementioned issue has been approached here through an in-depth study of the biographies of some of those monk-scholars in particular, preserved in the *GSZ* and *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集, whose cosmopolitan identity prepared them to comprehend and propagate some of the fundamental concepts of Buddhist teachings through parallel comparisons with similar concepts as in the indigenous Chinese thought systems. There seem to be three broad suppositions put forth by Erik Zürcher with regard to determining the identity of the newly emerging Chinese metropolitan cultured members of the Buddhist monastic community around the Jianye (also called Jiankang, referring to modern-day Nanjing) region in central and south China from around the fourth century onwards, based upon the biographical sketches of few of these southern Chinese monks around the fourth and sixth centuries[5].

First, that these cultured Buddhist clergymen, perhaps, partially represented the family of minor gentry officials owing to the fact that they received fundamental Chinese classical education.

Second, that these metropolitan cultured elite monastic members, in some probability, despite having fulfilled all the major criteria of serving as magistrate or official at the imperial court had refrained from accepting the official position and by conscious choice had become a retired scholar-gentleman, termed, *jushi*[6], thereby engaging in the in-depth study of Buddhist doctrines, comparing and contrasting them with indigenous Chinese philosophical tenets, and deliberating and debating upon the same with members of the affluent elite class society.

[5]Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 6-8.
[6]Zürcher, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 97-98, 216-217.

Third, that arguably, members of this cultured Buddhist clergy belonged to the literate strata of society, but by no means were close to the more affluent literati intellectual class. Due to available opportunities some of them might have managed to receive a limited amount of classical Chinese education within or outside of their Buddhist monastic set up. This further might have eased out their communication with the upper-class elite members of pre-modern Chinese society.

The Buddhist biographical source, namely the *GSZ* by Huijiao exhibits a rather stereotypical format in their portrayal of the lives of eminent Buddhist monks.

First, that the lives of most of the monks depicted here portray them to have belonged to rather humble and poor families, with not much social standing. They have been shown to have humble monastic beginnings until they receive the tutelage of an affluent lay person or a distinguished Buddhist master. Monks, as per their routine depiction in the Buddhist biographical sources exhibit unusual talents of being able to memorize large collection of sutras or of being able to prophecy the future, of being able to overpower ferocious animals with spiritual benevolence or to be able to interact with the other-worldly.

Second, that the monks are portrayed as having been orphaned at a young age, a reason cited for their joining the monastic order early in their lives.

Third, that in most cases, the original clan's name or surname along with the place of their birth is also not mentioned.

Out of these fixed biographical sketches, there are a few, yet, noteworthy special cases whose family information point towards their supposed connection to gentry families or to families of magistrates or high-ranking scholar-officials. It was through

their intervention that Buddhism succeeded in penetrating the highest strata of China's pre-modern society. These monks in particular, were the representatives of the cosmopolitan, metropolitan, cultured monastic clergy, who held some fair amount of contact or communication with persons in positions of repute, some being members themselves of the gentry official class by birth, having received Chinese classical formal education, and possessing the ability and intellect to study, interpret and elucidate the teachings of the *dharma* by upholding the spirit of *qingtan* conversation among the elite class, bureaucratic lay population of the south.

2.2.1.a. Shi Sengyou (释僧祐)

The greatest contribution towards popularization of Buddhist apologetic thought during the late fifth and early sixth century is attributed to Shi Sengyou 释僧祐 (445-518 C.E.), one of the most distinguished *vinaya* masters in Chinese Buddhist history, belonging to the reign period of the Liang Dynasty (502-557 C.E.). He was the chief compiler of the text under investigation here, the *HMJ*. Although his repute is largely attributed to his phenomenal bibliographical work and colophon, the *CSZJJ*[Collection of Records on the Translation of the *Tripiṭaka*], and the fact that he has often been hailed as one of the most distinguished scholar masters of the *Sarvāstivāda* school of *vinaya* teachings, very less scholarly attention has been granted to his contribution towards initializing the emergence of apologetic thought and propagandistic literature in pre-modern Chinese society and for defending the legitimacy and credibility of the foreign doctrine of Buddhism against anti-clerical sentiments that were making rounds amid the cultured elite population.

Scholars like Erik Zürcher[7], Arthur E. Link[8], Tang Yongtong[9] have often, in their research analysis on Eastern Jin dynasty Buddhism in general, and Shi Sengyou in particular, argued that it was owing to the cosmopolitan monastic culture prevalent during the said times, that Shi Sengyou could emerge as one of the most representative figures of metropolitan, urbane cultured Chinese Buddhist monastic community. His life and monastic activities reflected a spirit of syncretism[10] that was typical of the intellectual trend of the Eastern Jin times between the fourth and sixth century C.E. The section here argues that in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of Shi Sengyou's role in the propagation of Buddhist apologetic thought with special focus upon his compiled work, *HMJ*, it is pertinent to explore in-depth, various facets of his life, monastic training and scholarship which might have shaped his approach towards the need for popularizing the *dharma*.

His active years involved the time period between 445-518 C.E. which covered part of the latter span of the *Liu Song* dynastic reign (420-479 C.E.), the brief *Qi* dynastic period (479-502 C.E.) and the early one third span of the Liang dynasty. Despite certain anomalies in his exact birth and death years, his year of birth has been marked as 446 C.E. and his date and year of death as 26 May, 518 C.E., with the latter corresponding to the seventeenth year of the *Tian Jian* reign period of Liang Wudi. Shi Sengyou's clan name was Yu. His ancestors had reportedly been residents of Xiapei in Pengcheng. The site has been identified with a location at a distance of thirty miles from present day Tongshan, a prefecture at Jiangsu in the northeast region. When a little grown up, Shi Sengyou had joined the monastery, named *Jianchusi*. The

[7]Zürcher, 2007, 66-68.
[8]Arthur E. Link, "Shig Seng-Yu and His Writings," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80, no. 1 (1960): 18.
[9]Tang Yongtong, *Han Wei Liang Jin Nan Bei Chao Fo Jiao Shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shu Ju, 1955),
[10]Link, 1960, 19.

founder of the said monastery was a certain Buddhist master, named Sun Quan who succeeded in enshrining a relic (*śarīra*) there which had been procured miraculously by Kang Senghui. The fact that the monastery was named *Jianchusi* testifies to its presence as one of the earliest monasteries in the Jiankang region.

As per the prescribed format of biographical notes on eminent Buddhist monks, Shi Sengyou[11] is depicted as a strict disciplinarian, possessing utmost devotion towards Buddhism and a deep inclination towards monastic living. His unwillingness to return to the life of a laity won the approval of his parents, and he was put under the tutelage of his master, named Seng Fan, although the identity of the latter in the absence of evidences cannot be authenticated. At the age of fourteen, his marriage was secretly planned, upon learning of which he fled to *Dingling* monastery, located at Zhongshan in present day Nanjing. Tang historical records suggest that the monastery was erected around the *Yuanjia* era (424-453 C.E.) of the *Liu Song* dynastic period. Here again, Shi Sengyou received the intellectual guidance of the Buddhist master Fa Da. Having attained an age of maturity, he received full ordination (*upasaṃpadā*). He is also believed to have received teachings from *Śramaṇa* Faying, a renowned master of Buddhist monastic disciplinary codes at Dunhuang. It is important to note that *Śramaṇa*Faying himself had already won recognition at the hands of the then ruling imperial family. It was Faying's stature as a metropolitan cleric that had seemingly motivated Shi Sengyou to seek the former's guidance. Faying is also known to have received imperial orders from ruler Xiao Wudi (454-463 C.E.) and again from Emperor Gao, the founder ruler of the State of *Qi* (r. 479 C.E.), to serve as the

[11] For biography of Shi Sengyou 释僧祐, see *Gao Seng Zhuan* 高僧傳, *T. 50, Scroll No. 11*, NTI Reader. For detailed analysis of Shi Sengyou's depiction in Huijiao's 慧皎 *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, please see Arthur F. Wright, "Biography and Hagiography, Huichiao's Life of Eminent Monks", *Silver Jubilee Volume* of the *Jinbun-kagaku-Kenkyüjo*, Kyoto University, 1954, 393-394.

Regulator of the Buddhist monastic institution (*seng zheng* 僧整) at the imperial capital and its adjoining areas. Records such as these hint towards considerable degree of imperial intervention in Buddhist monastic institutional matters in pre-modern China, right from the fifth century onwards, apart from also suggesting close associations between rulers and Buddhist clergymen. Such diverse domains of training in scholarship that Shi Sengyou had been subjected to, perhaps played a crucial role in nurturing his innovative thinking in the art and skill of syncretism.

As has been corroborated by historical evidences, Shi Sengyou belonged to a period in time which was politically, culturally and intellectually vibrant and sensitive[12]. The historical phenomenon of mass exodus of the Chinese ruling house family members and the bureaucratic elite class societal members from the previous cultural heartland in north China to the southern borderland areas around modern Nanjing (Jianye) had ushered in waves of movement of diverse elements, including people (Buddhist and Daoist monks, Confucian scholar-officials), ideas and concepts (Buddhist concepts of *śunyavāda* and *mādhyamika*), and commodities (Buddhist relics and reliquaries). Almost about one hundred and twenty-eight years prior to the birth of Shi Sengyou, around 317 C.E., the political, social and economic instability which had earlier grasped the lives of the immigrant elite class population, following the fall of the entire north of China to the newly arrived Tuoba ethnic community, had quite eased out by the time of the early years of the fifth century.

The conflicts that had risen out of the first few phases and stages of interactions between the conservative provincial families already settled around the Changjiang river basin in the south and the newly displaced emigrees from the north had long

[12]Arthur F. Wright, "Buddhism and Chinese Culture: Phases of Interaction", *Journal of Asiatic Society*," XVII, 1957, 24.

subsided, resulting in the creation of a hybrid, vibrant elite southern culture[13]. Shi Sengyou had consciously attempted to capture the intricate complex processes of sinification of Buddhism marked by the amalgamation of Buddhist concepts with Daoist and Confucian doctrines. He had also been instrumental in popularizing Buddhism among members of the elite bureaucratic class in premodern Chinese society.

Much like his monastic master, Faying, Shi Sengyou's biographical record also points towards his regular interactions with members of the imperial household. Early such instances stem from few of the following records as found in the *Xin Tang Shu* 新唐書 and the *GSZ*; The Prince of Jingling (406-494 C.E.), later recognized by his canonical name, Wen Xuan, the second son of Emperor Wu of the southern *Qi* dynasty (ruling year 483-493 C.E.) won distinction as the Head of Instruction (*Si Tu*) and Grand Master (*Tai Fu*). He was known to have made considerable contributions towards patronizing Buddhism. It was under his orders that Sengyou compiled a collection of the *Dharma* (*Fa Ji*) in sixteen fascicles and one hundred and sixteen*zhuan* (scrolls).

During the Yongming reign period (483-493 C.E.), Shi Sengyou received an imperial edict to arrive at Wu (Wuxian prefecture in Jiangsu) to categorize the five different groups of Buddhist followers-*wuzhong*, namely, *bhikṣu*, *bhikṣuṇī*, *śrāmanera*, *śrāmanerika*, *śikṣāmāya*, and to further offer an intensive lecture on the *Shi song lü* (*Sarvāstivāda Vinaya*). He was also requested to lay out the correct methods for receiving the prohibitions (*śīlasamādana*). The call for this task to have been issued

[13]Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), 44-45.

by the royal house suggests that Shi Sengyou maintained close ties with the imperial house.

It is unfortunate that the *GSZ* section on the biography of Shi Sengyou does not throw much light upon his contribution towards the creation and propagation of Buddhist apologetic thought into China's elite social circles. Only fragmentary, piecemeal information about the abovementioned role of Shi Sengyou is found scattered in the preface of *CSZJJ* and in the introductory note of *HMJ*.

The text, *HMJ*, was compiled by Shi Sengyou at the *Jianchu* temple in Yangdu during the Liang dynasty[14]. In the preface of *HMJ*, Sengyou himself claims that he had committed himself to the task of propagating and defending the cause of Buddhism. He also mentioned that he had employed the method of powerful argumentative analysis to reason out the significance of Buddhism rather than using phrases of appeasement in its defense. It was during his stay in the mountains on the occasion of medical treatment and leisure that Shi Sengyou had collected the writings of times predating his, and some refined essays by Buddhist clergy and laymen. Having gleaned through them all, Shi Sengyou collected only those writings in particular which seemed to have eliminated wrong teachings, views and concepts, misconceptions and misunderstandings about Buddhism on the one hand, and justified the propagation of the *dharma* on the other. In humble submission, he also states in the preface of *HMJ* that his knowledge of the *dharma* is limited, that is learning is unrefined and solitary, and that he is narrow minded.

[14]*Hong Ming Ji, juan di yi, bing xu, liang yangdujianchusishisengyou zhuan* 弘明集卷第一，并序，梁楊都建初寺釋僧祐傳(Preface to fascicle number 1, *Hong Ming Ji* by Shi Sengyou). Also refer to Zieglar, 2015, 1.

2.2.1.b. Baochang (寶唱)

The Liang dynasty monk, Baochang (466 C.E.-dates unknown) is accredited with the authorship of the first systematized, organized corpus of the biographies of Buddhist monks, titled *Mingseng zhuan* 名僧傳 and of Buddhist nuns, titled, *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳. But more importantly he was a representative figure of the changing times, of the transitory period which eventually gave birth to Buddhist apologetic thought and Buddhist apologetic literature, and this is of interest to the research investigation of the thesis. Furthermore, given the facts that he was an important member of the Buddhist monastic community at Jiankang, the capital city of Liang, and also one who was believed to have been favored regularly by Emperor Wu (r. 502-549 C.E.), the study identifies possibilities of Baochang having witnessed the impact of Buddhist apologetic thought upon the monastic community during the late sixth and early seventh centuries.

Baochang, the distinguished monk-scholar was subject to verbal criticism and attack by Huijiao as being representative of the then clerical elite of the capital city. Huijiao in his preface of the *GSZ* (T. 2059) criticized the worldly and sycophantic tendencies prevalent amongst the metropolitan clergy in view of their close association with Emperor Wu and in their pursuit for worldly pleasure and fame[15]. Baochang was one of those members of the newly emerging heterogeneous class who was well versed both in non-Buddhist scholarship, especially in Confucian classical education, as well as Buddhist scholarship. As has been pointed out by Zürcher, like many of the Buddhist monks of the times, Baochang was born into a relatively cultured family

[15]This episode in the life of Baochang 寶唱 has been mentioned in the preface of Huijiao's *Gaoseng zhuan* 慧皎高僧傳. This has been elaborately discussed in Wright, *Biography and Hagiography*, Kyoto University Press, 1954, 400. Also see Tom De Rauw, "Baochang: Sixth-Century Biography of Monks and Nuns?", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125, no. 2 (2005): 203.

which had fallen into hard times. Also, his Confucian scholarship was meant to earn him a possible career as a government official. But since the higher ranks of the magistracy and members of the noble families, termed as *menfa* maintained strict exclusivity, members of the less influential families, like those of Baochang could not reach the higher rungs of bureaucratic life.

Having been thus excluded from the social, political and economic life of the higher echelons of society, many such members of cultured, yet impoverished families, like Baochang chose to join the Buddhist monastic community as a means to rise higher in societal position and status. In 483 C.E., when the famous Buddhist master Sengyou was ordered to go to the Kingdom of Wu, Baochang, then just eighteen years of age, left his family to become the former's disciple. Later Daoxuan in his *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 mentions Baochang as having also realized the importance of non-Buddhist literary studies and non-Buddhist scholarship as a means to develop greater and more refined intellectual attributes, and also as means to earn respect and fame as a Buddhist monk, which was then an emerging trend in Buddhist circles[16]. Therefore, Baochang engaged himself in the study of non-Buddhist writings under the guidance of several retired gentleman-scholars[17]。

With the fall of the southern *Qi* dynasty and the political chaos resulting from it, Baochang fled to the east, where he was summoned by Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty to take up the position of Abbot at the monastery of *Xin'an* in 505 C.E. Although the *Xin'an* monastery was rather modest, the fact that he received imperial

[16]*Taisho volume* number 50, scroll number 2060 (T.50.2060: 426b20-21).
[17]John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 118-124.

appointment as abbot is noteworthy[18], suggesting the involvement of rulers in the appointment of Buddhist clergymen, something unseen of in the pre-sixth century period. Emperor Wu is also known to have ordered Baochang to oversee the compilation of a whole series of texts, which were to enlist all the *Buddhās*, *Bodhisattvas*, all other deities mentioned in Buddhist scriptures, and the proper rituals associated with them to pray for protection and benefaction. The compilation of this massive Buddhist text under imperial order, suggests, first, the use of Buddhist intellectual resources by Emperor Wu to command his supreme authority and second, his close association with Baochang. According to some scholars, the interest of Emperor Wu in Buddhism could have stemmed out of his belief that the compiled Buddhist texts could serve as manuals for wielding the enormous power of Buddhism, and could eventually help him in ruling his empire.

A later episode in the life of Baochang also adds to important observations here. Due to persistent illness in 510 C.E. Baochang quit his post as abbot of *Xin'an* monastery and vowed that should he recover from his ailment, he would search extensively so that no Buddhist scripture be lost. This decision aroused the wrath of Emperor Wu who ordered Baochang's banishment to the far south (in present day Guangdong), fearing the non-protection of his empire in the absence of Buddhist scriptures.

In the *XGSZ,* in the biography of monk Zhizang, it has been recorded that Emperor Wu tried to assert state control on the community of monks and nuns by developing a form of state law, based on Buddhist *vinaya* rules (attaching punishments from

[18]Tom De Rauw is of the opinion that the imperial appointment of Buddhist abbotship of the Xin'an monastery being handed over to Baochang by Emperor Wu suggests that the Xin'an monastery must have been a state-sponsored monastery during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty. This, then, not only testifies to the penetration of Buddhism into the innermost influential core circles of pre-modern Chinese society, but also corroborates the fact that Buddhist monastic institutions were already coming under imperial control and supervision. For this, please refer to Tom De Rauw, "Baochang: Sixth-Century Biography of Monks and Nuns", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125, no. 2 (2005): 206.

secular law to the transgressions described in the *vinaya*, and by pronouncing himself as the "Great White-Clad Rectifier of Monks" (*baiyi sengzheng* 白衣僧正)[19]. Zhizang and other monks of the times were however, highly critical of the monarch's interference in monastic matters which forced the latter to withdraw his decision.

It is also said that after Baochang handed over a rough draft of the compilation of the Buddhist texts, Emperor Wu lifted the order of his exile in 514 C.E. Baochang once again returned to the capital of the Liang dynasty and completed the final revised version of *Mingseng zhuan*. Soon after, Baochang was entrusted with the charge of the *Hualin yuan baoyunjinzang* 華林園寶雲經藏, the personal library of emperor Wu, where he stored his collection of Buddhist scriptures. Owing to lack of information about any further literary activities on the part of Baochang post 518 C.E, it has been presumed that he must have died around that period.

Interesting observations emerge from the above recorded facts, first, that of state control over the individual and institutional lives of Buddhist clergy and monastics, second, that of the involvement of Buddhist clergymen in court politics and worldly matters, and third, of the wide spread dissemination of Buddhist teachings and use of Buddhist scriptures in protecting and legitimizing the political authority of the state over the people.

[19]The connotation of the 'white clothed rectifier of monks' bears great significance. In the indigenous Chinese context, the colour white when worn would ideally indicate a future prophesied ruler. There is a possibility that Emperor Wu was planning to use this strategy of calling himself the 'great white-clad rectifier of monks' in order to legitimize and popularize his ruler. In Buddhist context, white clothes would be worn by the Buddhist laity population. Also refer to Hubert Seiwert, *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 155-157.

2.2.1.c. Bo Yuan (帛遠)

Bo Yuan's biography preserved in the *CSZJJ* and in the *GSZ* corroborate the fact that he exhibited the features and tendencies that were typical of the Buddhist cultured clergy of pre-modern China[20]. He was a member of a cultured family of social standing where his father, Wan Weida was a well-read erudite scholar, renowned for his scholarship in Classical Chinese Studies and in Confucian scholarship in particular. Bo Yuan's father was one of those retired gentlemen-scholars (*jushi*), who had refused to accept official positions even at the request of the provincial ruling aristocracy.

The role that Bo Yuan had played in the propagation of the *dharma* and its dissemination into the inner most circles of the elite population was quite distinct. He is recorded to have founded a *vihāra* (*jingshe*) where he would preach and deliver to both his monastic followers and lay adherents. Although, Bo Yuan's monastic lineage is difficult to ascertain in the absence of concrete evidences, Zürcher is of the opinion that since the *vihāra* Bo Yuan had established was at close proximity to distinguished Buddhist monk-scholar and translator Dharmaraksa's Centre of Buddhist Studies, and also given the fact that Bo Yuan reportedly wrote a commentary on the *Śuraṅgamasamādhi Sūtra*（*Shoulengyan Sanmei Jing* 首楞嚴三昧經）that was originally rendered into Chinese by Dharmaraksa, that Bo Yuan could be identified as a cultured monk, who was not only engaged in monastic practices, but, also, equally inclined towards scholastic engagements that was characteristic of the southern style gentry Buddhism, the latter having been a direct product of the popularization of Buddhist apologetic thought.

[20]The biography of Bo Yuan 帛遠 is preserved in the Chinese Buddhist Catalogue entitled, *Chu san zang jiji* 出三藏記集, Taisho Volume Number55, *Sūtra* Number 2145 and the Chinese Buddhist Biographical source, entitled *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 Taisho Volume Number 50, *Sūtra* Number 2059.

Bo Yuan was instrumental in engaging in comparative study of ontological issues as reflected in Buddhist scriptures, Daoist Classics and Confucian texts, and he did so with members of the Chinese literati dwelling in the southern part of the Changjiang River Basin during the Eastern Jin dynasty who themselves were originally renowned scholars, belonging to the elite class provincial ruling houses.

The other significant role played by Bo Yuan was echoed in matters of his association with members of the imperial house, namely with King of Hejian and Prime Minister Sima Yong. Biographical records of Bo Yuan suggest that apart from Prime Minister, Sima Yong, other distinguished cultured literati belonging to the highest echelons of the ruling aristocracy would regularly hold discussions with him on philosophical issues on the concepts of *Dao* and *De*. An excerpt from the *Laozi huahujing* 老子化虎經[21]also mention that on several occasions, Bo Yuan would successfully defeat the Daoist Master Wang Fu while debating on the supremacy of Buddhism over Daoism. In order to defy the claims of superiority of Buddhism by Bo Yuan that Wang Fu had authored the abovementioned work.

2.2.1.d. Shi Daobao (释道寶)

The GSZ records the biography of one of the most eminent cultured Buddhist monk-scholars of pre-modern China, Shi Daobao[22] who was the younger brother of the ruler Wang Dao, the latter having been recognized as one of the chief patrons of Buddhism and the Buddhist monastic community at the southern capital at Jiankang. His

[21] The reference to the original source text, *laozi huahujing* 老子化胡經 could not be traced. The statement here depends upon the information shared by Erik Zürcher. See E. Zürcher, Brill, 2007, 77, 299.

[22]The biography of Shi Daobao 释道寶 is preserved in the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, Taisho Volume Number 50, *Sūtra* Number 2059. The biography of Shi Daobao finds place in the *GSZ* owing to the fact that Shi Daobao was the younger brother of ruler Wang Dao 王導 which further testifies to the fact that many of the cultured clergymen of the late fourth and early fifth century belonged to affluent and semi-affluent gentry families.

biographical note underscores some unique facets of his personality, namely his enlightened mind at a tender age and his unfettered conviction towards an ascetic life. On the day of his ordination, Shi Daobao's biography states that he purified himself by bathing in scented water and then just prior to accepting his tonsure, he composed a *gāthā* quite spontaneously, which read as follows, "Who knows how a spring which is destined to travel a number of miles, can be formed from the overflowing of water from a single cup?"

Shi Daobao was again representative of the southern gentry cultured monk who represented a perfect balance between strict asceticism and monastic discipline on the one hand, and profound scholastic engagement, accompanied by intense deliberation and ontological speculation on the other. Alongside, Shi Daobao was also known for his subtle artistic talents.

2.2.1.e. Shi Huiyuan (释慧遠)

Shi Huiyuan (334-416 C.E.) was a resident of the Loufan commandery of Yanmen. His surname was Jia. The fact that Shi Huiyuan was one of the most typical representatives of the cosmopolitan cultured Buddhist clergy is explained by the fact that he was attuned to receiving diverse forms of education, both Chinese Classical education as well as Buddhist philosophical discourses, amalgamated with the intense practice of severe monastic asceticism[23]. He belonged to a family of well-read scholars. His biography mentions Shi Huiyuan to have travelled with his maternal uncle to Luoyang and to Xuchang to study at the Academy at the age of thirteen. There he was trained in the study of the Six Classics and in the study of the Daoist

[23] Walter Liebenthal, "Shih-Huiyüan's Buddhism as Set Forth in His Writings", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 70, no. 7 (1950), 243-259.

scriptures (*Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*). This marked his initial training in Classical Chinese scholarship.

Huiyuan's unorthodox and receptive nature is expressed through the recorded fact in his biography that at the age of twenty-one he was also determined to live and learn from Master Fan Xuan Zi, who was then one of the most renowned of experts in the domain of Confucian rites and was a severe critic of *Zhuangzi* and *Laozi*, dwelling at Jiaodong. But due to the turbulent times following the death of Shi Hu, the ruler in 349 C.E. and the blockade of roads to the south, Shi Huiyuan had to abort his former plans.

By that time, Shi Dao'an had gained popularity as a *Dharma* and *Vinaya* Master, and his monastic establishment amidst the *Taihang* mountain at Heng Shan was teamed with disciples being trained in the *Prajñāpāramitā* discourse. Shi Huiyuan on account of his intellectual insight and brilliance of psychological ability was able to delve deep into the philosophical doctrine of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (Bore boluo mi duo jing 般若波罗蜜多經 and eventually emerged as an expert in its elucidation.

Like other Buddhist monks depicted in the *GSZ*, Shi Huiyuan and his brother Huichi were also portrayed as belonging to a humble family with limited resources. However, owing to the uprightness of their personal character and their intellectual zeal, both Huiyuan and Huichi became distinguished experts in the field of Buddhist ontology as expressed through *prajñā* discourse. His modest nature is known to have deeply moved his own Buddhist Master Shi Dao'an, as much as his fellow monks.

As per Shi Huiyuan's biographical note preserved in the *GSZ*[24], it is reported that following the political siege of Xiangyang around the fourth century (373 C.E.) by the *Qin* military general Fu Pi, the Buddhist monastic community under the tutelage of Shi Dao'an was forced to disperse. Shi Dao'an allowed his Buddhist disciples to travel either north or south, based upon their individual choices. Soon after, Shi Huiyuan immigrated to the south. Although, initially his southward sojourn brought him to the *Shangming* monastery and later, further south to Xunyang (identified as modern Jiujiang in northern Jiangxi province), the tranquil and serene natural environment around the *Lushan* site seemed to have captivated his mind. This monastic settlement around the *Lushan* site retreat proved to be a decisive moment in the life of Shi Huiyuan and also in the history of early Chinese Buddhism.

It was at this crucial juncture of his monastic journey that commenced from the centre at *Lushan*, that Shi Huiyuan began to receive support from members of the ruling aristocracy, as well as from the Chinese upper class elite literati. On account of a formal plea put forth by his former monk companion, a certain Huiyong, Shi Huiyuan received patronage from the then ruling governor of Jiangzhou, by the name of Huan Yi. Governor Huan Yi was immensely supportive of the Buddhist cause and made lavish donations to help build ceremonial halls and residential quarters for members of the Buddhist monastic fraternity on the eastern side of *Lushan*. This, then later, came to be known by the name of *Donglin Si* (Eastern Grove).

While residing and serving at the *Donglin Si*, Shi Huiyuan's association with the affluent elite members of premodern Chinese society during the fourth century has been attested in the *GSZ*. A section from the aforementioned Buddhist biography on

[24] The detailed biography of Shi Huiyuan 释慧遠 is preserved in the Buddhist biographical literature, entitled, *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (Biographies of Eminent Monks)

Shi Huiyuan mentions specific names of some of those elite literati who resided along with Shi Huiyuan at his *Lushan* Buddhist retreat, and most of whom were known for their 'hermit-like' lifestyle. Some of these enlisted names are as follows; Zhou Xuzhi, a resident of Yanmen of the age of twenty-five, Zong Bing from Nanyang of the age of twenty-seven, and Lei Cizong from Yuzhang, aged sixteen. A certain lay member, Liu Yimin from Pengcheng, and another named Bi Yingzhi from Xincai were also mentioned here. Most of these members from distinguished families were Confucian scholars, having adept knowledge in the interpretation of the Five Classics as well as in the metaphysical texts of *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, and other apocrypha. Disciples of Shi Huiyuan at *Lushan* and *Donglin Si* included both monastic disciples as well as Chinese laity.

Buddhism at *Lushan* under the able administration of its founder figure, *Tripiṭaka* Master Shi Huiyuan witnessed few very significant new trends and emerging tendencies in the history of early Buddhism, ever since the time of its first dissemination into the foreign socio-cultural space of China. The first of these trends was marked by the emergence of the *Amitābha* Buddha cult amidst the Buddhist followers of pre-modern China, especially in the southern Buddhist tradition, the second, was the initiation of the Pure Land Buddhist sect, and the third, was the discernible rise for the first time of the trend of devotionalism. Each of these above-mentioned trends marked a significant departure from the earlier prevalent monastic *dhyāna* practices which were limited to a small congregation of Buddhist monastic members. The abovementioned trends for the first time involved the active engagement of Buddhist lay followers in large numbers.

The fact that the *Amitābha* Buddha cult was first initiated by Shi Huiyuan amongst his immediate Buddhist followers, both laity and clergymen, has been attested both in the Chinese Buddhist catalogue, the *CSZJJ* as well as in the Chinese Buddhist biographical literature of the *GSZ*. In each of these primary source documents, it has been mentioned that when the constellation *Sheti* was in full appearance, in the same year, on the first day of the seventh month of autumn (*wuchen*), which corresponded to the twenty-eighth day of the cyclical sign of *yiwei*, Dharma Master Shi Huiyuan invited a total of one hundred and twenty-three Buddhist followers who were all upper-class elite gentlemen-scholars with their deep inclination towards the *dharma*. They all assembled in front of an image of *Amitābha* Buddha where offerings of incense and scented flowers were made to the image after circumambulation. Finally with Shi Huiyuan leading the congregation, all assembled Buddhist followers took vows in unison to be reborn after their death at the Western Paradise (*sukhāvati*), which was home to the Buddha *Amitābha* (The Buddha of Infinite Light). The abovementioned time line has been identified by scholars as 11 September, 402 C.E. The concept related to the cult of *Amitābha* was first transmitted to the intellectual realm of Huiyuan's *Lushan* retreat through some of the early Chinese translated versions of the *Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra* 佛說無量壽經. On account of this *sūtra* and its mindful chanting, the devotees of *Amitābha* Buddha would be able to behold his sight, just at the time of their death and after the vision, the devotees would have the spiritual bliss of being born in the land of *Sukhāvati*.

Shi Huiyuan is credited with the introduction of the different kinds of mental concentration practices, which he innovated through his analytical methods of amalgamation of *xuanxue* terms with the concept of *aṇusmṛti* (remembering, deep thinking) of Buddha *Amitābha* which had already been discussed and deliberated

upon in the *Banzhousanmeijing*. Shi Huiyuan had been the first Buddhist Master to have trained his group of disciples to be able to behold the sight of Buddha *Amitābha* in front of his eyes through deep thinking and concentrated breathing, a practice that was hitherto unknown. It was believed that by virtue of the immense grace and majesty (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the Buddha, and also by virtue of the merit accumulated through *karman*, the visualization of *Amitābha* Buddha would be possible. In fact, it was Shi Huiyuan who had excelled in the practice and propagation of the method of samadhi, as has been corroborated in the Preface to the anthology of poems authored by him, under the title, *Buddhāṇusmṛti-samādhi*, and also through his in-depth knowledge of the *Pratyutpannasamādhisūtra*.

Shi Huiyuan is also known for his pioneering efforts in organizing the White Lotus Society (*bailian she*) along with his dedicated Buddhist devotees on Mount *Lushan* and later in the creation of the Pure Land Sect of Buddhism. This practice of mindful meditation of Buddha in the forthcoming century strongly influenced the Buddhist meditation practices of Tiantai Buddhism under the aegis of patriarch Zhiyi (538-597 C.E.).

Again, the practice of placing an image or an icon, to worship the same with flowers and incense, to pay obeisance to the image by circumambulating and chanting or even by mindful meditating on visualizing the icon, all of this introduced a trend in devotionalism, an aspect which was earlier not quite visible in the social life of the Chinese commoners and householders of premodern China under the impact of indigenous Chinese religious practices. Although holding divination ceremonies, ancestor worship rituals, fasting sessions, and even vegetarian feasts were already in practice among the Chinese masses, including semiliterate and literate population, the

concept of offering prayers to an image or icon of the Buddha or Bodhisattva as a community of Buddhist adherents was first introduced by the aforementioned oath taking ceremony at Mount *Lushan* in front of the image of *Amitābha* Buddha. The thesis identifies this ceremony as the beginning of relic veneration practices that emerged around the early seventh century in China and continued to flourish thereafter.

Shi Huiyuan's most significant contribution however remains to be his systematized, analytical, well framed arguments, elucidating the true meaning of Buddhist philosophical concepts and doctrines, of monastic practices, and of Buddhist institutional codes of conduct, in defence of the *dharma* against constantly rising waves of criticism and opposition from sections of the Chinese intelligentsia, who harboured anti-Buddhist and anti-clerical sentiments.

The apologetic treatises composed by Shi Huiyuan that have been compiled in the *Hong Ming Ji*[25]clearly demonstrate his easy, flexible, and mindful ability to navigate through the philosophical doctrines of the *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, Confucian Classics and the Buddhist *prajñā* doctrine alike, by recognizing the specific points of convergence and commonality in these teachings. By employing the method of analogy, Shi Huiyuan succeeded in creating receptivity amongst the early adherents to Buddhism or even among the opponents of Buddhism. In fact, it is reported that Shi Daoan had allowed only Shi Huiyuan to use this special technique to use Daoist teachings and other secular Chinese Classical teachings to explain Buddhist doctrinal concepts. His regular interactions with members of the ruling aristocracy through a series of letters

[25]All detailed apologetic treatises composed by Shi Huiyuan have been compiled in the primary source text of investigation, *Hong Ming Ji* 弘明集, Taisho volume number 52, *sutra* number 2102.

of correspondence proved successful in being able to convince them to abandon their ideas of political persecution and eventually seek refuge in the *dharma*.

The following are few of those letters of eminence which were compiled in the *HMJ* and were exchanged between Shi Huiyuan and some of the most influential rulers of the times. These letters, with strong apologetic overtone were authored by Shi Huiyuan to specifically address issues if concern and refute serious allegations which were then being constantly levied against the Buddhist monastic community.

One of the most significant of these letters is titled, *Shamen bujing wang zhe lun; Yuan Fashi* (Discourse by Dharma Master Shi Huiyuan as to why *śramaṇas* cannot pay obeisance by bowing before the ruler) complied under Fascicle Five in *HMJ* (*Hong Ming Ji zhuan di wu*)[26]. The fact that Buddhist monastic members or *śramaṇas* were not obliged to pay respect to the sovereign by bowing before him, much in contradiction to the customary practice prevalent in the Land of the Han since times immemorial, stirred intense anti-clerical sentiments amidst the Chinese ruling bureaucracy. There was severe opposition from Chief Defence General and later ruler-dictator Huan Xuan and other members of the ruling aristocracy, namely General In-charge of Chariot and Horse, Yu Bing who regarded this as a highly disrespectful attitude of the Buddhist clergy members towards the Son of Heaven, wherein the latter was eventually, as per the *Dao De Jing*, to be treated at par with the Three Elements of the Heaven, Earth and Way. A letter in this regard was thereby issued by Defence General Huan Xuan in consultation with eight other Executives insisting upon the need for all subjects under the jurisdiction of the sovereign,

[26]弘明集卷第五 *Hong Ming Ji juan di wu*，沙門不敬王者論遠法師 *shamen bujing wang zhe lun*, T.52, 2102.

including both secular members as well as Chinese Buddhist monastic clergymen to pay obeisance to the ruler by bowing before him.

In response to the abovementioned letter portraying anti-clerical sentiments expressed by the ruling house, Shi Huiyuan prepared the following arguments to justify the Buddhist practice of not making it obligatory for Buddhist monks to bow before the ruler. With regard to the Chinese Buddhist laity, Shi Huiyuan underscored the fact that, owing to their foundations in Confucian ethics, all Chinese lay followers possessed the virtues of propriety and honor their social ties and family bonds, while the Buddhist teaching of retribution and reward made them reverential both towards their parents and their sovereign. Therefore, just as other subjects of the Land of Han, all Buddhist laity were obliged to express their reverence to the ruler in accordance with the rites of the land. He went further to emphasize upon the fact that even without the consent of one's parents and sovereign, no individual could accept the tonsure, thereby once again refuting the accusation that Chinese Buddhist followers were disrespectful towards their ruler.

With regard to Buddhist *śramaṇas* not abiding by the prevalent rites of propriety by bowing to the ruler, Shi Huiyuan argued that Buddhist monastic members were not of this mundane world, and therefore their everyday ascetic practices were not in alignment with the daily social practices of those of the regular householders. Deeply influenced by the Buddhist teaching of not getting attached to the cycle of life or to the principle of transmutation between birth and death, Shi Huiyuan opined that the Buddhist *śramaṇas* practiced as to how to prevent the course of affliction which was seen as the source of all suffering. Under these circumstances, they, therefore, did not regard the services of the sovereign provided for the welfare of the masses as any

privilege for them. Since Buddhist monks renounced social ties with the mundane world in their spiritual quest, they also did not feel compelled by any obligation to bow before the ruler. They however, did not sincerely intend to be impudent towards their sovereign by any means.

With regard to another such pressing accusation put forth by a certain Buddhist critic on the *śramaṇa's* robe being worn with a bare right shoulder, Shi Huiyuan provided his argumentative analysis about the same. In another apologetic treatise compiled in the *HMJ*, authored by Shi Huiyuan, tilted, *Shamen tanfu lun* (*Discourse on the Sramana's Robe Worn with a Bare Shoulder*), he emphasized upon the fact that the *śramaṇa's* robe (*kāsāya*)[27] did not violate the proper code of dressing as prescribed in the Ancient Classics. However, every set of decorum from the times of the ancient three rulers, King Yu (Xia), King Tang (Yin) and King Wu (Zhou) had been practiced in continuum, even in later generations. Since the Middle Kingdom residents were unaware of the cultural practices of distant lands, they were averse to the Buddhist code of monastic dressing. Shi Huiyuan in his apologetic treatise then systematically explained the origin of the Buddhist monastic dress code to the opponent, elucidating the fact that this particular Indian etiquette of dressing, with an uncovered bare right shoulder depicted paying obeisance to the glorious ones or to the gods, and was thus regarded as the ultimate form of unadornment even in the *Book of Rites*. He finally concluded saying that since the written records on these were not much in circulation, therefore there were possible apprehensions arising amidst the critics.

[27]弘明集卷第五 *Hong Ming Ji juan di wu*, 沙門袒腹論 *Shamen tan fu lun*, Taisho volume number 52, *sūtra* number 2102.

2.2.2. Sixth Century Chinese Laity, Donors, and Lay Practitioners

Most of the sources, both secular and religious, preserved in the Chinese dynastic annals and Buddhist biographical literature remain rather silent about the nature of the earliest Buddhist lay community in China, or about the series of complex processes that pre-modern Chinese society had to undergo in order to create and sustain such Buddhist lay communities, or even about the nature of interaction that might have existed among the Chinese Buddhist laity and the Chinese Buddhist monastic Order.

So long as Buddhism was transmitted into the social circles of the illiterate and semiliterate population residing in the outer fringes of Chinese society as a foreign doctrine, neither Chinese official dynastic historical records, nor Buddhist bibliographies or biographies mentioned anything about the Buddhist laity. Connections between the newly emerging Buddhist monastic community and the lay followers from among the non-Han immigrant families, even if they did exist at a rudimentary level, did not compel the Chinese historiographers, nor the Buddhist biographers to put them into record.

But from the fourth century onwards, the scenario seems to be changing in matters of regular association between the Chinese Buddhist laity and the monastic communities. The lay Buddhist community, therefore, begin to find mention also in the historical annals and the Buddhist corpus from this time onwards. Once Buddhism began to be approached with curiosity and studied intensely by the affluent elite class members of provincial families and gentry officials of southern China, in line with *xuanxue* speculations, *qingtan* conversations and *mingjiao* deliberations, Buddhist catalogues like the *CSZJJ*, Buddhist biographies like the *GSZ* and the *MSZ*, and apologetic treatises like the *HMJ* and the *GHMJ* began to portray the lives and deeds of pre-

modern China's lay Buddhist practitioners. They also put to record the nature and depth of connectivity that these Chinese Buddhist laity shared with the Chinese Buddhist clergy.

Apart from the extant Buddhist sources, secular documents such as Pei Songzhi's commentary to the *San guozhi* 三國志[28]or sections of *Shi shuoxinyu* 世說新語 portray Chinese aristocrats as engaging in Buddhist lay practices and rituals in close association with the Buddhist monastic organization from only the early fourth century onwards and not prior to that. Fragments from other sources which was later incorporated into the eleventh century treatise, titled *Lushan* 廬山記(*Record of Lushan*) by Chen Shunyu[29] have also depicted the contribution of lay members who were residing in the Buddhist retreat of Mount *Lushan* under the tutelage of the distinguished Buddhist Master, Shi Huiyuan.

In these sources, most of the lay devotees are seen to take up the vows of abiding by the Five Precepts prescribed for them, that included refraining from killing, stealing, unchaste activities, telling lies, consuming alcohol or intoxicants, along with additional three more vows of offering prayers by burning incense sticks, listening to Buddhist sermons, and conversing with Buddhist monks during every fortnightly fasting ceremony. Moreover, their communication with members of the Buddhist monastic Order became more consistent and profound. These Chinese Buddhist laity also eventually emerged as some of the most influential donors of their times, who patronized not only the foreign faith of Buddhism but also the activities of the Buddhist *saṅgha*. This growing intimate bond between the Chinese Buddhist laity and

[28]*San guozhi* 三國志 in 四部備要 *Si bubeiyao*, *Shishuoxinyu* 世說新語 by 劉義慶 Liu Yiqing with commentary by Liu Jun 劉峻 in 四部叢刊 *Si bucongkan*

[29]*Lushan ji* 廬山記 (*Record of Lushan*), 陳舜俞 Chen Shunyu, Taisho volume number 51, *sūtra* number 2095.

the Chinese Buddhist clergy from the fourth century onwards, helped Buddhism consolidate its position despite waves of rising opposition and criticism. Many of the Buddhist lay followers played important role in furnishing arguments in favour of Buddhism, most of which were reflected in the treatises on Buddhist apologetic and propagandistic thought.

With regard to the particular status or affiliation of the lay devotees, the study here makes the following observations based upon critical investigation of Chinese Buddhist catalogues and bibliographical literature as primary source documents; first, that most of the Chinese lay devotees were members of economically affluent, elite families of provincial ministers, officers or even rulers, who either themselves were engaged in state politics and governance, or were close to such high ranking ministers and members of the ruling house, second, that most of them had received formal education in Chinese Classics and therefore, were intellectually adept and trained in critical analysis and gnostic speculation, as well as in the identification of various convergences and parallels that they could locate between various Buddhist philosophical doctrines and the Daoist or Confucian approaches to such philosophical issues, and third, that they were all almost deeply inclined towards the ritualistic practices related to the religious aspect of Buddhism, with focus upon ideas such as merit making. The one common feature for all of them was that while they were actively engaged in promoting and popularizing Buddhism among members of different strata of Chinese society, they all did so while remaining at home (*zai jia*) and not by renouncing family ties.

2.2.2.a. Mouzi (牟子)

The thesis here identifies Mouzi as an eminent intellectual personage of pre-modern China who fulfilled the criteria of being acknowledged both as a Buddhist laity as well as a member of the elite class Chinese scholar-official family. His apologetic treatise, titled, *Mouzi lihuo lun* (*Mouzi's Discourse on the Elucidation of the Dharma in order to Eradicate All Doubts and Delusions*)[30], the first Fascicle of *HMJ* has been regarded as one of the most representative of all polemic treatises compiled in the *HMJ*. In the *Preface* that accompanies the said fascicle, it is recorded that Mouzi had been a Chinese scholar-official, perhaps engaged in official services at the Cangwu Prefecture in the southern Province of Jiaozhou. The Preface further portrays Mouzi as having immigrated to Jiaozhi, which has been identified as present-day Vietnam at an early age along with his mother, and to have returned to Cangwu Prefecture in the south around the age of twenty-six and gotten married. The thesis argues that the abovementioned itinerary of Mouzi is suggestive of existing networks of connection between the southern prefectures of China around the rule of the Eastern Jin dynasty and the southeast Asian polities and socio-cultural spaces via maritime routes, making Jiaozhou, thus, a vibrant cosmopolitan cultural centre. This also finds attestation in the same *Preface* which highlights Jiaozhou as a cultural cauldron where the residing population was as diverse in their ideological inclinations, as much as were their professions and arena of engagement. Jiaozhou was a safe haven for immigrant refugees flocking in from the north, owing to the social stability and peaceful atmosphere there. The *Preface* records Mouzi of having been confronted by people of heterodox views at Jiaozhou, especially those of who practiced the art of the immortals and refrained from consuming even a single grain in order to attain

[30]Mouzi's brief life sketch is preserved in the 弘明集卷第一，牟子理惑論-云蒼梧太守牟子博傳 *Hong Ming Ji* Taisho volume number 52, *sūtra* number 2102, fascicle number 1.

immortality, referring mostly to Daoist practitioners. Having been trained in the study of Chinese Classics, Mouzi arguably refuted their claims, by referring to the Five Classics.

Mouzi's biographical sketch in the *Preface* further outlined various official positions that were offered to him at various points in time, first by the Governor of Cangwu Prefecture, and, later, by the regional governor of Jingzhou, on account of his in-depth knowledge and expertise in Classical Chinese scholarship, both of the official appointments, he seemingly declined, owing to his loss of interest in political affairs and state governance, following the political chaos of the times. Later, his intellectual fervor and ardent love for learning brought him closer to the study of the Buddhist Path as well as the teachings of the Daoist Classic, *Daodejing*. This was the point in time when the Chinese common masses and other scholar officials doubted his intentions and misunderstood his syncretic skills for heterodoxy. Mouzi then on began to spend most of his time with ink and brush and ended up composing the particular apologetic treatise, *Mouzi Lihuo Lun*, with the intention of explaining the various facets of Buddhist doctrinal teachings in order to eradicate all doubts and delusions that were being raised by the non-followers of Buddhism, both from the Confucian scholar-gentry officials as well as from Daoist practitioners.

Despite having been considered one of the most popular of all apologetic writings, both the person Mouzi and his acclaimed work, *Mouzi Lihuo Lun* had been at the centre of controversy. While some modern scholars like Hu Yinglin, Liang Qichao, Tokiwa Daijo expressed serious reservations regarding the authenticity of the text, and even refuted the actual existence of a person, called Mouzi, if at all, there were numerous other scholars like Sun Yirang, Yu Jiaxi, Hu Shi and Tang Yontong who

authenticated their existence and relevance. That which further complicates the issue of authenticity is the fact that each of the scholars put forth their conflicting viewpoints based upon authentic documentary evidence. Based upon the examination of Buddhist and secular sources, and also cross-examination of the arguments placed by the abovementioned scholars, the thesis argues that Mouzi, the lay follower of Buddhism in all probability belonged to the educated, yet humble gentry-scholar-official class with some amount of social standing, and must have lived between the late third and early fourth century. His authored treatise, *Mouzi Lihuo Lun* must have also been composed around the early fourth century but compiled later by Shi Sengyou around the sixth century.

As the narration of the treatise proceeds, the supposed opponent questions Mouzi's intention behind employing the teachings of *wuwei* (Daoism) and those of the Ancient Sages (Confucianism) in elucidating the Buddhist doctrinal philosophy, despite the latter being the thought system of the western barbarians. In response, Mouzi as one the chief intellectual figures of the time, justifies his stand by underscoring the commonality in the teachings of the ancient wisdom of the sages as preserved in the Five Classics (Confucianism) and the practice of *wuwei* as propounded in the *Daodejing* (Daoism), with the profound Buddhist philosophical doctrines. In defiance of the allegations that the opponent raised against various Buddhist practices, namely using of traditional medicine and acupuncture contrary to the Daoist practice of eternal healing and longevity, or prohibiting the use of intoxicant drinks and meat, which is otherwise accepted as an integral part of regular Daoist practice, Mouzi is once again seen using his syncretic intellectual skill of uniting the central theme of Daoist philosophy of the Absolute Non-Being (*wuwei*) with the Buddhist central *Mahāyānamādhyamika* concept of Absolute Emptiness (*śunyavāda*), thereupon

emphasizing upon the transient nature of all matter and phenomenon. This, however, he did by employing the strategy of using rather simplistic explanations in order to make the concepts more receptive for the common masses who were new to the domain of Buddhist Studies. The Chinese language used for composing the *Mouzi Lihuo Lun* was archaic and Classical, in contrast to the otherwise use of vernacular or semi-classical Chinese in authoring the other apologetic treatises of the *HMJ*, testifying to Mouzi's acclaimed expertise in Chinese Classics and secular literature.

2.2.2.b. Zong Bing (宗炳)

The first of the most influential Buddhist lay followers in the history of Buddhism in pre-modern China, living between the late fourth and early fifth century was Zong Bing. He was an eminent painter, calligrapher, musician, and also one of the authors of the apologetic treatise, titled, *Ming fo Lun*, which was compiled in Fascicle Two of the sixth century Buddhist apologetic text, the *HMJ*[31].

Zong Bing's name also stands out as one of the most trusted and devoted lay followers of the *Dharma* and *Vinaya* Master Shi Huiyuan. Although the extant biography of Zong Bing in the *GSZ*, does not indicate with clarity the duration of Zong Bing's stay at Mount Lu Shan under the guidance of the distinguished Buddhist scholar-monk, Shi Huiyuan, but, it does attest the fact that Zong Bing, having declined all official positions, had stayed on with Master Huiyuan at the *Lushan* Buddhist retreat as one of his closest lay disciples. Information on Zong Bing's nature of association with Shi Huiyuan might be gleaned from the biographical sketch of Master Huiyuan as has been preserved in the *GSZ*[32]. In the said biography on Shi

[31]弘明集卷第二，明佛論晉宗炳 *Hong Ming Ji Fascicle 2, Ming fo Lun*, T.52,2102.
[32]高僧傳释慧遠 *Gaoseng zhuan* Shi Huiyuan's biography. Also refer to *Song Shu* 宋書 93.2b, and *Nan Shi* 南史 75.3b.

Huiyuan, there is mention of a certain Xie Lingyun from Chengyun who is known to have been rather arrogant and rude in his demeanour. But, despite this natural disposition of his, Xie Lingyun has been portrayed as having been deeply reverential towards Master Shi Huiyuan. The excerpt on Xie Lingyun also mentions him witnessing master Shi Huiyuan expounding the meaning of the "*Canon of Mourning Garments*", while his obedient disciples, Lei Cizong and Zong Bing both carried the writing scrolls, hanging from their hands, where they meticulously noted down the explanations and commentaries put forth by Shi Huiyuan. The study here argues that Zong Bing, therefore was representative of that distinct group of Chinese intellectuals, who by virtue of their training in Classical Chinese education were deemed fit to serve in some of the highest ministerial ranks in the bureaucracy, and yet, owing to their deep inclination towards Buddhist philosophy and its system of thought, vowed to serve the Buddhist monastic community, and contribute with utmost sincerity towards propagating the cause of the *dharma*.

Such profound was Zong Bing's commitment to the cause of Buddhism, that he decided to renounce worldly ties, accepted the five vows of the Chinese Buddhist laity, and devoted himself to the services of the Buddhist monastic retreat at Mount Lushan. Upon being repeatedly insisted to leave the *Lushan* retreat by his brother, Zong Bing returned to Jiangling, but, yet, continued to engage closely with the Buddhist monastic community there. With advancement in age and maturity in his erudite scholarship on Buddhist philosophical doctrines, especially on the concept of *dharmakāyā*, lay devotee Zong Bing skilfully crafted his apologetic strategy and defence mechanism in order to elucidate the true teachings of the *dharma* in order to remove the misconceptions that had arisen with regard to the imported faith of Buddhism.

Zong Bing ranked among the leading propagators of Buddhist apologetic thought. As is seen from the content and form of his self-authored apologetic treatise, *Ming Fo Lun*, compiled in Fascicle Two of *HMJ*, the study here argues that Zong Bing's literary skill and argumentative analysis were profound, as much as, was his commitment towards clarifying the endless doubts that were being raised against various facets of Buddhism by the anti-Buddhist segment of the Chinese intelligentsia.

In the *Ming Fo Lun*, Zong Bing is seen to be arguing that Buddhist philosophy was too subtle a system of thought for the people of the Middle Kingdom to grasp, despite their acquaintance with the Confucian principles of righteousness and uprightness. Underscoring the fact that the principal teachings of the Buddhist *mādhyamika* doctrine on emptiness (*śunyavāda*) had parallels in the Daoist concept of void (*xu*), Zong Bing attempted to discard allegations of Buddhism being a foreign faith, practiced by the western barbarians and thus unworthy for the people of the Land of Han. Furthermore, Zong Bing demonstrated his extraordinary skills of syncretism by suggesting points of convergence between the chief principles of five golden relationships (familial and social) as advocated by Confucianism on the one hand, combined with the concept of 'Grand Void' in Buddhism on the other. In his final statement of the treatise, he proposes that the perception of space and time, as distant or proximal is all in accordance with the training of the intellect.

2.2.2.c. Yin Hao (殷浩)

Yin Hao (died in 356 C.E.) has been portrayed as one of the most influential and capable politicians of fourth century south China as per his biographical sketch preserved in the *SSXY*[33], who became inclined towards Buddhism during the last

[33]世說新語 Shi shuoxinyu 1B/23b.

phase of his professional career, owing to a sudden conspiracy planned against him by his opponents. Records suggest that during the last years of his life, Yin Hao had been wrongly framed owing to a conspiracy staged by his political opponent, Huan Wen and had been exiled to a far-off remote location at Xinian in western Zhejiang Province, having been stripped of all official ranks and positions.

Yin Hao reportedly had close acquaintance with the Sogdian propagator of Buddhism, Kang Sengyuan. It is further attested in the abovementioned source that it was with Yin Hao that Kang Sengyuan and other fellow monastics held long discussions and engaged in profound debates on the *prajñāpāramitā* discourse. This, then, argues the thesis, marked the rising tendency that was typical of the southern Chinese Buddhist laymen and upper-class elite literati who were attracted towards *xuanxue* speculation in close alignment with Buddhist *prajñā* deliberations. Although the accounts lack detailed information on the duration of such interactions, it does testify to the close intellectual bond shared by Yin Hao and the Buddhist clergymen. Other passages in the *SSXY* suggest that Yin Hao was deeply involved with the study of Buddhist scriptures, although he is believed to have lacked clarity on subjects like the five *skandhas* and the twelve *nidānas*.

Another significant intellectual trait of Yin Hao that has caught the attention of the research investigation is his revered commitment and lifelong adherence to the study of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*. Although, sources hardly provide any information about his role as a benefactor (*dānapati*) of Buddhist monastic Order[34], yet, the very fact that he had closely held on to the *VKNS* throughout his life underscores his possible conviction on lay Buddhist devotees to possess the ability to comprehend Buddhist *sūtras* with utmost clarity, while having been engaged in secular official

[34]E. Zürcher, Brill, 2007, 102,111.

activities. Without having renounced family ties, these Buddhist lay followers were committed to serving society with sincerity and benevolence as per the true virtue of a *Bodhisattva*, as proposed in the *VKNS*.

2.2.2.d. Liu Yuanzhen (劉元真)

A certain defining feature of the Chinese laity around the fourth-fifth century of pre-modern China had been their unprecedented inclination towards scholastic discussions on various Buddhist philosophical doctrines. On many an occasion, Chinese Buddhist lay followers have been reported to have been engaged in lengthy discussions, lecture sessions and debates on various complex Buddhist doctrinal issues at monasteries which had by then emerged as the leading centres of knowledge dissemination. Liu Yuanzhen[35] was one such representative of the elite upper class Chinese literate population, who, on account of his in-depth scholarship in secular studies, analytical skill and literary talent was able to develop a comprehensive understanding of various ontological problems. Further, together with his knowledge in Buddhist gnostic arts, he was able to offer, with utmost precision, a profound explanation of such issues to other members of the Chinese aristocratic scholar members of the intelligentsia.

In the primary source document, titled, “Eulogy on Liu Yuanzhen”, authored by the Buddhist scholar, Sun Chuo, it is mentioned that Liu Yuanzhen was a Buddhist *ācārya* who was active around the region of Luoyang, presumably having been associated with the Buddhist monastic settlements and communities there. The distinguished Buddhist Master Zhu Daoqian had reportedly been his disciple and thus, had won recommendation of Zhi Dun to a certain monk of Gaoli.

[35] The biography of 劉元真 Liu Yuanzhen could be briefly accessed in E. Zürcher, Brill, 2007, 77-78.

The thesis here draws attention to the fact that despite having been a lay follower of Buddhism and an intellectual elite of fourth century premodern China, Liu Yuanzhen was known to have been instructing Chinese Buddhist monks like Zhu Daoqian in Buddhist philosophical teachings. This, then, corroborates the fact that both Buddhist monastic members and Buddhist laity maintained close correspondence with each other, that they influenced and stimulated each other intellectually, and that the Chinese Buddhist laity's support, both material and intellectual, played a crucial role in enabling Buddhism to survive and prosper beyond the confines of Buddhist monastic institutions, into the realm of Chinese elite class population. The presence of Liu Yuanzhen at Luoyang, having been attested in the primary source document, suggests that formerly he might have been associated with the northern dhyana Buddhist tradition, since both Chang'an and Luoyang were major Buddhist centres excelling in Buddhist meditative practices. However, as has been gathered from the biography of Zhu Daoqian preserved in the *GSZ*, there is every possibility of Liu Yuanzhen having migrated to the southern capital of the Eastern Jin at Jiankang after the collapse of the western Jin ruling house, and to have been engaged in the intensive study and elucidation of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* there. From the records in the *CSZJJ*, it has been opined by Erik Zürcher that Liu Yuanzhen might have been a family member of a certain Liu Yuanmou who had been portrayed as a lay Buddhist donor while residing at Luoyang. Although, the thesis does not rule out this possibility, in the absence of any other surviving document, this family connection between Liu Yuanzhen and Liu Yuanmou could not be conclusively proven.

The *GSZ* and *CSZJJ* also mention few other prominent laymen like Wei Shidu who has been portrayed in the sources as having been born in a humble family of scholars from the south western province of Shanxi at Jijun, who not only promoted the cause

of Buddhism but used his intellectual insight and scholarly zeal to compose commentaries for the Chinese literati on some of the most important Buddhist sutras, for instance a short excerpt on the *Aśṭasāhasrika Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*.

2.2.2.e. Xi Chao (郗超)

Based upon the biographical note on Xi Chao preserved in the *SSXY*[36]and *JS*, and attested further by his mentor, Zhi Dun's biographical sketch in the *GSZ*[37], the thesis identifies the former as one of the key Chinese intellectual laymen who played the dual role of not only engaging with Buddhist monastic community members and some of the most influential Buddhist masters in scholastic studies, but also in being able to create a unique niche for themselves in matters of philosophical speculation.

Xi Chao belonged to a family which had already been noted for its Daoist affiliation and Buddhist inclination alike. As recorded in the *SSXY*, Xi Chao's father, a certain Xi Yin (313-384 C.E.) himself was of affluent financial standing and of distinguished social position. He was one of those lay followers who contributed immense wealth to the lay Daoist community as patronage, of which he was also a respected member. Xi Yin was a follower of the "Daoist Doctrine of the Heavenly Master" and was held in high esteem. Interestingly, the family of Xi Yin was open and receptive to diverse intellectual trends of the times. This is attested by the fact that Xi Yin had become a lay benefactor of a certain Buddhist scholar, Xie Fu and also had sought consultation from the distinguished Buddhist monk-physician, Yu Fakai at a time when he had fallen ill.

[36]世說新語 *Shi shuoxinyu* IA/42b.
[37]高僧傳 *Gaoseng zhuan, Fascicle* IV,349.1.9.

Xi Chao's deep intellectual insight and scholarly brilliance is corroborated by his most revered self-authored apologetic treatise, titled, *Fengfa Yao* (*Essential Features of the Flourishing Dharma*), compiled in the *HMJ*. As it becomes obvious from the content of the treatise, *Fengfa Yao*[38], Xi Chao was one such lay devotee who not only studied deeply the Buddhist philosophical discourses, but also was well aware of organizing the doctrines and elucidating them in a manner that could be receptive for both the common masses as well as for the distinguished elite class population. *Fengfa Yao* served as an important guidebook for lay Buddhist devotees to uphold the *dharma*.

Xi Chao in the *Fengfa Yao* reportedly elucidated the fundamental teachings of the *Triśaraṇa* (Triple Refuge) where he preached the idea of devotionalism and ultimate surrender of oneself to the *Buddha*, *dharma* and *saṅgha*. He introduced the twelve categories of scriptures catering to the teachings of the historical Buddha (*shi er bujing*). He called upon all Buddhist adherents to also wish for the wellbeing of all. Xi Chao's detailed explanation of the Five Precepts for all lay devotees also found resonance among the other laity. Xi Chao, owing to his in-depth knowledge in the Buddhist scriptures, also put forth his explanations on the 'Six Contemplations', namely, contemplating on the Buddha (*nianfo*), contemplating on the scriptures (*nianjing*), contemplating on the *saṅgha*(*nian seng*), contemplating on acts of charity (*nianshi*), contemplating on the precepts (*nianjie*), contemplating on the gods (*nian tian*).

[38]弘明集卷第十三，郗嘉賓奉法要 *Hong Ming Ji*, Fascicle 13, T.52, 2102.

2.2.3. Chinese Intelligentsia

Pre-modern China between the fourth and the sixth century C.E., was a period of intellectual emancipation, philosophical speculation and artistic creation. This period witnessed the emergence of Chinese intellectuals who were deeply motivated and influenced by ontological issues, owing to their interest and ability to deal with abstract thoughts. Despite most of the Chinese intellectuals belonging to educated upper-class gentry families with strong foundations in classical Chinese education, there was a noticeable tendency among them of wanting to refrain from accepting and serving in official positions. The intellectual environment of this Wei-Jin period (late third to fifth century C.E.) was also conducive towards the free exchange of thoughts and ideas, a fact that granted the Chinese intellectuals with greater freedom of literary, artistic and intellectual expression without any obligation of having to conform to set rules and ideas. The influence of these Chinese intellectuals upon the rise of the syncretic, hybridized version of Buddhism, although briefly portrayed in Chinese secular literature and historical documents, was discernibly long-standing and profound. Their quest for the abstract and the gnostic was reflected in their approach to seek common grounds in the philosophical deliberations on Buddhist *śūnyavāda*, the mystical learning of *xuanxue,* and the doctrine of *mingjiao*. While some of these members of the Chinese intelligentsia were painters and calligraphers, others were poets and composers. It was owing to their syncretic skills that Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism could be viewed through the prism of transcendental wisdom, and this approach opened up new vistas for sinification of Buddhism in China from the sixth century onwards.

2.2.3.a. Zhu Shulan (竺叔蘭)

In compliance with the evolving trends of fourth-fifth century intellectual atmosphere in premodern China, marked by features of spontaneous expression, candid discussion, anti-ritualistic attitude and eccentricity, there emerged a large number of intellectuals who engaged in *qingtan* conversations, and led a life of non-conformity to set rules and social norms. Zhu Shulan was one such Chinese intellectual whose biography in the *CSZJJ*[39] portrays him as having Indian ancestral lineage, but to have been born and raised in the Land of the Han amidst Chinese values and ethics. He is known to have been well versed in both Classical Chinese scholarship and Sanskrit. Although the source text that was used for the compilation of his biographical note in the *CSZJJ* appears to be rather apocryphal in nature, most Buddhologists have reached a consensus in identifying Luoyang as the site of his birth. His in-depth scholarship in Buddhist philosophical doctrines has also been well attested in the primary source document. But despite his inclination towards ontological issues and his sincere long-standing intellectual engagement with seeking common ground between *xuanxue* and Buddhist teachings of *śunyavāda* (emptiness), he reportedly led a life of renouncement from worldly affairs and engaged in excessive drinking. His natural disposition and social behaviour often led Buddhist biographers to include him within the category of the 'Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove'. Zhu Shulan with his profound knowledge of Buddhist doctrines had also been involved in the translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* which has proved to be one of the essential Buddhist texts for popularizing Buddhism among the lay members of society.

[39] Zhu Shulan's biography alongside his intellectual engagement is recorded in 出三藏記集 *Chu san zang jiji* Fascicle 13, 98.2.3. Taisho volume number 55, *sūtra* number 2145.

2.2.3.b. Sun Chuo (孫绰)

Sun Chuo was one of the leading intellectuals of premodern China, who, while having been firmly grounded into Classical Chinese scholarship was unorthodox, liberal, open, cosmopolitan, receptive and sensitive to the emerging complex intellectual trends within the domain of Buddhist doctrinal discourses and possessed the capability of syncretizing Buddhist gnostic *prajñā* philosophy of emptiness (*śunyatā*) with the amalgamated version of *xuanxue* and *mingjiao*. He was an eminent literati, author, composer who is known to have introduced new literary genres of brief short-length epigrams and eulogies. His literary talent and intellectual zeal were showcased in the depiction of eminent monks through his miniature portraits extant in his authored quotations. Some of these find mention in the *GSZ* under the titles, "Eulogies on Famous and Virtuous Monks" (*ming de shamen zan*) and "Treatise on Monks and the Illustrious Ones" (*daoxian lun*)[40].

Furthermore, his intellectual contribution is reflected through his composition of a short-length apologetic treatise titled, "Clarification of the Path" (*yudao lun*), compiled in the *HMJ*[41]. In this treatise, Sun Chuo presents his tremendous syncretic skill of uniting *xuanxue* teachings with Buddhist philosophical ideas using sophisticated language. In this particular apologetic essay, Sun Chuo, much like most of the intellectuals of his times, was driven by the spirit of adaptability, and was thus seen arguing in favour of seeking common ground by reconciling the transcendental Buddhist philosophical concepts with the Confucian ideals of social virtues. He also proposed a broadening of vision for all intellectuals, encouraging them to look beyond the narrow confines of moral virtues as illustrated by legendary emperors Yao and

[40]A.F. Wright, Silver Jubilee Volume, 428,6. Also refer to 續晉陽秋 *Xu jinyangqiu* by Tan Daoluan 檀道鸾.

[41]弘明集卷第三孫绰喻道論 *Hong Ming Ji*, Fascicle 3, *Sun Chuo Yudao lun*. T. 52, 2102.

Shun only, or to look beyond the fixed parameters of Absolute Truth as expressed in the principal teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi, or as has been propounded in the *Classic of Change* (*Yijing*). Rather, through this abovementioned illustrious treatise, Sun Chuo invited all fellow intellectuals to deeply deliberate upon and internalize into their psyche, the profound wisdom of the Buddhist Middle Path (*mādhyamika*) and the concept of universal emptiness (*śunyatā*). Sun Chuo elucidated the meaning of the word Buddha, as the enlightened one who embodies the Path, and revealed its close alignment with the *xuanxue* teachings, which propounds that the one who upholds the Path (*dao*) is the one who remains active amidst non-activity, and who responds to the stimuli of the world in accordance with the needs of all beings.

2.2.3.c. Xu Xun (許詢)

The *SSXY*[42] depicts a certain Xu Xun as a well-known *qingtan* adept of the fourth century. He was accredited with the composition of five syllable poems (*wu yan shi*). His intellectual engagement brought him closer to the both cultured monks like Zhi Dun and upper-class aristocrats like Wang Meng. This association between the gentlemen-scholar monks, educated Buddhist clergymen, upper class elite societal members and Buddhist lay devotees defined the intellectual trends of the time in pre-modern China that eventually resulted in the final dissemination of Buddhism into the inner most core layers of Chinese society. Xu Xun like the other eminent Chinese intellectuals lived the life of a recluse, retired from his political career and supported by members of the aristocratic families, like Xie An and Sima Yu.

[42] The biography of 許詢 Xu Xun is preserved in 世說新語 *Shi shuoxinyu*, fascicle IB/33b-34a and fascicle III A/17b.

2.2.3.d. Wang Qia （王洽）

Another prominent Chinese intellectual, Wang Qia (323-358 C.E.) draws the attention of the thesis in having occupied official position, in having served in the capacity of a governor of Wuxing prefecture in northern Zhejiang Province, in having been the third son of the ruler Wang Dao and, yet, to have been drawn towards ontological speculation[43]. The table of contents in the Chinese Buddhist catalogue, titled, Falun, compiled by scholar, Lu Cheng (425-494 C.E.)[44] mentioned in a commentary authored by Paul Pelliot cites possible ties of connection between Zhi Dun and Wang Qia. This proposition is testified by the fact that the two scholar-intellectuals have been referred to have been engaged in thorough discussion and debate on the relation between “matter” and “emptiness”. Wang Qia had also been known to have enjoyed life-long commitment towards the study and deliberation on the concepts of *xuanxue*, namely, “being” (*you*), “original non-being” (*ben wu*) and “final being” (*mo you*).

[43] E. Zürcher, Brill, 2007, 134.
[44]廣弘明集 *Guang Hong Ming Ji*, Fascicle 28, 323.1.

CHAPTER THREE

MINGJIAO, XUANXUE AND *QINGTAN*: BUDDHISM AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL PHENOMENON IN PRE-MODERN CHINA

3.1. Background Study of the Intellectual Landscape of Premodern China (Fourth-Sixth Century Common Era)

As has been suggested by Jonathan Z. Smith and Benedict Anderson, and supported by Company[1], intellectual traditions and cultural trends at any particular time and space should not be treated as solitary, unitary compartments, but rather as seemingly imagined composite units. The study in this chapter therefore attempts to trace the mutual impact and influence of the prevalent indigenous Chinese systems of thought on the Buddhist trends and vice versa, in order to develop a holistic understanding of the emergence of Buddhism in premodern China as a socio-cultural phenomenon.

History of Buddhism in the context of China has often been perceived through the lens of translation activities that were first conducted from the end of the Eastern Han period (25-220 C.E.) through the Three Kingdoms Period (220-265/280 C.E.), up until the late Tang (618-906 C.E.) and Ming (1368-1644 C.E.) imperial times. An in-depth study of the translated versions of the Buddhist scriptures extant in Chinese dating from around the second century C.E. onwards, throws light upon the following issues, first, upon the specific Buddhist philosophical concepts which won a wide audience among the Chinese Buddhist monastic community, second, upon the strategy adopted by those monk-scholars in making the Indian doctrinal concepts of Buddhism easily acceptable and comprehensible to the Chinese masses of all social strata, third, upon the areas of convergence, if any, between the newly disseminated

[1] Robert Ford Company, "Two Religious Thinkers of the Early Eastern Jin: Gan Bao and Ge Hong in Multiple Contexts," Asia Major 18, no. 1 (2005), 189.

Indian Buddhist philosophical discourses and the already prevalent Chinese indigenous systems of thought, and fourth, upon the intellectual environment of the times during which the processes of transmission, transmutation, adaptation and assimilation of the Indian Buddhist doctrines into the Chinese cultural milieu was underway.

The period in time of interest and importance to the study here are the latter few decades of the third century which ushered into the intellectual life of the Chinese population a search for spiritual salvation. This historical period known as the Wei-Jin period (220-420 C.E.) in the official Chinese historical dynastic annals was marked by political chaos, economic instability, social unrest, incessant warfare, natural calamities like floods and droughts, and depreciated human moral values and ethics. The Confucian concept of sage ruler and ideal governance did not match the political reality of the times, given the fact that political power was confined within the hands of the palace eunuchs and royal relatives. The story of every ruling house coming to power was a repetition of the same cycle of events, namely, usurpation, indiscriminate blood-shed in palace coups, and a chain reaction of conspiracies. Scholars appointed in official ranks were beginning to realize the futility of theoretical orthodox Confucian principles of benevolent and righteous rule that was far from being practically applied to everyday governance[2].

With the final downfall of the Western Jin dynasty (266-316 C.E.) and the mass immigration of the Chinese population from the war-torn imperial capital of Chang'an, followed by the founding of the Eastern Jin dynasty and the relocation of the imperial capital at the southern centre of Jiankang (also called Jianye, present-day Nanjing),

[2]Wing Tsit Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy (Princeton and New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), 336-337.

many of the imperial office holders and bureaucrats decided to withdraw themselves from fulfilling their social obligations, and to renounce their political career. This has often been perceived by historians on China as a spirit of escapism from reality, one that characterized the psychological essence of the intelligentsia and literati of pre-modern China around the fourth and fifth century. This also created a growing interest of the Chinese intellectuals in the concepts of 'non-being', 'absolute being', voidness, and further to the idea that the world and the objects were all transcendental and noumenal. Orthodox Confucianism, by this time, was becoming an extreme form of scholastic practice with the ultimate focus upon gaining official rank or position in the bureaucracy. Dong Zhongshu's proposition on the association between the human and the natural world was also sometimes seen to be falling short of explanations on world occurrences and phenomena. The *Huang-Lao* cult, the *Yin-yang* philosophy and the *Yijing* (Classic of Changes) were also losing significance, as they all were gradually degenerating into mere rituals and practices associated with occultism.

Within the school of Confucian Studies, there emerged two distinct parallel intellectual movements, followers of one that called themselves adherents of the Ancient Script School and followers of the other that referred to themselves as adherents of the Modern Script School. While the Ancient Script School regarded Kong Fuzi (Confucius) as a mere teacher who offered instructions to his disciples about building an ethical society based upon harmonious social relations by compiling the ancient wisdom of the sages, the Modern Script School added a certain 'godliness' to the ancient founder father, regarding him as a savior of all mankind and insisted upon grating him the due recognition of being a throneless king. Whether the existing differences and the ongoing conflict between the two schools ultimately led to any conclusive outcome is beyond the purview of the discussion here, but there is no

doubt about the fact that it did create an atmosphere of candid discussion and in-depth analysis on the then existing Confucian scholarship and promoted a free-thinking intellectual environment.

The intellectual matrix of premodern China around the fourth century comprised of members who either belonged to cultured family households with moderate social standing, were well read in the Chinese Classics, and served in various capacities in official positions, or belonged to humble gentry households, with training in Chinese scholarship, and yet, chose to renounce family ties to take up the tonsure and joined the Buddhist monastic Order. With the collapse of the Western Jin royal house, there was mass exodus of these cultured scholar gentry officials and Buddhist cultured clergymen and monk-scholars from the northern capital of Chang'an to the newly founded Eastern Jin dynastic southern capital of Jiankang. It was here in the south, at the relocated capital of the Chinese ruling dynasty of Eastern Jin that the immigrant members of the Chinese officialdom or itinerant Buddhist monk-scholars had the opportunity to interact closely with the elite class members of the southern provincial families. The open, unfettered, unrestrained cosmopolitan intellectual environment, thus created, was most suited and conducive to the interchange of ideas on abstract philosophical and ontological issues that ran like a common thread connecting Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism.

Based upon the nature of intellectual engagement, China from the late third century was gradually divided into two cultural zones, the northern cultural zone and the southern cultural zone. While the north with important cultural and political centres around Pengcheng, Chang'an and Luoyang continued to be characterized by orthodoxy in intellectual engagement, the south with its cultural base around Jiankang

began to be recognized for its emerging intellectual trend of fluidity and unorthodoxy. The changing political landscape, marked by recent shifts and transition, further contributed in creating an intellectual atmosphere of open debates. This Wei-Jin period in Chinese history also witnessed the active participation of intellectual thinkers and master-philosophers in streamlining the various existing and diverse traditions of ancient Chinese philosophical wisdom, eventually leading to the creation of a syncretic, hybridized, and yet coherent system of thought.

In relation to the evolution of Buddhist scholarship, there emerged two distinct tendencies, one being the northern Buddhist tradition with its focus upon *dhyāna* (meditation practices marked by severe austerity and mindful concentration), and the other, being the southern Buddhist tradition, founded upon *prajñā* (marked by ontological speculation). While the former witnessed the involvement of the Buddhist monastic community members with their strong commitment towards upholding the Buddhist monastic disciplinary codes through continued regimented practice of mental concentration in order to eradicate all possible mental delusion, the latter emphasized upon the study of exegetical texts to acquire a state of transcendental wisdom. The above-mentioned southern Buddhist tradition further prepared the ground for the rise of the Buddhist *Mādhyamika* school of philosophy with its core teachings on emptiness (*śūnyavāda* 空), propounding the idea that no matter, nor thing possesses self-nature (*svabhāva* 自性). This Buddhist concept of absolute emptiness as expounded in the *Mahāyāna* teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* was also seen resonating in the reinterpretation of Daoist concepts of Being (有), Non-Being(本無), and Final Being (末有), a popular practice among Daoist practitioners which was also fast gaining ground around this period in time.

The Confucian concept of Mandate of Heaven (天命) was now seen reflected in the Buddhist reference to the existence of a universal ethical principle which was believed to operate throughout the cosmos, but subsequently determined by an individual's course of thought and action, touching upon the concepts of rebirth, *karman*, and retribution of sinful deeds. While on the one hand, the predominance of Han Confucianism was fast decimating, making inroads for metaphysical speculation in combination with a growing focus on revived Legalism which soon crystallized into the discourse of an emerging philosophical school, called the *mingjiao* 名教 (Tradition of Names), on the other hand, the ancient Daoist teachings as expounded in the *Laozi* 老子 and *Zhuangzi* 庄子 began to be reinterpreted in the context of the theory of *wuxing* 五性(Five Elements) and that of the *yin-yang* 阴阳. The growing interest of the Chinese intelligentsia of the pre-modern period towards speculation on metaphysical issues was also reflected through their profound deliberation on concepts like *jing* 静(tranquility), *xu* 虚 ((emptiness or vacuity), *wu* 無 (non-being), *wuzuo* 無作 (non-activity) and *ziran* 自然 (spontaneity). There was also a discernible shift towards trying to locate a connecting link between the concepts of *wu* 無 (non-being), *mo you* 末有(final being) and *you* 有 (being) which came to characterize another trend of thought, the *xuanxue* 玄學 (Mystic Knowledge/Wisdom). The drastic shift from an overemphasis upon Confucianism towards more abstract philosophical deliberations as advocated by Laozi, Zhuangzi, Mozi and the School of Logicians, improvised upon by the *li* 理 (concept of reasoning) formed the central ideological foundation of the times.

The natural tendency of the intellectuals of fourth and fifth century pre-modern China was one of syncretism, hybridization, selective adaptation and assimilation between the abovementioned three emerging philosophical strands, namely, *mingjiao* 名教, based upon reinterpreted Confucian and Legalist ideologies, *xuanxue* 玄學, founded upon reinterpreted Daoist ideologies and *prajñā* 智 created out of Buddhist gnostic speculation.

While in the north of China under the rule of the non-Han Tuoba Wei dynasty, each school of philosophy continued to remain strictly confined within their own limited boundaries of philosophical discourses, in the south of the China under the newly established Eastern Jin rule, the activity of philosophical speculation was not anymore restricted to individual scholastic groups and communities pertaining to Buddhism, Confucianism or Daoism only, but rather, exhibited a common intellectual intervention towards the identification of common points of convergence between *xuanxue* gnostic ideas, *mingjiao* concepts and Buddhist *prajñā* philosophical discourses.

The intellectual members of this newly emerging group representing the essence of hybridization of the times belonged to the younger generation of vagabond, carefree thinkers who celebrated the spirit of enquiry amidst free, unrestrained lifestyle. Poetry and wine frequently accompanied their intellectual pursuit. They studied in-depth the three metaphysical scriptures (三玄), namely the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi* and the *Yijing*. These young scholar-vagabonds represented those Chinese literati, who were often referred to as the ‘Close Associates of Simple Conversation’ (清談家), had easy and unrestricted access to the social circles of high officials, who spent most of their time in wining and dining, composing music and poetry, and engaging in light

conversation on topics of profound ontological relevance. In this context, a reference could be drawn to a popular group of young intellectuals, called the 'Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove' (*zhulin qi xian*) who reportedly met at the mansion of the noble aristocratic family of the Shi clan and engaged with them in gnostic speculation.

One such kind of an ascetic, free-minded intellectual was Juan Chi (210-263 C.E.) who in the treatise, titled, 'Da ren xiansheng zhuan' (Life Sketch of Mr. Great) propounded the concept of the transcendental union of the ideal gentleman with the cosmos, where all forms of dichotomy contained with the periphery of social norms could be obliterated. In his opinion there would be no distinction between ethical and unethical, right and wrong, material affluence and poverty, high status and low social standing. A similar kind of an idea was elucidated by another young Chinese intellectual of the times, Xi Kang (223-262 C.E.).

This Wei-Jin intellectual atmosphere, therefore, witnessed the emergence of Neo-Daoist speculation into cosmic reality. As has been attested by essays in the *Quan sanguo wen, Quan jin wen* and *Shishuoxinyu*, the philosophical discourse of this period was focused upon a search for reality beyond time and space, that existed as an absolute beyond the world of phenomenon, this particular insight was seen to have cast an indelible impression upon the southern intellectual gentry form of hybrid Buddhism, inspired by its inclination towards *prajñā* thought.

In line with the above observation, the thesis argues that with regard to pre-modern China's prevalent system of thought and intellectual trends, there did not exist definitive and distinctive lines of demarcation. Rather, the general intellectual atmosphere was reflective of several overlaps and convergences in matters of ontology.

3.2. *Mingjiao*

From about the latter half of the third century, intellectuals of pre-modern China affiliated to diverse philosophical systems of thought got fascinated with abstract concepts like “name and reality”, “nature of existence”, “form and function”, “fundamental non-being and final being” and their correlation. It was owing to the prevalent spirit of constant hybridization and systematized syncretism that intellectuals began to reinterpret the then prevalent version of the Confucian state doctrine and the principles of Legalism against the Daoist ontological issue of the ‘Absolute’. Against this intellectual backdrop emerged *mingjiao* (School of Names), the proponents of which primarily concerned themselves with the task of correlating “ming” (name) with “shi” (reality) in an attempt to be able to specifically define the capabilities of an individual in order to be able to allocate better functions to him (fen). The sole purpose of the *mingjiao* deliberation was then to ensure the selection of the most eligible persons for serving in official ranks and social positions, and fulfilling tasks that were related to governance, ceremonies and rituals, legal obligations and building of one’s moral character (as a ruler).

It is to be noted that the mainstream Confucian concept of the ideal ‘sage ruler’ (*junzi*) prevalent from the late Zhou (771-256 B.C.E.) until the Han times (202 B.C.E.-220 C.E.), under the influence of *mingjiao*, during the Wei-Jin period (220-420 C.E.) came to be refurbished in alignment with the universal and the ‘all-encompassing nature’ (*tian zirandao*). This has often been perceived by scholars like Wing Tsit Chan as a union between Daoist metaphysis and Confucian ethics, giving rise to a strong overtone of what they defined as Neo-Daoism. One such eminent and influential intellectual of this time was Guo Xiang (died 312 C.E.) who despite being a high-ranking government official was equally inclined towards the metaphysics of

Daoism, He was one such scholar-official who was a deep enthusiast of the teachings of Zhuangzi, but owing to his strong skills in imagination, contemplation and syncretization, Guo Xiang was able to breathe in new meaning to it. The departure for Guo Xiang's philosophy was from the focus on *Dao* in *Zhuangzi* as advocated by the traditional Daoist school to a renewed emphasis upon *Ziran* (nature), wherein Tian (heaven) was also argued to be contained and indifferent from Ziran. According to Guo Xiang's belief, everything in the cosmos exists and transforms itself based upon its own inherent principle, and that there is no external factor or agent to govern its existence or transformation. Furthermore, Guo Xiang's philosophy propounded the idea that everything or being was endowed with natural capacities, talents, skills, desires, and inclinations as if these were natural share (fen) endowed upon them by Ziran or Tian. Thus, each thing's allocation or given share of property was typically his own and unique.

3.3. *Xuanxue*

It was against the reoriented intellectual backdrop of Neo-Daoism and the *mingjiao* speculation that the philosophical discourse of the *xuanxue* (Mystic Learning) laid its foundation stone upon the intellectual matrix of pre-modern China. The *xuanxue* deliberations started off from the fundamental Confucian concept of the 'sage ruler' who had been offered the *tian ming* (Mandate of Heaven) in order to determine the destiny of Heaven, all under Heaven, and the course of all cosmic phenomena. This representation of the ideal image of the 'sage ruler' in close conformity to the Han-Confucian ideology of ideal governance under ideal ruler was also seen having been corroborated in the *Yijing* (Classic of Changes). While the orthodox Confucian image of the sage ruler was more worldly with the inner virtues of benevolence, altruism, propriety, sincerity and righteousness, the Wei-Jin image of the Confucian ideal sage

ruler became ‘out of the world’, ‘other-worldly’, and ‘transcendental’. In the *xuanxue* discourse, the image of the ideal ruler began to be anticipated against the Daoist concept of seeking unconditional unity or focus on the absolute status that underlined all temporary and transient condition of change. In the *xuanxue* deliberation, the focus was on ontological issues where the search was for a way to unite the permanent substrate or the Great Ultimate (*taiji*) with the transient-changing matrix that lay beneath[3].

The most important social factor of the Wei-Jin period that seems to have influenced the rise and growth of the *xuanxue* philosophical tradition in the context of pre-modern China was an unconscious, yet prominently conspicuous natural social divide between the more powerful political gentry families (*menfa*)[4] with their ever-lasting access to social status and political position by virtue of their hereditary titles, and the less significant gentry family members with less social standing and financial position (*hanmen*)[5]. This class distinction was eventually the result of continued deterioration in the moral norms and social codes of conduct from the time of the collapse of the Western Han through the Wei-Jin period. Elaborate discussions on uniting names and reality (as propounded by *mingjiao*) and adherence to the unity between rites and propriety, and codes (*li fa*) also put on hold actual emphasis upon social obligations and family ethics. It was primarily well-read young gentlemen-scholars of decent gentry families who failed to inherit official positions that drew attention towards these abstract philosophical enquiries.

[3]James, D. Sellmann. “Xuanxue Contributions to Chinese Philosophy,” in *Dao Companion to Xuanxue* 玄學*(Neo-Daoism),* ed. David Chai (Springer: Hong Kong, 2020), 13-32.
[4]Sellmann, Springer, 2020, 17.
[5]E. Zürcher, Brill, 2007, 6,7.

As Feng Youlan proposes, *xuanxue* speculation originated from four inter-connected issues of enquiry that found reflection in the introductory chapter of the Daoist Classic, *Daodejing*[6]. These issues were as follows, first, the divide between language and the ultimate way or the Absolute Dao, second, the divide between the description of things and any constant term to define the same, third, the proposition that the origin of both being and non-being is the same, and fourth, the proposition that matter or phenomena may differ but their meanings remain constant. Xuanxue's departure stems from a re-interpretation of the Laozi and Zhuangzi, as well as from Yijing's explanation on the cosmological formations, wherein it underscores the inter-relation between the application of general terms and names to specific instances.

The most identifiable trait of *xuanxue* system of thought was its constant search for an association between various philosophical concepts and the suitable terms to define the same, especially those that were concerned with self and reality, being and non-being, vacuity and non-activity. The *xuanxue* deliberations upon the above-mentioned ontological subjects seemed to have touched upon the debate on the non-substantial ultimate reality. *Xuanxue* elucidated the above by using the approach that all matter is contained within a larger category that is home to all myriad things (*wanwu*). These myriad things are all, in turn, captured within the domain of heaven and earth (*tian di*), encompassing reality, both material and abstract.

The leading philosophers in this genre were intellectuals of the second quarter of the third century, Wang Bi (225-264 C.E.), He Yan (disputed year-249 C.E.) and Zhong Hui (225-264 C.E.). These early *xuanxue* proponents focused upon *non-being* as the highest or absolute reality. Under this proposition, *non-being* was not projected as the absence of all things, as has often been misinterpreted, but, rather, as a state of highest

[6]Fung Yu-Lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy (London: Collins Macmillan, 1948), 217-221.

abstraction, beyond all things. This concept of non-being is beyond being conceived through words and thoughts, neither through language nor physical sense organs. The abstract absolute state of *non-being*, as per the proposition of the early *xuanxue* mystics could be conceived of only through a state of deep meditation, to be acquired through altered layers of mental consciousness[7]. They further argued that it is the absolute abstract reality that to most of the extent controls the lower category of things of this nature and the cosmos.

Xuanxue philosophers like Wang Bi and He Yan prepared the groundwork for *xuanxue* speculation by reinterpreting the *Lunyu* (Confucian Analects), Yijing (Classic of Changes) and *Dao de jing*(Classic of Dao and De), and through their deep veneration for non-being, represented by the term *guiwu*. Both Wang Bi[8] and He Yan refrained from explicitly elucidating the concept of *non-being*, since the latter was the state of ultimate abstraction, an ultimate void beyond all words and worldly expressions. Both the philosophers therefore used a rather esoteric way of speaking about *non-being*. He Yan opined that if something is spoken of while being inexplicable through speech, if something is being described while being indescribable through words, if something is being viewed without having any form, if something is being heard without an element of sound or echo in it, then it reveals that Dao is contained in it. Wang Bi gave the following explanation for the concept of *non-being*, that which is beyond all form and description, the origin or ancestor of all things. It cannot be felt as warm and cold, it cannot be heard or seen, it cannot be attributed as high tone or low tone.

[7]For an in-depth understanding of xuanxue through the lens of reinterpreted Zhuangzi, the study has referred to Guiying Chen, "The Tradition of Emotive Writing in the "Zhuangzi" and its Echoes in Later Generations," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 10, no. 3 (2015): 340-352.
[8]The philosophy of Wang Bi has been studied through a deep reading of Rudolf G. Wagner, Albany, 2003, 279-289.

3.4. *Qingtan*

It has been argued that one of the principal strategies employed by Chinese upper class aristocratic members in introducing and popularizing the Buddhist faith among the imperial court circles had been the emerging trend of 'pure or light conversation' (*qingtan*), an indigenous method of debate and deliberation, envisioned by the Chinese Wei-Jin intelligentsia. Although the method employed in conducting such intellectual debates were ingeniously Chinese, scholars like Friederike Assandri have also noted their partial Indian influence[9]. Most debaters who engaged in this casual style of candid interactions did so at the imperial courts or at the mansions of elite class gentry officials, where they were often invited to share their views on ontological issues. They were mostly defenders of Daoism and Buddhism, being Daoist masters and Buddhist clergymen. *Qingtan* thus denoted a distinct kind of a rhetorical discussion of high philosophical and aesthetic value which involved only the higher-ranking social and intellectual elites of the times. Another characteristic feature of *qingtan* which involved the intervention by the major proponents of the Buddhist apologetic faith was the use of sophisticated and elegant language in the rhetorical discussions that accompanied such debates. Many of the debaters, both of Daoist and Buddhist affiliation reportedly traveled from different regions from in and around the imperial capital and challenged each other on specific doctrinal issues or on the interpretation of texts.

[9]Friedderike Assandri, "Inter-religious Debate at the Court of the Early Tang: An Introduction to Daoxuan's Ji gujinFo Dao lunheng", in *From Early Tang Court Debates to China's Peaceful Rise*, ed. Friedderike Assandri and Dora Martins, "Inter-religious Debate at the Court of the Early Tang: An Introduction to Daoxuan's Ji gujinFo Dao (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 19-20.

3.5. Buddhism as a Socio-cultural Phenomenon (Fourth-Sixth Century C.E.)

The Buddhist intellectual fervor of the times witnessed affluent bureaucrats and ruling house members widely patronizing the *dharma* and integrating their scholastic zeal with profound devotionalism. The ritualistic practice of venerating an image of the Buddha (past, present and future) by circumambulating it, burning incense sticks, offering fragrant flowers and trying to visualize the Buddha (Maitreya, Amitābha) through regular chants and controlled breathing became a regular event in the lives of the Chinese Buddhist intellectual laity. This was in fact, one of the most discernible signs of Buddhism having penetrated into the core societal structure of pre-modern China from the fourth century onwards, wherein most of the devoted Buddhist laity were from among the highest-ranking elite bureaucracy. Many of these affluent and politically conspicuous Buddhist lay followers regularly began visiting the monasteries, listened to the elaborate preachings of Buddhist monk-scholars and the *dharma* masters, offered huge monetary and land donations to the Buddhist monastic community, regularly visited imperial courts for candid discussion with the courtiers and magistrates, and also most often engaged in elaborate discussions and debates with Buddhist clergymen on doctrinal issues. It was during this time that Buddhist monasteries emerged out of their isolated state and became great centres of cultural exchange and intellectual engagement. Lay Buddhist followers were also known to have been engaged alongside Buddhist monastic members in the rendition of original Indian Buddhist texts into Chinese. Furthermore, as has been attested in the apologetic treatises compiled in the *Hong Ming Ji* many of the well-read Buddhist cultured monks also took up official positions as imperial advisors upon official request received from imperial offices of magistrates and bailiffs, and even from rulers

themselves through decrees, often times imploring Buddhist monks to renounce their monastic obligations and accept positions in the imperial offices.

The previous scholastic tendency of highly compartmentalized, liner treatment of Chinese Classics or of Buddhist scriptures seem to have become obsolete. The more cosmopolitan intellectual environment created fresh opportunities for free flow of ideas and unhindered exchange of views. Therefore, while on the one hand, Buddhist monks were associated with the study of Chinese Classics in the light of the exegetical discussions on Buddhist *prajñā* (transcendental wisdom) and *śūnyavāda* (emptiness) philosophical doctrines, on the other hand, the Chinese scholar-officials were immersed in the re-interpretation of the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, alongside composing commentaries on them. There were also a few other upper-class members of the Southern nobility who continued to experiment with realigning the meaning of Confucian rituals and social practices.

The most discernible feature of the intellectual environment of pre-modern China was the active and spontaneous scholastic engagement of Chinese intelligentsia, whether as members of the cultured monastic community or as affluent Buddhist lay followers in Buddhist *prajñā* discourses with equally significant interest and expertise in *xuanxue*, *mingjiao* and *qingtan*. The elaborate, candid, insightful philosophical discussions on the abovementioned gnostic problems characterized the times.

Based upon the critical observations above, the study here underscores the fact that although Buddhism as transmitted from the *Madhyadeśa* did retain most of the fundamental Indic doctrinal roots, around the fourth-fifth century, it however underwent complex sinification or sinicization owing to the comprehension of Buddhist *prajñā* philosophy through the prism of *xuanxue* and *mingjiao* philosophical

concepts. This could then be perceived as an era of immense intellectual churning[10]. This hybridized, sinicized form of Buddhism that emerged at the southern capital of Jiankang of the Eastern Jin dynasty has been identified and styled by the study here as the 'southern intellectual gentry form of Buddhism'.

In the context of the then emerging intellectual trends of *mingjiao* and *xuanxue*, and during the interaction with the Neo-Daoists, the southern Chinese Buddhists deliberated upon the issue of the fundamental reality with utmost focus. The Buddhist concept of *tathatā* thus found a parallel with the Daoist terminology of the original non-being.

Apart from the scholastic contributions of Buddhist *Tripiṭaka* Masters like Shi Daoan, Shi Huiyuan, Shi Sengyou discussed in the other chapters, the syncretic spirit of the times was equally reflected through the activities of the Buddhist monk, Dharmarakṣa (Fahu 266-308 C.E.)[11], of supposed Indian origin, revered as the 'Bodhisattva from Dunhuang'. The southern hybrid form of intellectual gentry Buddhism that emerged as a typical representative of the gentry-style Buddhism at the southern capital of Jiankang during the rule of the Eastern Jin dynasty has often been argued to have carried the influence of intellectual Buddhist thinkers and their close community of Buddhist monastic members who were trained in the northern tradition of Buddhism, first, in the northern capital of Luoyang and then later at Chang'an. Dharmarakṣa was one such prominent Buddhist Master, who, on account of his extensive travels between the cultural spaces of Dunhuang (located beyond the Yumen Gate Pass at the final end point of the Gansu corridor), Jibin (located in the region of Kasmir or

[10]Detailed discussion on such processes is to be found in James Robson, "The Polymorphous Space of the Southern Marchmount [Nanyue]: An Introduction to Nanyue's Religious History and Preliminary Notes on Buddhist-Daoist Interaction," *Cahiers d'Extreme-Asie* 8 (1995): 221-264.
[11]E. Zürcher, Brill, 2007, 66-67.

Gandhara) and later to Chang'an (ancient Chinese imperial capital), his knowledge of a number of regional languages, his in-depth scholarship in Chinese Confucian Classics and Buddhist scriptures was able to develop the skill of collating the prevalent popular discourses on ontological problems and bring out a streamlined version of the same. Under Dharmarakṣa's tutelage, his Buddhist disciples, although trained in the northern tradition of Buddhism were able to mix and match well, the concepts of Confucianism and Buddhism, thus setting the southern Buddhist trend of amalgamating diverse discourses by focusing upon their specific points of convergence.

This also attests the fact that by the latter half of the eastern Jin rule, there were the following parallelly existing Buddhist philosophical doctrines, available also in multiple versions and renditions namely, the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi Sūtra* (*Shoulengyan Sanmei Jing*) prioritizing the bestowing of transcendental nature, supernatural powers, and miraculous feats to the practitioners of this extreme form of meditation and exploring the highest level of samadhi, the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (*Boreboluomiduo Jing*) focusing upon transcendental wisdom through the concepts of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), lack of inherent property (*svabhāva*), transient nature of things (*māyā*), dependent origination of all things (*anutpāda*), the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*(維摩詰经 *Weimo Jing*) acknowledging attaining the highest degree of enlightenment while focusing upon the ontological speculation of nondualism and the doctrine of *śūnyatā*, and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* (*Miaofa Lianhua Jing*) underlining that all paths lead to the same Buddhahood. But each of these were in equal circulation without sole predominance of any particular one out of them. The study here observes that the

central ontological problems discussed in each of these abovementioned sutras shared a common link of association with those of *xuanxue* and *mingjiao*.

Not only in the field of intellectual thought, but also in the arena of painting and architecture, Buddhism cast its profound influence. Buddhist themes found their representation in murals painted in Buddhist temples and monasteries, and in hand-painted portable scrolls. The practice of chanting Buddhist sutras (*fanbai*) was incorporated as an innovative method in the field of Chinese musical art. The domains of arts and aesthetics, literature and calligraphy also highly resonated the essence of this historical period. New literary genres like the five-syllable poems (*shi*shi), four-syllable eulogies (*zan*), ornate preludes to essays, commentaries and explanations (*lun*), and inscriptions (*ming*) became an integral part of literary innovations.

Apart from the cultured Chinese elite, pre-modern Chinese society also included the illiterate and semi-literate population, comprising the common masses, who lacked the required knowledge or expertise to delve deep into the subject matter or the content of the Confucian Classics, with its top-down approach and focus upon striving to serve as the 'Son of Heaven'. The slightest of chaos on the top of the world would eventually lead to a disturbance in the cosmic order as per the Confucian principles. The common man's relief could only be brought about by changes in the cosmic programming of events and phenomena in his individual life. The concept of Confucianism to cultivate one's inner virtues of benevolence, righteousness, altruism, sincerity and propriety only appealed to the educated gentry family members who aspired to serve in imperial ranks. But, for the common masses with limited or no access to formal education, the refuge was initially directed towards the Daoist magicians and soothsayers who could predict the future and recommend hopeful

changes in their lives by interpreting the hexagram designs in broken and unbroken lines in the *Yijing* (*Classic of Changes*), and then gradually shifted towards the concept of devotionalism towards the cult of future Buddha and Bodhisattva Maitreya (*Mile Pusa*) and Buddha Amitābha (*Amituofo*), who were believed to offer solace to all suffering souls by the preaching of self-realization through proper action and proper association with the *dharma* by the former and by ensuring afterlives of all devotees at *Sukhāvatī*. (Land of Pure Bliss).

It is therefore being argued that by the end of the sixth century C.E., the processes of amalgamation, selective adaptation and assimilation of abstract gnostic elements of diverse philosophical teachings embodied in the *xuanxue*, *prajñā*, *mingjiao* were reoriented such that both the illiterate and semi-literate common masses as well as the upper-class elite population were gradually been drawn towards a new intellectual trend that was marked by southern intellectual hybrid gentry Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism and Neo-Daoism.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RULING HOUSE AND THE BUDDHIST CLERGY: A CRITIQUE OF CHINESE POLITICAL RESPONSE TO A GROWING BUDDHIST MONASTIC ORDER

4.1. Objective of Study: Issues and Perspectives

The main objective of study in this chapter is to determine the nature of responses that were generated from the Chinese ruling house towards an increasing presence of Buddhist monastic institutions around the pre-modern period of Chinese history, focusing primarily between the fourth and the sixth century C.E., and going a little beyond in time.

The thesis attempts the abovementioned task through a three-stage process of examination and critical analysis. The first stage entails a critical study of the initial nature of interaction and connection that might have existed between the ruling aristocracy and the Chinese monastic community from around the time of the first phase of Buddhist dissemination into China (first century C.E.), until the beginning of its first phase of initial consolidation (late third century C.E.), followed by the mapping of the nature of political response that gradually evolved through such interactions. In the second stage, the study in this chapter takes a critical view of the changes in the nature of such interactions, both pro and anti-Buddhist in response, in the wake of the propagation of Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought around the fourth and sixth century C.E., and particularly during the time of the circulation and popularization of the original text under consideration here, the *Hong Ming Ji*. In the course of investigation in the second phase, the study undertakes the critical examination of some of the crucial original letters of correspondence that were arguably exchanged between members of

the officialdom and those of the imperial house, or those between Buddhist monks and Chinese officials, or even between the laity and the Chinese rulers. Apart from examining some of the most relevant original treatises of the *HMJ*, other primary source documents pertaining to the pre-modern period of Chinese history between the fourth and sixth century C.E., have also been critiqued here. In the third stage, the chapter focuses upon the analytical study of the impact of apologetic texts like *HMJ* and its sequel, the *Guang Hong Ming Ji*on members of the imperial circles, and attempts to map their responses.

The task of research investigation in attempting to map the political responses of the ruling house towards a growing Buddhist monastic Order from the first until the sixth century C.E., also ideally requires an in-depth study of the different ruling houses or clans which came to power at different periods in time and their specific connections, if any, with the *saṅgha*. Therefore, the study of Chinese Buddhist history has been examined here in close association with the other interconnected domains of China's social history, political history, as well as cultural and intellectual history.

Having outlined the objective and the approach of the study above, the research investigation proceeds from the following general observations. First, that the interactions being examined here, were at most of the times, spontaneous and unforced, while at others, also strategized and planned. Second, that the interactions between the Chinese imperial house and the Buddhist monastic communities were spaced across various ruling dynasties or clans of China, spread across various geographical locations, and having percolated through varied layers of Chinese intellectual strata. And third, that given the lack of homogeneity in the subjects (issues, factors, agents) which are

being treated for investigation here, observations and findings of the chapter are most likely to appear non-linear.

4.2. Mapping the Initial Phases of Interaction between the Chinese Aristocracy and Buddhist Monastic Community (100-300 C.E.)

In the first stage of research investigation, the study here explores the initial nature of contact and communication that might have existed between the individual rulers and bureaucratic members of various imperial states from the time of the Later Han dynasty (25-220 C.E.) through the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280 C.E.) into the beginning of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589 C.E.).

History of early Buddhism in China has been revisited by scholars based upon varied and distinctive extant primary source documents and evidences, each of which carry the unique interpretation of diverse social members of premodern Chinese society towards the newly disseminated foreign doctrine of Buddhism. Therefore, there cannot be a singular, homogeneous approach or treatment of the subject.

History of Buddhism in China between the first and third century C.E., has primarily been a history of translation activities of Indian Buddhist scriptures through individual scholarly endeavors of monks, as well as those of the collaborative efforts of the monastic community. As has been argued by Jan Nattier, some of the earliest translations of Indian Buddhist texts and teachings into Chinese happened around the late second and early third century C.E. onwards[1].

While on the one hand, Buddhist philosophical doctrines became the central point of scholastic engagement for Buddhist monastic members, on the other hand, certain

[1]Jan Nattier, *A Guide to the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Translations, Texts from the Eastern Han 東漢 and the Three Kingdoms Period 三國*(Tokyo: Soka University, 2008), 4-10.

strange and fantastic perceptions about Buddhist monks, possessing supernatural powers of flying, healing diseases, making rain, began to draw the fancy of the Chinese common masses. Responses of individual rulers of both Han and non-Han ethnic origin towards Buddhism was again markedly different from the abovementioned first two. Chinese Han and non-Han rulers, often times, viewed the historical Buddha as a foreign deity of the western region (*xiyu* 西域), capable of granting immortality to dead souls, and of providing longevity to living worshippers, and more than often used the images of Buddha on imperial tombs consecrating the dead emperors. Sacrificial ceremonies, offerings and feasts in the name of worshipping the Buddha were then mere extended versions of the already prevalent ceremonial and religious practices of the indigenous Chinese *Huang-Lao* cult.

Interestingly enough, as can be discerned from the abovementioned facts, Buddhist monastic members, laity, and temporal rulers, then, had their own interpretations and perceptions of the early transmitted form of Buddhism, and consequently devised their own innovative methods of association with the dharma at their own individual levels.

The study here underscores the fact that prior to the large scale institutionalization of Buddhist monastic community, followed by the emergence of the Buddhist *saṅgha* as an asocial, apolitical unit, not subservient to the Son of Heaven, the three main segments of Chinese pre-modern society, comprising mainly of Buddhist clergy, laity, and the ruling aristocracy, all of who began their preliminary interactions with the newly conveyed fundamental Buddhist teachings and doctrinal discourses at their own individual levels, did so in isolation from each other. Mutual connections and interactions between the abovementioned societal groups in matters related to Buddhist activity were all a phenomenon of much later times.

Buddhologists and scholars of ancient Chinese history, during the early decades of the first century have argued that fragmentary information on Buddhism might have percolated into the different geo-political and socio-cultural spaces of pre-modern China through the trading networks, and by the active and passive involvement of human agents belonging to different professions, including those of merchants, labourers, refugees, envoys, monks and so forth. Lack of authentic doctrinal guidance in deciphering the meanings of the early teachings of Buddhism might have then possibly resulted in more flexible associations of the foreign faith with the Chinese commoners and rulers alike. In such cases, their simplistic understanding of Buddhism might have been influenced by their own individual psychological orientations, which perhaps, had been shaped in turn by the Chinese indigenous systems of thought.

The task of mapping political responses of the Chinese ruling house towards an emerging Buddhist community from the time around the first to the sixth century C.E., is being approached here, through the study of textual evidences corroborating Buddhist presence in specific geographical locations, and through an examination of the surviving records of Buddhist affiliation of individual rulers or clan leaders or even feudal lords and emperors.

The following table illustrates the scope that has been delimited for the study in this chapter:

TABLE NO. 4.A

<table>
<tr><th>Sl. No.</th><th>Time Period</th><th>Location</th><th colspan="2">Ruling Dynasty</th></tr>
<tr><td>01.</td><td>100-200 C.E.</td><td>Pengcheng</td><td colspan="2">Western or Former Han
Eastern or Later Han</td></tr>
<tr><td>02.</td><td>160-220 C.E.</td><td>Luoyang</td><td colspan="2">Eastern or Later Han</td></tr>
<tr><td>03.</td><td>220-265/280 C.E.</td><td>Wei, Shu and Wu</td><td colspan="2">Three Kingdoms Period</td></tr>
<tr><td>04.</td><td>265-317 C.E.</td><td>Cangyuan, Chang’an</td><td colspan="2">Western Jin</td></tr>
<tr><td>05.</td><td>320-420 C.E.</td><td>Jiankang/Jianye</td><td colspan="2">Eastern Jin</td></tr>
<tr><td>06.</td><td>365-417 C.E.</td><td>Xiangyang, Xiaoguo, Jiangling and Lu Shan</td><td colspan="2">Northern and Southern Dynasties</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">07.</td><td rowspan="3">386-577 C.E.</td><td rowspan="3"></td><td colspan="2">Northern Wei
386-535 C.E.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Western Wei
535-537</td><td>Eastern Wei
534-550</td></tr>
<tr><td>Northern Zhou
557-581</td><td>Northern Qi
550-577</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">08.</td><td rowspan="4">420-587 C.E.</td><td rowspan="4"></td><td colspan="2">Liu Song 420-479</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Southern Qi 479-502</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Liang 502-557</td></tr>
<tr><td>Chen
557-589</td><td>Western Liang
555-587</td></tr>
<tr><td>09.</td><td>581-618 C.E.</td><td></td><td colspan="2">Sui</td></tr>
<tr><td>10.</td><td>618-907</td><td></td><td colspan="2">Tang</td></tr>
</table>

4.2.a. *Early Buddhist Community around Pengcheng and their Interactions with the Ruling House Members* (65-194 C.E.)

Even before the formal attestation of the presence of Buddhism in Chinese secular and Buddhist literature, there are evidences to support the proposition that the infiltrated early form of Buddhism, not as an organic whole representing any particular school/sect of Indian Buddhism, but rather as basic, fragmentary and often misinterpreted concepts and notions related to Indian Buddhist philosophy and practices, did manage to earn some of its early group of followers from amongst the non-Han, foreign immigrant families who had settled in and around the outer fringes of Chinese society at a rather earlier date.

From around the latter half of the first century C.E, Buddhism seems to have made in-ways into the intellectual lives of the non-Han ethnic groups of settlers, dwelling in the regions north of the Huai River basin, in eastern Henan, southern Shandong and Northern Jiangsu. With recent archaeological excavations of Buddhist images at the Pengcheng region dating from around the first few decades of the first century C.E., the above claims have been proven to be true. Sun Yutang in *Handai de jiaotong* 漢代的交通[2]refers to Pengcheng as a prosperous centre of commercial activities, situated on the eastern extended branch of the trans-continental Silk Road, and connected with Luoyang to its west, Langye in southern Shandong to its northwest, Wujun and Kuaiji to its southeast, and to the trading ports of Indo-China and the Malay peninsula via Panyu (Guangzhou)[3].

[2]孫毓棠 Sun Yutang, 漢代的交通 *Handai de jiaotong* in 中國社會經瘠史集刊 zhongguoshehuijing ji shijikan.
[3]E. Zürcher, Brill, 2007, 26.

The *Hou Han Shu* 后漢書[4]testifies to the presence of a certain King Liu Ying, head of the state of Chu, related to Emperor Guangwu (25-58 C.E.) as one of his sons, initially enfeoffed as Duke in 39 C.E. and later as King in 41 C.E., to have performed sacrifices to the Buddha and to have observed fasting. He is also portrayed as one, who possessed profound interest in Daoism or the *Huang-Lao* (黃老) cult. The statement in the *HHS* reads as follows, "*wei futu ying jie za ji*". Although Maspero has identified *Huang-Lao*of the given excerpt in the *Hou Han Shu* as *Huang-Lao jun* (黃老君), one of the principal Daoist deities in the pantheon[5], and not as two separate individuals, as in Huang of Huangdi and Lao of Laozi, as has often been contended by the general scholars, there is yet consensus on one particular observation that has been shared by all, which is the recorded fact that King Liu Ying did pay occasional obeisance to the Buddha.

The *HHS* also records that Emperor Ming Di, in a decree, had cited the instance of Liu Ying as an ideal official, who on the occasion of confessing about his inappropriate action had redeemed the punishment by offering thirty pieces of yellow and white silk. Emperor Ming Di reportedly ordered his officials to have the abovementioned pieces of silk to be distributed for lavish ceremonies in service of the *upāsakas* (伊蒲塞) and *śramaṇas* (桑門).

In another such instance of a random mention of the involvement of a particular Chinese ruler with Buddhist rituals and practices, the study here critically examines passages in

[4]後漢書 Hou Han Shu, 72.4.b.
[5]Maspero's opinion has been taken from E. Zürcher, Brill, 2007, 27.

the *Sanguozhi*[6]（三國志）and the *HHS*[7]. Each of these two records mention a certain warlord, Zhai Rong by name, entrusted with the services of transportation of grain in the prefecture of Xiapei, Guangling and Pengcheng. Zhai Rong is depicted in these records to have erected a large Buddhist temple (*fu tusi* 浮圖饲), and to have sculpted an effigy (of perhaps the Buddha) decorated with silk and brocade. Below the Buddhist temple there was a large building that could house more than three thousand people, all of who chanted the Buddhist scriptures. He further instructed the followers of Buddhism (*hao fo zhe* 好佛者) from the region under his jurisdiction to accept and bear their allegiance to the Buddhist doctrine (*shou dao* 受到)[8]. Over five thousand householders reportedly assembled on this occasion (*wuqianyu ren hu* 五千餘人户). *Ren hu* (人户) would ideally mean householders or Buddhist laity, rather than the presumed corrected of *ren kou* (人口) as suggested by Zurcher.

Scholars of Buddhist history hold on to the argument that this particular excerpt with the portrayal of a specific case of the existence of a huge building with the presence of large mass gatherings to venerate the image of the Buddha, and other charitable activities associated with the said ceremony are all possibly indicative of the existence of a large Buddhist monastic community under the patronage of the said official.

However, based upon archaeological evidences and other extant textual sources, the study proposes that the Buddhist community at Pengcheng could perhaps have been of a decent size. The monastic establishment must have been formed around simple

[6]三國志 *San guozhi*, *wuzhi*, 4.515b
[7]後漢書 *Hou Han Shu*, 103.11a.
[8]後漢書 *Hou Han Shu* commentary by 李賢 Li Xian 献帝春秋 Xiandi Chunqiu, compiled by Yuan Ye 遠曄.

curiosity and interest towards some of the popular fundamental teachings of Buddhism, namely the concepts of afterlife, retribution, rebirth and mortuary implications which might have penetrated overtime into the circles of the illiterate common laity who were seeking ways to redeem their past and present actions, hoping for a better life beyond their own, these being issues that were hardly addressed in the indigenous Chinese systems of philosophy, and thus, to have proven successful in initially drawing the common Chinese laity's attention. Venerating ancestors and offering prayers to the pantheon of gods in Daoism was already an indigenous ritual, well in practice in almost all regions of China. Paying obeisance to the Buddha, must, then, have originated only as a practice in continuum to the previously existing rituals. The objective behind the latter might not have involved any real quest for philosophical speculation on the part of the newly ordained monks or new followers of Buddhism from among the laity, but, rather, to have been stimulated by an intense desire to reap overall spiritual merit.

4.2.b. *Early Buddhist Settlement Around Luoyang and the Connections with the Ruling House Members* (148-220 C.E.)

Luoyang, located at the crossroads of the trans-continental Silk Road as a prosperous, cosmopolitan centre and imperial capital stood witness to a gradually emerging small Buddhist monastic community which lacked much of a formal consolidated organizational status, comprising mostly of some non-Han immigrant Buddhist *ācāryas* along with few members of the Buddhist translation team of Parthian, Sogdian and Indo-Scythian origin.

In the absence of textual evidence, nothing substantial can be stated about the nature of communication that might have existed between the ruling aristocracy and the monastic community. Similarly, the inclination of the laity population at Luoyang around the

first and second century C.E., has also not been attested in either secular or Buddhist literature of the said period in time.

Historians have often argued that the presence of any new religious community of foreign origin, in this case of Buddhism, at the heart of a commercial or trade centre, with possible adherents from within the common masses could not have gone overlooked or unrecorded in Chinese historical annals and official dynastic records. In fact, with regard to official arrangement made available for the purpose of recording the presence of foreign travelers and envoys, and monitoring their activities, the ruling bureaucracy under the Han imperial rule, did have an office under its jurisdiction to cater to the above needs. It was termed as *Da Hong Lu* 大鴻臚 (Department of Foreign Relations)[9], and was associated with the task of overseeing the management of foreign emissaries. However, primary source investigation of the records pertaining to the *Da Hong Lu* in the Han dynastic history lack any information about the Buddhist community of Luoyang, and also on the nature of interaction that the monastic community members might have had with the royal house. Despite, lack of direct evidences, scholars like Erik Zürcher and Jinhua Chen are of the opinion that the Buddhist monastic community in and around Luoyang during the late first and early second century must have received some amount of support from the lay people, who were gradually beginning to exhibit interest in the newly imported foreign faith of Buddhism, even if the imperial rulers were still not in any direct interaction with the Buddhist monastic community there.

Buddhist monastic culture around the region of Luoyang was yet to develop into its full mature form around this period. With the absence of complete versions of Buddhist

[9]後漢書 *Hou Han Shu* 35.75-8a.

monastic disciplinary codes (*vinaya*) between the first and fifth century C.E., the process of institutionalization of Buddhism had been slowed down. Buddhist *vinaya* masters, like Fotudeng and Shi Daoan had managed to create a few streamlined compiled versions of various fragmentary and incomplete monastic codes, which were arranged such, so as to suit the requirement of the Chinese monastic community as per their adaptability and receptivity. Therefore, these Buddhist monastic institutions at Luoyang and other nearby centres at Pengcheng and Chang'an before the fifth century could rather be viewed as small monastic establishments, which, owing to their insignificant presence in Chinese society did not quite draw the attention of the imperial ruling house. Records of interaction between members of the Buddhist clergy and the Chinese imperial house, therefore, appear to be sparse and limited, confined mostly at individual levels.

The *Chu san zang ji ji,* 出三藏記集[10]*Vol. VII, 97.2.13* reports the presence of a certain Zhi Qian, having been the grandson of a certain Indo-Scythian who had come to settle at Luoyang under the reign period of Emperor Ling (168-188). He is portrayed as having been occupied with the scholarship of "barbarian/orthodox texts" (*hushu* 胡書) and was adept in the six foreign languages. He became a lay disciple of his compatriot Zhi Liang, the latter having been a disciple of Lokaksema, another renowned Buddhist master. He reportedly was invited by Sun Quan, the ruler of the State of Wu of the Three Kingdoms period (reigning between 229-252 C.E.) as per evidences in the *CSZJJ* and *Gao seng zhuan*. The passage reads that when ruler Sun Quan had heard about Zhi Qian's expertise in Buddhist scholarship, he expressed his concern over the ambiguity of certain passages as compiled in the then extant Buddhist scriptures. Zhi Qian, by

[10]*Chu san zang ji ji,* 出三藏記集, *Vol. VII, 97.2.13.*

virtue of his in-depth knowledge of Buddhism, succeeded in expelling all doubts. Thereupon, Sun Quan, deeply impressed by Zhi Qian's elucidation of the *dharma*, appointed the latter as a scholar of wide learning (*boshi* 博士), entrusted him with the task of instructing the crown prince in Buddhist teachings, offered him positions and ranks, and granted him imperial favors. Although Zhi Qian's career as court official is of contested authenticity, as this matter does not find mention in the historical records of *SGZ*, the thesis argues that the abovementioned fact does indicate certain initial phases of interconnectivity between the ruling house and the Buddhist monks at an individual level.

Buddhist biographical and bibliographical literature alongside secular historical sources like the *GSZ*, *CSZJJ*, and the *HHS* testify to the engagement of monk-scholars, mostly of Central Asian and Indian origin, namely, An Shigao, An Xuan, Yan Fotiao, Lokaksema. in the translation of Indian Buddhist scriptures. Passing mention of monks as *upāsakas* (伊浦塞), *śramaṇas*(桑门) have also been found figuring in certain imperial edits, as mentioned in the *HHS*, and also in some of the celebrated works of Han secular literature like the Xijing fu 西京腹. However, apart from tertiary mention of a few Buddhist terms like (*sangmen* 桑門, *shamen* 沙門), (*biqiu* 比丘) (*shamier* 沙彌儿), (*aqili* 阿祇梨) in some random imperial edicts, there are no further reports in any of the surviving textual sources on the nature of association that was shared by the monastic members and the laity, nor on the level of communication that might have existed, if at all, between the Buddhist monks and the rulers or officials.

Scholars like Jan Nattier have suggested that such translation activities only involved a small community of well read, erudite Buddhist monastic scholars, most of who were

of non-Han origin[11]. Nattier's argument is well attested in the records of Chinese Buddhist colophons which fail to provide any accurate information about the nature, actual size, internal organization structure, and mechanism of operation of the earliest Buddhist communities.

4.2.c. *Early Buddhist Monastic Presence at Chang'an and Connections with the Ruling House* (25-220 C.E.)

Chang'an, has long been argued by Buddhologists to have been one of the first few flourishing economic and cultural centres located on the trans-continental Silk Route to have witnessed the early waves of Buddhist dissemination. Buddhism is believed to have gradually disseminated into the central plains of China, after having crossed the Gansu corridor at *Yumen guan* (Jade Gate) from the neighboring oasis city states situated along the northern and southern fringes of the Tarim Basin and the Taklamakan desert. Buddhism at Chang'an was initially confined to small Buddhist monastic communities, grouped together in small settlements, and surviving through meagre support received from some of the lay population who are believed to have possessed some amount of social and economic standing. Rest of the Buddhist followers here were most likely to have been part of the illiterate population who were drawn towards the miracle making feats of Buddhist monks and the occasional exhibition of their supernatural powers.

The study, therefore, argues that prominent Buddhist presence in Chang'an, and the building up of connectivity ties between the Buddhist monastic Order and the imperial house were matters of the late fourth century C.E. and further beyond.

[11]Jan Nattier, *A Guide to the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Translations, Texts from the Eastern Han 東漢 and the Three Kingdoms Period 三國*(Tokyo: Soka University, 2008), 20-23.

4.2.d. *Buddhism at Xiangguo and Yein the Light of Political Responses* (312-349 C.E.)

The seed of the northern tradition of Buddhism was first sown in the regions of Chang'an, Luoyang and Pengcheng which were located along the eastern branch of the transcontinental Silk Route. When the political situation deteriorated in Luoyang around 310 C.E., the first known Buddhist Master, Fotudeng along with a small community of monks immigrated to Xiangguo, where they grew close to the rebel leader Shi Le. The association between Fotudeng and the Jie rulers (Shi Le and Shi Hu) were at an individual level. Both the Jie rulers of non-Han ethnicity were attracted towards the general misconception of Buddhist monks being healers, rain makers and soothsayers. Fotudeng, as the leading Buddhist master of the relatively small Buddhist monastic community grew close in his interactions with them, given the fact that he got actively involved in the cultic practices of these rulers and those of their family members. Shi Le and Shi Hu seem to have relied upon Fotudeng for his unprecedented magical skills in the prognostication of fate related to battle outcomes. With the shifting of the capital at Ye, Fotudeng gradually emerged as a leading Buddhist master, winning extreme favor and respect from court officials and members of the ruling house.

That which commenced as casual interactions with the Buddhist community, eventually developed into mature ties between the Buddhist monastic Order and the ruling house of Shi Le within a span of just three or four decades. This is corroborated by the fact that ruler Shi Le encouraged the upbringing of his young sons in a Buddhist temple, and actively engaged himself in Buddhist ceremonial practices, like the annual bathing ceremony of an idol of the Buddha on the eighth day of the fourth month. Several Buddhist temples, lavishly adorned in jewels, located on the city's main thoroughfare were reportedly on display under the support and patronage of the Jie rulers. Fotudeng

seems to have finally won the title of the "great jewel of the state". His connections with the Jie ruling house were attributed mostly to his display of miracles rather than his involvement with Buddhist doctrinal analysis.

Few other Buddhist monks besides Fotudeng, known to have won acclaim at the court of the non-Han ethnic Jie rulers, were Shan Daokai (a Chinese Buddhist Master from Dunhuang), Zhu Fotiao (A Chinese Master known to be roaming as an immortal in the Changshan mountains), and Fa Shou.

4.2.e. *Buddhist Centres at Xiangyang, Jiangling and Lu Shan and the Avenues of Connectivity with the Ruling House* (365-417 C.E.)

In this section, the study draws attention to the form of Buddhism that was prevalent in the three main locations of the Jin territory, the first being the site at Xiangyang (present day Hubei) where the Buddhist settlement was being led by Shi Dao'an between 365-379 C.E., the second site at the centre of Jiangling (present day southern Hubei) which was a rather small and less significant Buddhist settlement around the same time period, and the third site at Mount Lu (Lu Shan) which flourished between the years 380-417 C.E., under its founder father, Shi Huiyuan.

Despite being Buddhist centres of the Eastern Jin dynasty, the abovementioned three locations markedly differed from the other Eastern Jin dynasty centre of Jiankang in the following aspects; first while Buddhism at Jiankang (Jianye) bore the classic example of intellectual hybridization based upon the emphasis on ontological discussions, Buddhist *prajñā* speculations, *xuanxue* traditions and *qingtan* conversations resulting in a distinctive variant of Buddhism, termed as southern Buddhism, the Buddhist practices prevalent at the centres of Xiangyang, Jiangling and Lu Shan emphasized upon the practice of meditation (*dhyāna*), combining devotional

aspects with practical use of Buddhist icons. Second, while the formerly discussed Jiankang form of southern Buddhism imbibed teachings and intellectual discourses from Chinese indigenous systems of thought, the northern Buddhist tradition at Xiangyang, Jiangling and Lu Shan was directed towards breaking free from all possible existing Chinese influence. Third, the Jiankang form of southern Buddhism witnessed profound interactions and deep links of interconnectivity with the elite class intellectuals, provincial rulers and their families, and also members of Chinese intelligentsia. On the other hand, the Xiangyang form of northern Buddhism was based upon strict monastic values, ethics and codes formulated and practiced by distinguished *Tripiṭaka* Masters, seeking allegiance with the central Asian oasis states, and the northern and central Indian Buddhist monastic community. While the latter tradition of northern Buddhism was therefore a purer form, with its extended roots in central Asia and India, the southern tradition of Buddhism was more of a Sinified version, based upon selective adaptation of the disseminated Buddhist doctrines, followed by complex processes of syncretism and hybridization of Chinese indigenous thought systems.

The complexity of the issue dealing with the mapping of the political responses and reactions of the political authority towards an emerging Buddhist monastic institution arises out of the fact that monks and Buddhist clergymen trained in both the northern and the southern tradition of Buddhism were equally responsible for the creation of the typical sinicized gentry form of Buddhism which finally penetrated into the inner most circles of the upper class elite intellectuals and rich provincial gentry families and their members.

Following the demise of the great Buddhist Master, Fotudeng, some of the most prominent of his disciples, namely Shi Daoan, Zhu Fatai, Fahe, Zhu Sengfu dispersed

to regions both in the north and the south, along with a small community of Buddhist monks. Among these Buddhist refugees, the most distinguished of all, was Shi Daoan.

In accordance with the details mentioned in his biography preserved in the *GSZ* and the *CSZJJ*, and also based upon the critical observations of Tang Yongtong, Shi Daoan along with his circle of close followers underwent several rounds of migration, initially from his temporary abode at Huoze (located west of Yangcheng, Xian, Shanxi), relocating to a place called Wangwu (located to the north of Luoyang), over to Feilong Shan (North of Macheng, Xian, Hubei) where he founded monastic establishments and carried on full scale monastic activities. From there, his onward journey to Hengshan and further on to Wuyi saw him being invited by the governor of that commandery, a fact that translates into Daoan's first such initial encounter with the ruling class of Chinese society. From there on, Shi Dao'an proceeded to Xiangyang with his small circle of Buddhist followers.

4.2.e.i. *Buddhist Monastic Community at Xiangyang* (349-365 C.E.)

As has been attested in the *GSZ* and the *CSZJJ*, soon after Shi Daoan's arrival to Xiangyang, he, along with his small community of Buddhist followers were provided with a donation of a monastic residence as a gesture of reverence towards the Buddhist monastic community by a certain local magistrate, Zhang Yin from Qinghe (Hebei). This newly donated monastery was named as *Tanqisi* by Shi Dao'an. For purposes of gaining financial stability, and to fulfil the basic requirement for institutional sustainability, the Buddhist monastic establishment under the leadership of Shi Daoan maintained close ties with the ruling house members.

With donations received from members of families possessing social standing and economic status, the said monastery in the subsequent years, witnessed the erection of

a five-storied pagoda and four hundred residential quarters for monks. There were hearsays and miraculous stories associated with the Buddha image at the *Tanqisi* pagoda, wherein monastic community members and the Buddhist laity believed the Buddhist image stationed inside the pagoda to possess powers of movement and alleviation. In fact, with the miraculous discovery of a relic inside the head gear of the Buddha image, there emerged a cult surrounding it. Ruler Fu Jian of the Former Qin (357-387 C.E), originally residing at Chang'an reportedly made donations of sacred objects for its worship to the *Tanqisi* pagoda. Even during his stay at Xiangyang, Shi Daoan and his monastic community comprising able disciples like Zhi Dun and Zhu Fatai were instrumental in disseminating information about the basic teachings of Buddhism to the gentry class. Around 370-380 C.E., Emperor Jianwen seems to have become a keen follower of Buddhism as he listened to the preaching of Zhi Dun and Zhu Fatai, while lay emperor Xiaowu founded a Buddhist temple inside the palace chamber.

4.2.e. ii. *Buddhist Monastic Community at Jiangling*

As per accounts preserved in the Buddhist biographical text of the *GSZ*, Jiangling was the official residing and ruling site of the governor of Jingzhou, and the monastic settlements there were not only supported by the rulers themselves, but, also by the provincial governors, prefects, and higher gentry class officials. Records mention two important Buddhist monasteries at Jiangling, one named the Changsha monastery (*Changsha si*) where a certain Tanyi, an important Tibetan disciple of Shi Daoan served in the position of the abbot, and the second one, named the Shangming monastery (*Shangmingsi*). The latter witnessed the arrival of an old companion of Shi Daoan, Zhu Sengfu by name who is believed to have been revered greatly by the Prefect, Wang Chen himself, and to have expressed his earnest desire to have Zhu Sengfu as his

spiritual sponsor. Later the same Wang Chen is known to have converted to the cause of Buddhism along with his own family members by Zhu Sengfu.

4.2.e.iii. *Buddhist Monastic Community at Lu Shan* (334-417 C.E.)

Between the mid and late fourth and early fifth century C.E., Mount Lushan emerged as one of the most prominent centres of Buddhism. Shi Huiyuan, one of the most able and distinguished disciples of Shi Daoan contributed immensely and played a very crucial role in popularizing the foreign faith (Buddhism) among members of the lay population, cultured elite class, and even the imperial house and royal court. Shi Huiyuan's life was spaced between two different cultural realms of China, the north and the south, each of which exhibited its own share of political turmoil and intellectual orientation.

Having been trained under the tutelage of one of the most erudite scholar-monks, Shi Daoan in both the prominent traditions of Buddhism, namely the northern and the southern tradition, Shi Huiyuan could successfully exhibit his cosmopolitan nature and his unparalleled syncretic skills in interpreting and propagating the *dharma*. Although his life-long interest in leading the life of a recluse, and his profound inclination towards uniting the sacred geography of any quiet location with the deepest teachings of Buddhism resulted in his founding of one of the most ideal retreats for Buddhism on the picturesque location of Mount Lushan, he did quite spontaneously develop ties of connections with the gentry and the ruling house members, both at Jiankang in the south and at Chang'an in the north.

4.2.f. *Buddhist Monastic Community at Chang'an* (379-385 C.E.)

The scene of Buddhist presence at Chang'an changed dramatically around the beginning of 379 C.E., when the once former residence of the imperial house of the

Former Qin was overcome by the armies of Ruler Fu Jian, who, in due course of time, emerged as one of the most benevolent patrons of the dharma. The biographical account of Shi Daoan preserved in the *GSZ* depicts in details, the close connections which Shi Daoan and his community of monks shared with the ruler, Fu Jian, who is believed to have ordered his general, Fu Pi to invite and escort Shi Daoan to his new capital after having seized power at Xiangyang. Secular dynastic historical annals like the *Jin Shu* 晉書 and the writings of modern Chinese historian Tang Yongtong have provided evidence to substantiate the fact that Shi Daoan and ruler Fu Jian indeed shared a special bond of intimate connection. Despite having been a Buddhist monk, Shi Daoanreportedly received the imperial favour and honour of sharing space in the imperial chariot with the ruler Fu Jian himself. Furthermore, relevant passages and excerpts in the JS also portray Shi Daoan as providing political advice to Fu Jian, deterring him from undertaking political and military campaigns against the Southern provinces and states.

After the defeat of Ruler Fu Jian and the collapse of the Former Qin State, the new ruler of Tibetan origin, with the name, General Yao Xiang founded the Late Qin dynasty at Chang'an. Known to have been sympathetic towards the cause of Buddhism, it was not only the new ruler, Yao Xiang, but also his successor, Yao Xing, and his brother, Yao Song, serving as the Army Commander-in-Chief of the Left who formed a strong link of interconnectivity with the members of the Buddhist monastic community. The entire aristocracy seemingly possessed keen interest in the study and deliberation on Buddhist philosophical doctrines. Accounts suggest that Yao Xiang's successor, Yao Xing's interest in Buddhism had been so strong that he personally seems to have requested Huiyuan to furnish an explanatory prelude to the Buddhist text, *Da Zhidu Lun*, a

Mādhyamika treatise originally attributed to the Indian Buddhist philosopher, Nāgarjuna.

4.3. Interconnectivity between Buddhist Monastic Community and Imperial House amidst Rise of Buddhist Apologetic Thought (317-420 C.E.)

In the second stage of research investigation, the study here maps the nature and depth of interlinkages and close connections that might have originated and evolved between the ruling aristocracy and the gradually emerging Buddhist monastic community during the reign period of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420 C.E.). This second stage of study has been divided into two sub-sections. In the first sub-section, the focus remains to be the examination and exploration of extant textual evidences in the form of secular historical dynastic records and Buddhist bibliographical and biographical literature, while in the second sub-section, the emphasis remains to be the study of certain select relevant original excerpts from the primary source text *HMJ*.

The history of Buddhism is seen entering a new phase of evolution during the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-420 C.E.). The rise of Buddhism at the southern capital of Eastern Jin, at Jiankang was closely linked with the emerging popularity of Buddhism among the Wang clan members, hailing from a region called Langye, under the leadership of rulers like Wang Dao and Wang Dun. The mass immigration of the eastern Jin court royals, and of members of the officialdom began around 310 C.E. and especially coincided with the fall of the Former Jin capital of Luoyang in 311 C.E. Following the mass exodus, a new government was set up at Jiankang, also known by the name of Jianye in the south.

Erik Zürcher has enlisted the prominent rulers of the eastern Jin dynasty and the chronological order of their rule as follows:

TABLE NO. 4.B

Sl. No.	Date	Ruling Clan	Leadership
01.	310-325 C.E.	Rule of the Wang 王 clan	leadership of Wang Dao 王導 and Wang Dun 王.
02.	325-345 C.E.	Rule of the Yu clan	Yu Liang, Yu Bing and Yu Yi as leaders
03.	345-346 C.E.	Rule of Yu family is challenged	Under the leadership of a certain He Chong, and those of Huan 桓 and Chu 褚 are placed in power.
04.	346-373 C.E.	Rule of Huan 桓	under the leadership of Huan 桓.
05.	373-385 C.E.-	Rule of Xie 謝	under the leadership of Xia An.
06.	385-403 C.E.	The political faction under Sima Daozi fights Huan Xuan 桓玄	_____
07.	403-404 C.E.	Usurpation of the throne by Huan Xuan and later collapse of Huan Xuan at the hands of Liu Yu.	_____
08.	420 C.E.-	Liu Yu removes Emperor Gong from the imperial position and founds the Liu (Song) dynasty	_____

4.3.a. *Connection between the Ruling Wang Clan and the Buddhist Monk-Scholars* (400-499 C.E.)

Wang Dao (276-339 C.E.) [12] , reportedly, utilized the intellectual talents and administrative skills of the immigrants and fugitives from the north on one hand, and of the prominent elite class local gentry officials from the south on the other, and eventually managed to strengthen his rule. After the fall of the Wang clan, there were other short-lived clans and their individual rulers who succeeded in establishing their administrative control over the southern region of China, while the north of China continued to be ruled by non-Han ethnic groups.

In the southern region of China under the Eastern Jin rule, Buddhism around the last decade of the fourth century witnessed unprecedented popularity under imperial sponsorship and wide scale support. It was owing to the patronage received from the dictatorial ruler Sima Daozi, and later on from the Wang clan members from Langye, that the Buddhist monastic institutions, not only could win over members of the ruling house as lay followers of Buddhism, but also managed to receive huge emoluments and grants from the imperial treasury.

The most authentic record of interconnectivity between individual Buddhist monks and the ruling Wang clan under the rulership of Wang Dao and Wang Dun is preserved in the accounts of two of the most eminent Buddhist masters of the times, Shi Daobao and Zhu Daoqian in the Buddhist biographical literature of *GSZ*.

[12]The biography of Wang Dao has been preserved in *Jin Shu*, 65.5b.

4.3.b. *Mapping the Political Response as Reflected in Relevant Select Excerpts of the Hong Ming Ji*

Some of the most authentic reflections of the political responses towards the emerging Buddhist monastic order in premodern China around the fourth and fifth century C.E., are contained in the various treatises of *HMJ*. Fascicle eleven of *HMJ*, in particular, throw considerable light upon the reactions that were received from members of the ruling house, aristocracy, elite officials and even rulers and emperors. Some of these responses and reactions appear to be explicitly pro-Buddhist in approach, while the others appear as being largely of anti-Buddhist sentiments.

4.3.b.i. *Political Response of King Wenxuan*

In fascicle eleven[13], there is a treatise that appears in the form of a letter issued from the office of King Wenxuan and signed by a certain Prince, Xiao Ziliang by name. The said letter is directed to a person named Kong Zhigui who is reportedly a Palace-Aide to the Censor-in-Chief. The tone of the letter appears to be rather persuasive, owing to the fact that the ruler in person puts forth a formal request to a certain Kong Zhigui to seek refuge in the *Mahāyāna* teachings of the Buddha. There are also notable instances in the letter, wherein the ruler, King Wenxuan cites excerpts from the teachings of Mengzi and equates it with an interpretation of Buddhist sayings. This letter seemingly authored by King Wenxuan and signed by Prince Xiao Ziliang stands out as authentic testimonial evidence, highlighting the fact that even rulers in late fourth and early fifth century premodern China had been involved in the circulation of Buddhist apologetic thought, and in the wide scale propagation of the *dharma* (Buddhism). After critical examination of the content of the letter in original, the study here identifies the

[13]*Hong Ming Ji,* Fascicle 11, T. 52, 2102.

following trait or feature; that the core teachings of Buddhism related to any particular school/sect (*nikāya*) have not been discussed here. This underscores the fact that King Wenxuan was perhaps not much engaged in the dissemination of philosophical discourses related to Buddhism, but was perhaps more interested in justifying the relevance of the applicability of Buddhist teachings in the lives of the people, both at an individual and community level. It might also suggest that for the Chinese bureaucracy, the interest in Buddhist teachings was driven primarily by core administrative and governance requirements, and least by spiritual motivation.

The letter reads like a supposed conversation between King Wenxuan on the one hand and Palace-Aide, Kong Zhigui on the other. King Wenxuan refers to the Mengzi, stating that neither wisdom nor courage should be what an emperor should sought after, but rather he should be governed by the guiding principles of love and justice. He further emphasizes upon the fact that it was through his first encounter with Śākyamuṇī's teachings that he came to realize that both Mengzi and Śākyamuṇī were pointing towards the same fundamental principles of life and world view. However, followers of either of the two schools (of philosophy), in King Wenxuan's opinion, failed to acknowledge the common point of convergence in the two discourses. Highlighting the Buddhist teachings of *karman* and retribution, King Wenxuan argues with reference from the Confucian Classic of *Daxue*, that the branches and leaves are as significant as the root or the foundation; as much as one's own deeds and the consequences emanating out of them. The king further expresses his concern over the people devoting themselves to the study of the Confucian philosophical tenets only, and not towards engaging themselves in the serious deliberation about the common principles as advocated by both Confucianism and Buddhism. The fundamental teachings of

Buddhism, in the opinion of King Wenxuan were not opposed to the teachings of the *Five Classics*, as both had high regards for family ethics and social obligations.

Further, while deliberating upon the Daoist concept of following the spontaneous ways of nature and phenomena, King Wenxuan questions whether such a worldview and perception of life would at all prove appropriate enough in serving societal obligations. If always abiding by nature would have been the first and ultimate choice, then, Fangxun (Yao) should have waited for his four wicked sons to undergo intellectual reform before sending them all to exile, and Yu Shun should have provided a second chance to his not-so-worthy son, Shengjun to gain adequate wisdom. The letter concludes with a signature of Prince Xiao Ziliang and a final mention of the composition of a two-fascicle work by the author of the letter, entitled, *the Explanation on Dispelling Delusions* (*Shizhi*) which once again reveals the pro-Buddhist attitude reflected through conscious efforts being made by the ruling house members in propagating Buddhist apologetic thought. In response to King Wenxuan's letter, Kong Zhigui also authors three letters of correspondence, in which he initially claims his inclination towards the teachings of Li Lao on account of his family of noblemen bearing their allegiance to Daoism, and finally submits himself to the Triple Refuge of Buddhism.

The letter authored by King Wenxuan and signed by Prince Xiao Ziliang finally commends Kong Zhigui for the rightful act of placing his devotion and faith in Buddhism, and further urges Kong Zhigui to persuade others to also become followers of Buddhism.

4.3.b.ii. *Political Response of Emperor Yao*

Critical Examination of Emperor Yao [Xing Zilue]: Letter to Daoheng and Daobao

This treatise from the *HMJ* in *Fascicle Eleven*[14] also records the response of one of the rulers, Emperor Yao [Xing Zilue], who usurped the throne and became the self-proclaimed ruler of the Later Qin dynasty. This is, yet, another letter of correspondence written by the abovementioned Emperor Yao to two of the prominent Dharma Masters of fifth century China, Daoheng and Daobao, urging them to renounce their Buddhist monastic vows and robes, and return to secular life in order to be able to serve society with their intellectual brilliance. The letter here begins with a profound note on acknowledging the extraordinary intellectual prowess, and emotional tranquility and steadfastness of the two *Dharma* Masters, Daoheng and Daobao in their submission to the gate of the *dharma*. Emperor Yao proceeds towards underscoring the fact that, he, being the sovereign is entitled to rule all under Heaven (*tian xia*), and therefore for ideal governance would require suitable talents to administer the task. He expresses his earnest desire to employ capable people who would rather not live a life of seclusion, but would willingly offer their meritorious services for society. In the letter, Emperor Yao admits about seeking the wisdom of the two *Dharma* Masters in state governance, and questions them about their undeterred commitment towards propagating the *dharma*. The letter also runs as a lucid conversation where he shares his resolute will to officially propose to the Director of the Imperial Secretariat, [Yao] Xian to invite the two *Dharma* Masters, possessing brilliant minds to serve for the benefit of the masses. He concludes the letter by posing the question as to whether it is necessary to additionally serve in the capacity of a Buddhist monk or lay devotee, even after having constantly adhered to a Buddhist mind. Emperor Yao's final statement in the letter

[14]*Hong Ming Ji*, Fascicle 11.

records him saying that the two *Dharma* Masters, Daoheng and Daobao cannot further use their Buddhist monastic affiliation as a pretext to refrain from granting their services for the well-being of society at large.

In response to this letter, the two *Dharma* Masters, Daoheng and Daobao continued to uphold their commitment to the *dharma* and requested repeatedly not to be considered for any official appointments in any capacity whatsoever.

Their requests were blatantly rejected by Emperor Yao in another two of the official letters that followed the first. In each of these two letters, the emperor demanded that Daoheng and Daobao uphold the imperial decision and abide by the government order.

Critical Examination of Emperor Yao [Xing Zilue]: Letter to Kumarajiva

In this letter by Emperor Yao, written to the distinguished *Tripiṭaka* Master of all times, Kumārajīva, the former wanted the latter to convince the *Dharma* Masters, Daoheng and Daobao of leaving behind their Buddhist monastic vows of arhatship, and accept government appointment for rendering official services to the state. From an investigation of the content of this letter it becomes quite obvious that for Emperor Yao, following the Buddha Way or the Path of the *Bodhisattava* was not about renouncing the secular lives or refraining from accepting government positions or ranks, but to be able to continue towards engaging in them by employing one's intellectual brilliance and bringing in benefit and service to one's own countrymen. The *Bodhisattva* Path for Emperor Yao did not culminate in donning the monk's robe, or leading a life of asceticism, but under the governance of the Buddhist Way to be able to serve society with utmost sincerity. In Emperor Yao's opinion, accepting the responsibility of an administrative position would mean playing the role of a true Bodhisattva, something which in ideal was no less significant than upholding the Buddhist precepts of a monk.

Critical Examination of Emperor Yao [Xing Zilue]: Letter to Sengqian and Other Buddhist Monks

This letter reads like a dialogue between Emperor Yao and the eminent Buddhist monk-scholar Sengqian. The emperor here acknowledges of having examined each and every perspective, and issue of concern as had been shared by Sengqian, with regard to requesting Emperor Yao to withdraw the imperial decree formerly issued in the names of Daoheng and Daobao, for them to renounce their Buddhist monastic vows. In Emperor Yao's opinion, the virtue of self-righteousness could not be equalled in goodness to the merit of selfless service for others. Also adhering to one's principles was not in any way more significant than delivering all sentient beings (from suffering). He reiterated that during times that were very hard on the common masses, and the task of administering China was also emerging as an equally growing challenge, it was Emperor Yao himself, who, at the individual level was trying to resolve issues. He was hopeful that with intellectually talented people in his administrative services, the best could be provided to the countrymen in terms of governance. He justified his call by reasoning out that even though as Dharma acaryas [teachers], the Buddhist Tripitaka Masters focus their concentration upon the Dharma Gate, yet they assist all others in leading a meaningful life by propagating the dharma. Does this, then, not align itself with the objective of leading the people and simultaneously managing the affairs of the state, asks Emperor Yao. He interestingly points out that the task of propagating the dharma would be a futile gesture if all people due to the present difficulties and chaos were to turn into mere objects. Finally speaking of Daoheng and Daobao, the emperor underscores that serving the world in a state of emergency would be as much worthy of a reward for meritorious act, as it would be to take refuge in the secluded life of a Buddhist monastic member. To bring in peace in a country through ideal governance

would, in fact, reap in greater merit in this present life than it would (according to the Buddhist principles) in the afterlife.

4.3.b.iii.*Political Response of Provincial Governor of Qingzhou, Liu Shanming: Letter of Correspondence Addressed to Dharma Teacher [Acarya] Sengyan in Reply to the Latter's Declining of Offer to Serve under Official Appointment*

The response of the Provincial Governor of Qingzhou, Liu Shanming lies confined in a letter that he authored for monk-scholar Sengyan. He begins the letter by citing that the Daoist Classic, *Zhuangzi*, had placed admonitions about the misfortune that would be brought about for leaving one's native place during youth. In his views, the Buddhist teachings only led a young son to a state of utmost confusion, who seemingly lost the way back to his own father. He accused the Buddhist teachings of uprooting their devoted followers from their place of origin (by renouncing family ties) and charged the Buddhist monks of mindlessly arguing over trivial matters that pose challenges to the ancient system of thought. He then quite explicitly expressed his desire to recommend talented and virtuous individuals to the Imperial Court by convincing them to renounce their lives of obscurity. Finally, citing the case of a certain Wang Xiang who originally was a woodman and was granted appointment at the age of sixty to serve in the government, while a certain person, Gong Sun Hong by name (of the Former Han dynasty) originally reared pigs but was recommended for a position at the central government when he was quite old, and enjoyed an audience with the emperor as the prime minister. Liu Shanming reinstated his desire to invite Sengyan to serve in the official ranks by revising his secular life and worldly ties.

4.3.b. iv. ***Political Response by Director of the Imperial Secretariat He Chong: Letter of Correspondence Addressing the Controversy as to Whether Buddhist Sramanas need to bow to the king***

As part of a classic example portraying ideological differences between members of the officialdom on the one hand, and members of the imperial family or the emperor himself on the other, stands out a report, which has been critically examined here, where there seems to be an underlying debate regarding whether or not Buddhist sramanas should bow to the king. The report is authored by the Director of the Imperial Secretariat, He Chong, who convincingly reasons out the cause for not compelling Buddhist sramanas for not bowing to the ruler.

As a prelude to the discussion, the report highlights that during the sixth year of the Xiankang reign period of the Jin dynasty (around 340 C.E.), Emperor Cheng was still a minor and was guided in political affairs by Yu Bing. The latter was of the opinion that Buddhist sramanas should pay obeisance to the ruler by following the prescribed Chinese protocol of bowing their heads. On the contrary, officials such as the Director of the Imperial Secretariat, He Chong maintained a strong stance of Buddhist *śramaṇas*of not having to bow to the king. In order to emphatically put forth their plea, a petition was prepared by the following officials, namely Director of the Imperial Secretariat, He Chong, Chief Administrators Chu She and Zhuge Hui, and Imperial Secretary officials, Feng Huai and Xie Guang. The said petition was submitted to the imperial throne for consideration and approval. The conversation of the report was initiated by the Director of the Imperial Secretariat, He Chong (292-340 C.E.) himself, where he began by eulogizing Emperor Wu for his profound intelligence in establishing the Jin dynasty and governing the country with the Mandate of Heaven, followed by praising Emperor Ming for having governed all under Heaven with a sense or profound

calmness. In both cases, opined He Chong, the emperors acknowledged that the permanent way of performing the highest good rested in the *śramaṇa's* selfless act towards all members of society and not restricted to the act of bowing to the king. He, therefore, requested the imperial house to consider the examples of the preceding emperors and reorient their approach towards the specifics of Buddhist monastic demeanor.

4.3.b.v. *Political Response by Emperor-in-charge Yu Bing: Imperial Decree Issued on Behalf of Emperor Cheng of the Jin Dynasty Admonishing the Request of the Petition Submitted by the Director of Imperial Secretariat, He Chong Requesting that Śramaṇas Should Abstain from Bowing to the Ruler*

In this imperial decree, Yu Bing as the Interim-In-Charge of the imperial governance, on behalf of Emperor Cheng (who is a minor) mentions that it is pertinent to abide by the customs which are specific to any particular state or kingdom. Yu Bing argues that the custom of bowing before the ruler or the emperor has had a long-standing tradition in China. This practice did not come into being for the sake of a ceremonial practice only but was based upon the existing Confucian ethics related to social obligations and family ties whereby the proper decorum and code of conduct was laid down between the father and the son, as well as between the sovereign and the subjects. Such institutionalized codified laws of social conduct could not therefore be challenged. Yu Bing levelled serious criticism against the Buddhist monks, who, in his opinion, had been defying almost all of the Confucian ethical codes of conduct, including deforming of their physical appearances, abstaining from taking up social responsibilities and duties, altering statutes of etiquette and propriety, and further disowning Confucian moral teachings. Buddhist monks in Yu Bing's opinion were nothing more than subjects

to the Jin court and therefore, in no way, did they have the right to discontinue the already established code of social conduct.

There were reportedly three rounds of petition submitted from the Director of the Imperial Secretariat, He Chong and other officials justifying their stand in support of the decision of the Chinese Buddhist monastic community of not having to abide by the social obligation of bowing to the emperor. The petition was twice met with strong rejection by the imperial court. However, in the end, Yu Bing's decree of Buddhist monks having to oblige by following the norm of bowing to the king was finally repealed.

4.3.b.vi. *Buddhist Master Shi Huiyuan and His Correspondence with Ruler-Dictator Huan Xuan*

Shi Huiyuan did not reportedly have any direct ties with either the Jin court officials or with the prominent elite class members of the gentry population, although most of them were known to have been the chief benefactors of Buddhism until as late as 402 C.E.

It was around 402 C.E., that a certain Huan Xuan, a self-declared emperor along with his allied forces swept into the central kingdoms of the Jin empire along with his allies emerged as the sole dictator. Prior to Huan Xuan's occupation of the throne in 402-403 C.E., Shi Huiyuan did not reportedly engage in any form of contact and communication with the imperial house, nor received any grants or emoluments from the elite gentry class. Most of the textual evidences available have portrayed Huan Xuan, both as an admirer of the *xuanxue-prajñā* exegetical discourses, having himself been an erudite scholar of Chinese Classics, well read in the *Laozi* (*Daodejing*) and *Zhuangzi* and deeply interested in the Buddhist doctrines, and also of having been the greatest

persecutor of Buddhism, given his doubts and reservations about the Chinese Buddhist clergy's growing involvement in power struggles at the court and political intrigues.

Huan Xuan has been infamously known for his drastic persecution measures while rising to power as a dictator at Gushu (402-404 C.E.). His anti-clerical attitude has been clearly reflected through the following measures; first, being his repeated attempts to convince distinguished monks to return to secular activities and serve in the official ranks of the imperial court, second, being his continued intervention in the selection process of members for appointment in the sangha, and third, being his decree, ordering the registration of all monks in the Province of Yangzhou.

It therefore might be stated that while Huan Xuan as an individual was closely engaged with the study of Buddhist exegetical texts and with Buddhist gnostic speculation, on the other hand, as an emperor he identified serious flaws in the Buddhist monastic practices and rituals, most of which stood out as challenging the existing Chinese Confucian social norms, and opposed the rise of Buddhist monastic Order as a new social organization which refused to be subservient to the imperial authority.

4.3.b.vii. *Political Response in Huan Xuan's Letter to Shi Huiyuan of Mount Lu*

A letter issued by Emperor Huan Xuan to Shi Huiyuan of Mount Lushan, one of the first patriarchs of the Pure Land School of Buddhism and the founder of the White Lotus Society, was explicitly critical and sarcastic about the conduct of Buddhist monks around the fourth and fifth century C.E. Pointing towards the distinctive discernible traits of sramanas, such as those related to renouncing all family ties, disowning members of six relations, abstaining from the pleasure of good food and clothing, and living a life of extreme austerity with the sole purpose of attaining a moment of Buddhahood, ruler Huan Xuan questioned the very credibility of the intension of the

monastic members, who he believed were more smitten by worldly desires than any other ordinary person of the mundane world. He further underscored that with every passing day each person is adding on days to his old age, and even if one tries to recover the youthful time, it shall only be a futile exercise.

4.3.b. viii. *Political Response by Huan Xuan: Issuance of Letter to the Eight Official Executives Regarding the Issue of Buddhist Monks Having to Fulfil the Obligation of Bowing to the King*

The letter begins with a self-declaration by Ruler Huan Xuan, stating that he is already aware of the debates and deliberations that have been in circulation over the issue of whether or not Buddhist monks are liable to abide by the law of the Land of the Han, which prescribes all subjects having to bow to the ruler, and that the issue still remains unresolved. Huan Xuan proposes that while on the one hand, Yu Bing's formal decree ordering Buddhist monks to pay respect to the ruler by bowing, emanates from the latter's unconditional reverence for Confucian ideals, on the other, He Chong's justification for the non-requirement of monks to bow to the ruler emerges out of his strong ties with Buddhist principles and monastic obligations. In Huan Xuan's view, it was only appropriate to look upon Buddhist clerical members as equal in status and standing to those of the lay people, both being subjects of the land and the emperor. Therefore, an imperial decree, commanding obeisance of all subjects would also have to be the same for monks and laity.

Furthermore, in the letter, Huan Xuan cites references from the *Laozi* (*Dao De Jing*), explaining that since time immemorial, rulers or princes from all over China have been treated as being equal to the three elements; the Heaven, the Earth and the Way. It is because of this inherent virtue in them that they have been granted the Mandate of

Heaven (*tian ming*). Likewise, Huan Xuan states that the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*) views the greatness of Heaven and Earth through manifestations of life. Thus, the ones who maintained the Way, and subsequently arranged all things in order were the virtuous sovereigns of the land. It was then, certainly obligatory for people to respect the imperial throne of honour and to show courtesy to the rulers in accordance with the already existing norm. This, according to Huan Xuan, then, rightfully justifies the obligation of the Buddhist monks to bow before the ruler.

4.3.b. ix. *Political Response of the Eight Executive Officials: Issuance of Formal Letter to Huan Xuan*

The response of the Chinese officialdom to the letter issued by Huan Xuan was penned down by a certain Huan Qian who was the Imperial Capital Army General along with the Imperial Secretariat Director and Marquis of Yiyang. At the very outset, the petitioners seem to have accepted the official decree, ordering all Buddhist monks to bow to the emperor. Yet, they also make an attempt to present their perception of the issue. They begin justifying their views by pointing out the underlying differences between the perspectives of Buddhism and those of the teachings of Laozi and Confucius. Thus, while the Chinese people, driven by Confucian ethical values have been known to have treated their bodies (skin and hair) as a valuable inheritance from their ancestors, and therefore, donot indulge in making any changes in them, the Buddhist monks, likewise, in accordance with their Buddhist monastic disciplinary codes, shave off their hair and accept the tonsure. Similarly, while Confucian adherents believe that serving one's parents is the supreme form of filial piety, the Buddhist monk believes that lack of vigilance towards one's parents does not necessarily reflect lack of filial piety. Since Buddhism, ever since the time of its first phase of dissemination during the rule of the three dynasties (Han, Wei and Jin) was accepted and tolerated,

despite being a foreign faith, then its norms and codes need also to be abided by. Finally, as the ultimate point of justification, the eight executive officials argue that if the king claims to follow the *dharma*, then he should also accept the prescribed Buddhist monastic code of conduct, otherwise his adherence would be termed as being selective adaptation.

4.3.b.x. *Huan Xuan's Final Response*

After four such rounds of mutual exchanges of letters and petitions, there was a final (fourth) letter written by Defender-In-Chief, Huan Xuan. In this letter, in very explicit terms, Huan Xuan defends the cause of Buddhism, stating that the faith is too profound and beyond the ordinary in intelligibility. He also underscores the fact that he has been able to connect with the sincere thoughts that all followers of Buddhism adhere to, and that he now shares with them, the same bond of reverence with the dharma. Having ascended the throne, he issued the declaration that the matter regarding whether or not, monks should bow before the ruler, is now at his discretion. Since the matter, in his view, is quite complex, Huan Xuan called upon all others not to coerce sramanas to bow before the king, and to make this decision of his, universally public.

4.4. Critiquing the Political Response towards the Growing Buddhist Monastic Community after the Propagation of *Hong Ming Ji*

4.4.a. *Critical Survey of the Political Response of Emperor Liang Wudi*

Emperor Liang Wudi, or Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty (reign period 502-549 C.E.), also known by his personal name, Xiao Yan has been held in high esteem in Buddhist historical narratives and chronicles, almost at par in distinction with the Indian Buddhist patron and ruler, Emperor Aśoka. Having ascended the throne as the founder ruler of the State of Liang, his extraordinary competence as a ruler had always been an

important theme of scholarly discussion, as much as his controversial image of that of a Chinese Buddhist patron[15]. However, that which remains to be one the most neglected areas of research in relation to Emperor Liang Wudi's rule, is the study of the complex union between political and monastic forces during his imperial rule. Emperor Liang Wudi's reign had been marked by political stability, economic prosperity, and most importantly by unprecedented heights of Buddhist patronage, wherein the emperor's political life seems to have been closely and intricately intertwined with his religious life. Apart from nurturing close ties with the Chinese Buddhist clergy, Emperor Liang Wudi reportedly had been drawn towards the religious and spiritual aspects of Buddhist philosophical doctrines.

Jinhua Chen attests the abovementioned fact by drawing attention to a unique occurrence, the founding of a *neidaochang* (*bodhimaṇḍa* or religious precinct or field of practice, analogous to a Buddhist temple or monastery) within the premises of the imperial palace building of Emperor Liang Wudi[16]. Such Buddhist temples located within the imperial palace buildings stood out for a wide variety of activities that connected the religious interests of the Buddhist clergy with the political interests of the royal house members. This spiritual arena served multiple purposes, namely, those of a translation centre, facilitating the rendition of select Indian Buddhist scriptures into Classical Buddhist Chinese, one of an imperial state-funded Buddhist assembly hall, a venue for the administering of Bodhisattva precepts to emperors and their extended family members, including empresses, concubines and princes, as a top-level unit of monastic leadership activities, as much as a revered Buddhist shrine, housing a

[15]A detailed study of Liang Wudi's political career and Buddhist affiliation in this study has been conducted based upon Mark Strange, "Representations of Liang Emperor Wu as a Buddhist Ruler in Sixth-Seventh Century Texts", *Asia Major* 24, no. 2 (2011), 53-112.
[16]Jinhua Chen, ""Pañcvārṣika" Assemblies in Liang Wudi's Buddhist Palace Chapel," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 66, no. 1 (2006), 44.

Buddhist relic, or even as a theatre house for showcasing religious performances for members of the aristocratic royal house. Although many scholars support the viewpoint of Chou Yi-liang that it was with Emperor Liang Wudi that the tradition of building imperial Buddhist palace chambers was first inaugurated, Jinhua Chen argues that there did exist something of an imperial Buddhist palace chamber or temple within the premises of the imperial garden both during the Later Qin (384-417 C.E.) and Northern Liang (397-439 C.E.) periods[17]. Similarly, Emperor Xiaowu of the Eastern Jin dynasty (371-396 C.E.) is known to have constructed within his imperial premises, a Buddhist temple *Jingshe* and to have invited some *śramaṇas* to reside in there.

China's southern capital of Jiankang on 7 May, 504 C.E., witnessed a historic event. as per records preserved in the biographical notes of Emperor Liang Wudi in the extant primary source, *Wei Shu* 魏書. The emperor had called upon over twenty thousand subjects of his imperial state, including both Buddhist monks and lay people to assemble at the central chamber of the Zhongyun Hall at the Liang imperial palace. On that very day he formally renounced his family's association with Buddhism and declared his newly founded faith in Buddhism. After three days on 10 May 504 C.E., he issued a second edict reinstating Buddhism as the "only true way".

This marked one of the regular Buddhist events that continued to be organized by Emperor Liang Wudi every five years, the *pañcavarṣika* (*wuzhefahui* or *wuzhedahui*) or the grand religious ceremonies or *dharma* gatherings, where monks and laity from all rungs of society were invited for Buddhist doctrinal deliberation and vegetarian mass feasts, irrespective of their age, gender, social standing, and even philosophical affiliation. Chanting and lecturing on some of the most significant Buddhist *sūtras* like

[17]Jinhua Chen, 2006, 52.

the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* were also employed as tools of religious manipulation meant to convert the faith of the Chinese lay people to Buddhism. Liang Wudi's patronizing activities were thus just not confined to funding the Buddhist monastic institutions and clergy only, but was also devised to create an interest among the common lay people towards the foreign doctrine of Buddhism by their close witnessing of Buddhist rituals and practices.

Throughout the following years till the end of his reign period, Emperor Liang Wudi emphasized upon the role of Buddhism for imperial reforms and state rituals. He is also known to have patronized major Buddhist events, such as largescale construction of Buddhist temples, pagods, stupas and monasteries, and promoting the funding of Buddhist scholarship.

While Emperor Liang Wudi's unconditional support for the Buddhist monastic community and lay members won widescale appreciation from quite a few members of the royal court, he also received an equal share of opposition and dissent from some other members who were fearful of the growing command of the Buddhist monastic community that would in future, perhaps, underscore the supremacy of the Liang imperial institution. As Emperor Liang Wudi's reign ended in political chaos and social unrest, marked by the confinement and later death, followed by the founding of the State of Chen under a formal military general, Chen Baxian (503-559 C.E.) on 16 November 557 C.E., severe debates and controversies emerged over the nature of engagement and involvement between the Buddhist monastic clergy and the imperial house. From the sixth century onwards, there arose serious deliberations upon the role of Buddhism in political commitment.

Scholars like Mark Strange have identified three distinct intellectual discourses in circulation during the premodern period in Chinese history which critically examine the nature of Liang Wudi's association with the Buddhist monastic community after the latter's institutionalization, and also the cascading effects produced by such association[18].

The first such discourse underscored the idea that despite imperial patronage received by the Buddhist sangha from Emperor Liang Wudi, the relationship between the imperial house and monastic community was one that was ridden by conflict of interests, and that the Buddhist clergy had no ability, nor potential to claim its legitimate authority over the imperial house.

The second discourse delineated Buddhism and the influence of the Buddhist community from the administrative life of Emperor Liang Wudi. In fact, as part of royal propagandistic strategy, Emperor Liang Wudi's conformity to Confucian principles of statecraft was highlighted.

The third discourse, very tactfully assigned Liang Wudi's peaceful and stable reign period of almost half a century to his affiliation and sympathetic attitude towards Buddhism. The justification provided for his successful regime was that of Buddhist piety and merit gaining activities through sincere patronage to the Buddhist monastic community. The Mandate of Heaven, in this case, arguably went in favor of Emperor Liang Wudi's ascension to power, by virtue of his adherence to Buddhist moral principles.

[18]Mark Strange, "Representations of Liang Emperor Wu as a Buddhist Ruler in Sixth-Seventh Century Texts", *Asia Major* 24, no. 2 (2011), 56-60.

The fourth discourse that emerged around the eighth century highlighted the intellectual perception that if Buddhist philosophical doctrines were to be used mindfully, they could promote mindful good governance.

The primary source texts which highlight the trajectory of the abovementioned popular discourses are *WS, Jinlouzi*, and *Lidaisan bao ji*. Overall, the image of Emperor Liang Wudi appears to have been portrayed in a negative manner, wherein his administrative failure is often attributed to his allowance of institutional interference by the Buddhist monastic community. Most of the Chinese historical-biographical works therefore carry a negative and anti-Buddhist overtone, such that Emperor Liang Wudi's intentions remain doubtful and questionable. Official documents also project an overt tendency of re-analyzing and re-examining Liang Wudi's role in promoting Buddhism and patronizing the dharma to an extent such that the former mentioned factors were considered reason enough for severed ties between the emperor and his Confucian officialdom, draining the imperial house of funds that had, instead been used for erecting Buddhist temples and monasteries, and instigating some of the early signs of mass resentment.

Emperor Liang Wudi's inclination is known to have reached unprecedented heights, based upon the accounts preserved in the historical documents. He reportedly renounced worldly ties and was determined to take up monkhood at the Tongtai monastery of Jiankang, if not for the timely payment of a ransom amount by court officials to expediate his release. Emperor Liang Wudi's role in facilitating the religious intervention of Buddhism in the political affairs of the state won him the title, "emperor Bodhisattva" (*Huangdi pusa* 皇帝菩萨). His wearing of the monks' robe during his worship of the Buddha and following a strict vegetarian diet. Researchers have however

identified certain tendencies of manipulation in the historical dynastic annals of Wei Shu by the historian and compiler of the text, Wei Shou as the investigation of all available data testify to the fact that Emperor Liang Wudi's conversion to Buddhism was an event that predated his regime's decline.

Almost contemporaneous to the *WS* is the *Jin Lou Zi*, a ten *juan* long collection of a series of writings, compiled by Liang's Prince of Xiangdong, Xiao Yi (508-555 C.E.) around 554-555 C.E., where he presents a biographical sketch of his father, Emperor Liang Wudi under the section, "Sovereign in the Ascendant" at the end of the opening scroll. The notable difference in his affiliation is reflected in his depicted company of illustrious individuals wherein in *WS* he was depicted as one of his barbarian rulers. Liang Wudi's abstinence from the use of non-vegetarian food items have also found resonance in the *JLZ*, depicting the pious side of his moral character. This primary source document also states that after his mother's death, Emperor Liang Wudi retired into a state of filial mourning, while his father's death reportedly led him into a state of coma. His filial piety was thus in accordance with the principles as reflected in the Confucian Classics of the *Xiao Jing* 孝經 and the *Li Ji* 礼記.

The third primary source document that testifies to a close association between Emperor Liang Wudi and his Buddhist ideals is the Buddhist chronicle, *Lidai Sanbao Ji*, compiled by Fei Changfang in the late 6th century C.E. Fei Changfang reportedly served as a scholar of Canonical Translation at Chang'an's *Daxing Shan* Monastery. The abovementioned work survives from around the last decades of the 590s. He himself had once been the witness and victim of severe Buddhist persecution between 574 C.E. and 578 C.E. when Northern Zhou Emperor Wu (56-578 C.E.) had deprived members of the Buddhist clergy from occupying ecclesiastical positions. The *LDSBJ*, a chronicle

of the history of Buddhism in China with a detailed account of Buddhist scholarship, translation activities and monastic engagements was therefore authored with the purpose of propagating the cause of the dharma to the Sui imperial house.

As was true with the nature of Buddhist apologetic thought, the underlying purpose of propagating and popularizing the dharma, stemmed out of the serious concern for the survival of Buddhism on the foreign atmosphere of China. For this, the two very essential requirements were, first, imperial recognition and patronage, second, mass mobilization. In order to be able to invite imperial support, and to counter the ill effects created by Northern Zhou emperor Wu's anti-Buddhist policy, Fei Changfang projects the image of Emperor Liang Wudi as an ideal sovereign whose imperial administrative success rested in his continued support for Buddhist activities. As in the *JLZ*, *LDSBJ* also associates Emperor Liang Wudi's receiving of spiritual support and the Mandate of Heaven on grounds of his Buddhist piety. Fei Changfang suggested that Emperor Liang Wudi, himself was of the conviction that administrative stability could only be granted to his regime by the principles of the Three Jewels of Buddhism (*Triratna*) above, those of the Four Heavens in the middle, and the allegiance he received from the *Nāgarājas* and *Devas* below. Like the other primary source documents, namely WS, *JLZ*, the *LDSBJ* also corroborates the fact that Emperor Liang Wudi entertained monks and lay devotees to lavish vegetarian feasts and supported Buddhist doctrinal lectures.

Liang Wudi's other patronizing activities included efforts towards the promotion of overall education and support of learning for those members of premodern Chinese society who had been deprived of formal education, of encouraging Buddhist translation endeavours, and of organizing regular doctrinal interpretation of Buddhist

texts and treatises through regular sessions of deliberations and discussions that would benefit Buddhist monks and laity alike.

In the *LDSBJ*, Emperor Liang Wudi also features as one of those emperors who commanded equal standing as those of the other members of the Chinese intelligentsia, given his in-depth knowledge and erudite scholarship in all of the ancient Chinese Classics. The *LDSBJ* reports that Emperor Liang Wudi wrote exegetical treatises on the *Li Ji* 礼記, the *Zhou Shu* 周書, the *Zhuangzi* 庄子, the *Dao De Jing* 道德經, the *Xiao Jing* 孝經 and the *Lunyu* 论語. The emperor's life of simplicity and austerity was given a specific pro-Buddhist explanation, His vegetarian diet, coarse clothing and ordinary bedding stood in sharp contrast to the lavish ceremonies and religious offerings at Buddhist feasts that he would arrange with imperial funds. He is also known to have been responsible for the large-scale construction of Buddhist viharas, temples and monasteries, all sponsored by the Liang State imperial funds. Such activities were directly attributed to the reason for the granting of cosmic assistance and divine support to Emperor Liang Wudi's uninterrupted, stable, imperial rule, by most of his biographers.

Fei Changfang's narration style in the *LDSBJ* appears convincing enough for the Sui rulers to emulate Liang Wudi's model of Buddhist propaganda. Fei Changfang therefore, through his depiction of Emperor Liang Wudi's patronage of Buddhism perhaps pointed towards the projected authority of the ruler beyond the physical realm of this world. The *LDSBJ*, thus, stands out as another apologetic text, which was composed to encourage temporal rulers to support the cause of Buddhism.

4.4.b. *Anti-Buddhist Political Response from Xun Ji*

As per official biography preserved in the Beishi, a certain Xun Ji (died in 547 C.E.), occupying official ranks as an Attendant-in-ordinary or as Imperial Classical Expositor of the Eastern Wei State is reportedly known to have been one of the fiercest critics of Buddhist propaganda in general, and of Liang Wudi's Buddhist patronage in particular. The BS was a text compiled around 659 C.E., and finds due attestation in the Tang catalogues. Despite originally hailing from a family which had its roots in the lower Changjiang River Basin, he chose to serve the State of Eastern Wei. His former acquaintance with Emperor Liang Wudi, prior to the latter's accession to the throne, and his serving as a court official in the northern state of Eastern Wei instead of the southern State of Liang, has been interpreted by Mark Strange as having been a clear sign of defiance of Emperor Liang Wudi's administrative policy, because of its heavy reliance upon the foreign imported doctrine of Buddhism. Xun Ji's open criticism earned him the status of Emperor Liang Wudi's enemy. As per reports in the Beishi, Emperor Liang Wudi had ordered Xun Ji's execution, and to evade the order, Xun Ji had fled to the State of Eastern Wei.

A full-length letter by Xun Ji addressed to Emperor Liang Wudi lies preserved in the apologetic treatise of *GHMJ*, a sequel to *HMJ*, compiled by the sixth century distinguished monk-scholar, Daoxuan (596-667 C.E.), the abbot of the Ximing monastery at Chang'an and a comparatively shorter version of it in the BS. In each of the above primary source documents, the letter features alongside a host of other anti-Buddhist treatises. The content of Xun Ji's letter encompasses two of his most serious concerns, the first being the overindulgence of Emperor Liang Wudi in Buddhist propagandistic activities, the second being the over-interference of the Buddhist monastic community, Buddhist clergy and Buddhist monastic institutions in the

imperial affairs and governance policy of the State of Liang[19]. In case of the former, attention was drawn to the specific emerging trends like reforms in the imperial ancestral sacrifices wherein vegetarian sacrifices had been introduced by Emperor Liang Wudi, superfluous spending under his patronage for constructing huge Buddhist pagodas, stupas, temples, statues, his discernible practice of convening large Buddhist assemblies with a huge congregation of monks and lay devotees, and his granting of donations and material gifts to the Chinese Buddhist monastic community. In matters related to the latter, attention was drawn towards the rising monastic trend of close interference of the Buddhist clergy in not just the political life of the imperial State of Liang, but ever since the Han imperial times. Objection was raised against the tendency of granting political legitimacy to any ruler based upon his Buddhist affiliation. Examples of Buddhist monastic members getting involved in secular activities, trade and commerce, and even in the internal governance of the imperial state, revealing their worldly attachments are seen to emerge as specific targets of criticism in Xun Ji's personal letter to Emperor Liang Wudi. Anti-Buddhist sentiments echoed louder when Xun Ji, like many others of the times, argued that imperial patronage to Buddhist establishments created a huge financial burden on the imperial state.

[19]Mark Strange, 66-85.

CONCLUSION

In this concluding section, the study attempts to systematically arrange the major findings and critical observations which have come to the fore during the entire course of the research investigation, by means of which it plans to testify whether the main objective of the study has been accomplished, whether the research gaps existing in present scholarship have been addressed, whether the central research questions have been explored and answered, whether the research methods, tools and the conceptual framework of the study have been utilized, and whether, finally, the hypothesis has been successfully proven. The abovementioned task in this concluding chapter proceeds along the following steps which are as follows:

I. Revisiting the Research Objective of the Study

The task of research investigation pertaining to this doctoral thesis, from the very outset, had been aimed towards mapping the complex interplay of social, cultural, religious and intellectual forces that were operative during the pre-modern period in time in the history of Chinese Buddhism, which according to the argument of the thesis, had eventually led to the popularization of Buddhism in China, despite its non-Chinese/foreign roots of origin. The central aim of the research initiative had been to identify the specific factors, human agents, body of texts, and processes that were involved, both overtly and covertly, in creating an initial atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance for the imported foreign faith of Buddhism, and later contributing to its in-depth penetration into the inner-most layers of Chinese society to the effect that Buddhism emerged as one of the three major religions and systems of philosophy in China, alongside the indigenous schools of thought namely, Confucianism and Daoism. This study therefore had envisioned to bring to the fore, one of the most neglected domains of academic intervention with regard to the history of Chinese Buddhism,

namely, the phase of its consolidation and sinification which was eventually responsible for transforming Buddhism from an imported system of philosophy of non-Han origin being initially practiced within the narrow confines of Buddhist monasteries by members of the Buddhist clergy, both of Han and non-Han ethnicity or as a foreign faith arousing the inquisitiveness of some of the non-Han immigrant family members, living in the outermost circles of Chinese society into its emergence as an everyday religion and a way of everyday life for members of all sections of premodern Chinese society, including even rulers, aristocrats and bureaucrats of the highest social strata.

The concluding chapter here claims that the study has fulfilled the central objective of the research investigation by delving deep into the intellectual environment that was prevalent in premodern China, particularly from the fourth century to the seventh century, in the aftermath of the mass immigration of royal family members, retired gentlemen-officials, cultured monastic clergymen after the collapse of the Western Jin dynasty and the relocation of the Han imperial authority in the southern capital of Jiankang (Jianye) under the seat of the Eastern Jin dynasty. In accomplishing the objective of the thesis, this study has explored the complex intellectual exchanges and nuanced interactions between diverse social members of pre-modern Chinese society, including Buddhist monastic clergy trained in Classical Chinese scholarship, affluent elite class Chinese Buddhist laity, and the Chinese intelligentsia belonging to the southern Chinese provincial families of social repute and economic standing, that eventually led to the creation of syncretic versions of Buddhism with admixtures of Daoist gnostic speculation and Confucian ontological views that helped make the foreign faith more akin to the indigenous Chinese belief system, and thereby more palatable for the Chinese mass audience. Furthermore, the study by critically examining the debates and discussions on specific issues of common concern and speculation

between the Confucians, the Daoist and the Buddhists could point out the commonality in the teachings of each of these systems of thought, which functioned as one of the key strategies employed by the pro-Buddhist intellectuals and proponents of the Buddhist faith in presenting their arguments to defend the cause of the *dharma* against the fierce criticism of the opponents of the Buddhist faith.

II. Revisiting the Research Gaps in Existing Scholarship

The study at the outset had argued that following a critical examination of all the available secondary textual sources, it had been observed that the academic treatment of the history of Chinese Buddhism had always been a highly compartmentalized research domain. The existing scholarship in the field of Buddhology in general, and Chinese Buddhism in particular, involved an in-depth study of the different features of Chinese Buddhism, ranging from the classical approach of exploring the ancient routes of transmission of Buddhist Indic notions and concepts, Buddhist paraphernalia, relics and reliquaries into China from the Indian Gangetic plain (*madhyadeśa*) via the overland and overseas trans-continental Silk Route, critiquing the contributions made by distinguished Indian and Central Asian Buddhist masters and Chinese pilgrims in the continued processes of transmitting and disseminating the core teachings of the *dharma* to the Chinese audience, and engaging in the study of the corpus of the Buddhist canonical literature that had been rendered from Indic Buddhist language to Classical Chinese language through massive collaborative efforts and the scholastic engagement of monks and scholars from India, the central Asian oasis Buddhist kingdoms, and China, to the more recently emerging approach of examining the historical and sociological factors, and the political and cultural context that had made possible the early dissemination of Buddhism into China. While the latter approach with its focus upon the process of Sinicization of Buddhism has continued to capture

the recent attention of scholars, one of the sub-domains of the same, related to the critical examination of the process of syncretism and hybridization that was closely accompanied by the rise of apologetic and propagandistic texts and treatises, in response to the anti-clerical sentiments among the Chinese ruling house, members of the Chinese officialdom, Chinese bureaucracy and magistracy, vehemently attacking the legitimacy of the transmitted Buddhist faith has been rather understated and overlooked.

The study, through an examination of one of the most authentic extant Buddhist apologetic compilations, *Hong Ming Ji*, alongside other relevant Buddhist biographical and bibliographical literature, as well as historical secular documents, has addressed the research gap in the existing scholarship, and has highlighted the significance of Buddhist apologetic thought from around the fourth-fifth century Common Era in the popularization of the Buddhist faith among the most influential and politically powerful members of pre-modern Chinese society, by clarifying doubts that had been repeatedly raised by critics of Buddhism with regard to Buddhist monastic practices, rituals, family ethics, social obligations, which they argued to be of non-Han origin, and therefore opposed to the teachings of the ancient sages of Confucianism and Daoism. A critical observation of the tactical responses, the well formulated arguments and counter-arguments, and the well-thought-of strategies that formed the foundation stone of apologetic writings have further helped the thesis to bring to light one of the most critical components of Chinese Buddhism.

III. Revisiting the Specific Domain of Research Investigation

The study had identified the broad time line between the early fourth and the early seventh century Common Era as the most defining moment in the history of Buddhism in China, owing to its first few episodes of encounter with the intellectual class, most of whom were members of the affluent elite ranks of officials and scholars, and who, were vehemently opposed to the philosophical teachings, doctrinal discourses and ritualistic practices of the foreign faith of Buddhism, which they believed stood in direct contrast to the centuries-old already existing Chinese indigenous systems of thought, namely Confucianism and Daoism. In the course of preliminary investigation it was brought to light that following the initial rise of Buddhist monastic institutions by the end of the third century Common Era as a new social organization in the context of China, the official intelligentsia became deeply concerned about the possible loss of credibility and position of power so far enjoyed by Confucianism and Legalism as the founding principles of Chinese imperial rule and the official philosophies practiced at the royal court of China. The matter was complicated further, given some of the early signs of imperial support and patronage to Buddhist monastic institutions and imperial favours to individual monks. Elite class Confucian official members voiced their fear about Buddhist monastic institutions as posing a serious threat to the imperial authority of the 'Sons of Heaven', and of draining the imperial house and the governing states of funds and material wealth. In the midst of allegations and accusations levied by the Confucian state officialdom or Daoist practitioners towards the individual and institutional lives of the Buddhist monastic members, there emerged waves of pro-Buddhist sentiments emanating out of the intervention of Chinese intellectuals who through an intensive training in Chinese Classical education and an in-depth study of Buddhist philosophical doctrines could suggest points of convergence between the two

apparently rival schools of philosophy and contrasting social and family ethics, and thus suggest ways of reconciling both. The thesis had underscored the relevance of such propagandistic and apologetic treatises that embodied these pro-Buddhist sentiments, and had played a crucial role in removing misconceptions, misinterpretations and delusions regarding Buddhism from the psyche of the Chinese Confucian official class members. The text *Hong Ming Ji*, compiled by the sixth century Liang dynasty monk-scholar Shi Sengyou had been identified as one of the most significant and influential apologetic texts under the genre of 'defence literature' (*hujiaobianlun*) and had been taken up for the research work as the most important primary source of evidence for retracing the nature of Buddhist apologetic thought that had been in circulation among the educated literati class around the sixth century Common Era. A critical analysis of the argumentative treatises compiled in the said text along with cross examination of a later date apologetic text, collated by another eminent monk-scholar Shi Daoxuan in seventh century, titled Guang Hong Ming Ji, as presumed, had highlighted some of the crucial defining features associated with the strategy of popularizing the dharma, despite repeated and continuous attacks meted out by the Confucian and Daoist opponents of Buddhism.

Specific Domains of Research Investigation in Tabulated Form	
Primary Source Text for First-hand Investigation	***Hong Ming Ji***
Other Primary Texts for Cross-Examination	***Guang Hong Ming Ji*** and other apologetic treatises under the section ***Hu Jiao bian lun***
Specific Area	**Buddhist Apologetic Thought** and **Propagandistic Literature**
Specific Social Fabric	Premodern China's **Elite class intelligentsia**, **ruling house members** and **cultured Buddhist clergy**
Specific Time Line	From **fourth century** to **seventh century** Common Era **Pre-modern times** in the context of **Chinese Buddhist chronology**

IV. Revisiting the Hypothesis of the Study

During the commencement of the research investigation, based upon extensive survey of literature and review of literature, the study had proposed that despite the first round of extensive large-scale rendition of Buddhist philosophical doctrines (*sūtra*) and codes

of Buddhist monastic discipline (*vinaya*), transmitted from their original Indic sources, both in oral Pāliand written Classical Sanskrit into Classical Chinese between the first and fourth centuries of the common era, despite the regular presence of some of the most distinguished Indian and central Asian Buddhist translator-monks and *Tripiṭaka* Masters at the leading Buddhist centres of Changan and Luoyang, and their continued interaction with local rulers, merchants, laborers alike, and also despite the circulation of authentic Indic Buddhist source texts, made available through the arduous, long pilgrimages of Chinese Buddhist monk-scholars through some of the most inhospitable terrains, braving extreme hazardous weather conditions to Central Asia and India, Buddhism failed to gain official recognition on the soil of China, and continued to retain for long, its status as a non-Han, foreign religion, practiced by the less cultured people of the western frontier regions (*xiyu*). The initial few random cases of meagre official patronage granted at an individual level to some of the small Buddhist settlements or communities also failed to establish a stronghold of Buddhism among the educated population of pre-modern China. Furthermore, with the rise of Buddhist monastic Order (*saṅgha*) as a new social organization, hitherto unknown in the context of Chinese Confucian culture had begun to draw in severe criticism from the proponents of Chinese indigenous thought systems. The opposition and resistance against the Buddhist faith rose to a point, such, that official persecution of Buddhism became commonplace and Buddhism was almost on the verge of absolute collapse. The study hypothetically proposed that, had it not been for the intervention and conscious efforts of the Chinese elite class intelligentsia, cultured Buddhist monastic members, and the Chinese scholar-class official, all of who comprised the counter-current, pro-Buddhist faction of pre-modern China, to help eliminate the false allegations levied against the actions and intentions of individual monks, and the ritualistic institutional practices of the Buddhist

monastic community through proper justification, meticulous counter-arguments and strategized analyses, that Buddhism would not have been able to survive the several rounds of attacks meted out against it by the Confucian officialdom. The socio-politico-intellectual landscape of pre-modern China (fourth-seventh century), marked by mass exodus of the ruling house population to the southern part of China, following the tumultuous political times after the collapse of the Western Jin dynasty had also been conducive in bringing about open, unhindered, candid moments and episodes of interactions among the literati population of China, whether among the formally educated Buddhist clergymen, or retired scholar-officials, or members of the imperial house, or members of the aristocratic provincial families, on ontological issues that were of interest to most intellectuals, despite their individual affiliation to either Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. It was by virtue of their continued search for common points of convergence in matters of philosophical speculation that eventually led to the rise of Buddhist propagandistic writing and apologetic thought, later compiled under the section of *hujiaobianlun* of the Chinese Buddhist Canon that could successfully defend the cause of Buddhism against all anti-clerical and anti-Buddhist sentiments. The chief primary source of research investigation embodying some of the most crucial elements of apologetic thought was the sixth century text, *Hong Ming J.*

V. Revisiting the Arrangement of Chapters

As is suggested by the title of the PhD thesis, "Pre-modern Chinese Buddhist Apologetic Thought: A Critical Investigation in the Light of an Annotated Translation of *Hong Ming Ji*", the focal area of research investigation of the study has been to explore in-depth the multi-dimensional facets of Chinese Buddhist apologetic thought and propagandistic literature that was in circulation around the pre-modern period in the history of Chinese Buddhism through the prism of the sixth century apologetic text,

HMJ, and to map the critical role that it had played in consolidating the status of Buddhism in China, amidst growing anti-Buddhist sentiments among the Chinese intellectual Confucian official class. Apart from rendering a critical study of the primary source text, *HMJ* which is one of the most representative works on Buddhist apologetic thought in pre-modern China, the research task has attempted to bring together through the chapters of the thesis, diverse elements that were intricately intertwined with the said text and those that deserved critical attention. While some of the chapters have been dedicated to the examination of the chief catalytic factors responsible for the emergence of Buddhist apologetic thought around the fourth-sixth century common era, or the growing complexity and changing nature of relation between the Buddhist monastic Order and the governing house on the one hand, and the Chinese elite class literati population on the other, the other chapters have delved deep into attempting to understand the complex interplay of intellectual forces, and their mutual conflicts and contradictions that led to the syncretization of pre-modern China's thought system, and finally into mapping the socio-cultural and intellectual impact that Buddhist apologetic thought created.

VI. Critical Observations and Major Findings

The following section here discusses the critical observations and major findings of this study pertaining to the multi-dimensional aspects of Buddhist apologetic thought and propagandistic literature in the order of the arrangement of chapters in this study in order to substantiate the main propositions of the proposed hypothesis.

VI.A. Chapter One: An Annotated Translation of Select Fascicles of *Hong Ming Ji*

- *Hong Ming Ji*, the primary source of research investigation stands out as one of the most representative texts under the category of Buddhist apologetic literature. It is to be noted that this special genre of Buddhist literature does not have an Indian origin or root, and therefore does not share its presence in the Pali Canon. This is solely of Chinese origin.
- The Chinese title *HMJ* means a collection of texts and documents that have been compiled for clarifying and elucidating the *dharma* teachings. This particular text alongside a series of such other treatises have been classified under the category of *hujiaobian lun*, meaning argumentative documents in defense and preservation of the teachings. Its presence in the *hujiaobianlun* sub-section of *shichuanbu lei* of the Taisho *Tripiṭaka* volumes of the Chinese Buddhist Canon testifies to its prominence as defense literature, referring to such Buddhist treatises as were compiled and circulated in the defense of the *dharma.* The term 'apologetic' was first used by Erik Zurcher and has since then been in use by most of the other non-Chinese and western world Buddhologists or Buddhist historians of contemporary times. Chinese scholars have refrained from using any specific term to define this kind of literature and still continue to employ the original Chinese title, *HMJ*, without further elaboration.

- The text *Hong Ming Ji* and its later sequel *Guang Hong Ming Ji* were such Buddhist apologetic collections that were composed, collated and circulated consciously as the need of the times. The historical period in China around the late fourth century stood witness to Buddhism encountering direct confrontation with the indigenous schools of philosophy, especially with that of Confucianism

and Daoism. Under continuous attacks on doctrinal issues and ritualistic practices from the opponents of Buddhism, there was a dire need to formulate a mechanism to ensure its survival. Buddhist monastic members, pro-Buddhist influential laity, and pro-Buddhist intellectuals therefore devised a chain of strategies to counter all attacks and criticism levied against Buddhist practices, philosophical doctrines, Buddhist monastic institutional life and the like.

- The *Hong Ming Ji* was a sixth century text, collated by the Liang dynasty monk-scholar Shi Sengyou (445-518 C.E.), compiling a series of apologetic treatises authored mostly by lay Buddhist followers of dominant social ranks and political positions, and also by some of the most distinguished Buddhist *ācāryas* and *Tripiṭaka* masters. The time line of its compilation between 515-518 C.E., suggests the period in time when pre-modern Chinese society was witnessing periodic episodes of intellectual churning and philosophical speculation.

- The content of the text *HMJ* reveals diverse and often loosely arranged, independent collection of a series of official letters of correspondence, imperial decrees and orders, elaborate essays, and family codes exchanged between members of Chinese intelligentsia and imperial bureaucrats, either in opposition or defense of the Buddhist faith.

- Most of the passages arranged in the independent treatises reflected a common format, that of a supposed argumentative conversation between the opponent of the Buddhist faith and its defender. The opponent mostly had an affiliation other than Buddhism, and was either a Confucian scholar-official belonging to the higher ranks of the Chinese bureaucracy, or the ruler or magistrate himself, or an affluent Daoist lay practitioner, while the defender of the Buddhist faith was

either an influential Buddhist laity or a well-read Buddhist master or distinguished Buddhist clergymen. The conversations as recorded in the apologetic treatises in most of the ordinary cases started off by a supposed doubt raised by the opponent of the *dharma* regarding any scholastic, monastic or ritualistic practice associated with the Buddhist system of thought, while the response to it was one put forth by the defender of the faith by means of the use of systematized and detailed clarification and elucidation of specific issues raised thus.

- The critical examination of the apologetic treatises compiled in the *HMJ*, also brings to light the interesting observation that most often times the arguments placed in favour of the *dharma* or in justification of its concepts or practices did not truly reflect the hard core authentic and in-depth explanation of Buddhist philosophy, but rather appeared to be rather superficial in discussing the same. Furthermore, some of the Buddhist proponents used the technique of *geyi* as a strategy to match the concepts of Buddhism with those of the already prevalent Daoist and Confucian notions to make the foreign imported faith of Buddhism acceptable to the Chinese audience, which helped popularize the dharma. In some other distinct cases, one also notices that the Buddha is hailed as an ancestor or master of *Laozi* and *Kongzi*, and that the teachings of the *Daodejing* and the Confucian Classics to have emerged from the preachings of the Buddha.

- A close observation of the text *HMJ* offered a basic understanding of the structure of pre-modern Chinese society. On the one hand, there existed the outer fringes of societal structure comprising social groups of illiterate and semi-literate population of both Han and non-Han origin, most of who were

inquisitive casual followers of the *dharma*, while on the other hand there existed the inner most core societal structure, comprising Chinese intellectuals belonging to the upper class elite literati and cultured gentlemen-scholars and monks, some of who, as anti-Buddhists were engaged in the opposition of the dharma through vehement criticism of both Buddhist philosophical concepts and notions on the ground of these being divergent from those of the teachings of the ancient sages and of Buddhist monastic practices as running contrary to the Confucian principles and ethical codes, while some of the others, who as pro-Buddhists were concerned with clarifying all delusions often arising in the minds of the non-believers to ensure the propagation of the dharma against counter-currents of strong opposition.

- Although, the treatises of *HMJ* do not reflect profound philosophical content or literary quality, the text undoubtedly played a very crucial role in defending the cause of the dharma against waves of attacks and helped Buddhism to survive the initial few phases of political persecution. The argumentative analyses that are contained in the discussions clarifying each and every possible doubt proved crucial in promoting the rise of the *saṅgha* as a parallel social institution and in justifying the worthy services of an individual Buddhist monk and the Buddhist monastic community at large. Furthermore, the text also contributed in propagating and popularizing the foreign faith.

VI.B. Chapter Two: Monks, Laymen and Chinese Intelligentsia: A Critical Study of the Impact of Buddhist Apologetic Thought upon the Intellectual Environment of Pre-modern Chinese Society

- The most important human agents involved in the composition of Buddhist apologetic treatises and in the propagation of Buddhist apologetic thought between the fourth and the sixth century common era were the formally educated Chinese Buddhist monks, Chinese Buddhist laity, and members of the Chinese intellectual class. Since all of these societal members of pre-modern China were engaged in the common task of propagating and defending the *dharma*, their individual identity and social affiliation often times converged, thus making it difficult to discern with clarity the very specific lines of demarcation between them except for the monastic members who accepted the tonsure and renounced the life of householders.

- The Chinese Buddhist monks who played significant role in the clarification of the *dharma* and were authors of some of the treatises included in the *HMJ*, included such monastic clergymen and Buddhist masters who were trained in both the northern Buddhist tradition of meditation practices of *dhyāna* and the southern Buddhist tradition of philosophical speculation, based upon the *mādhyamika* doctrinal discourse on *śunyavāda* (emptiness). But their most crucial contribution lay in their immense skill in justifying the points of contention between Buddhism and Confucianism, or Buddhism and Daoism in the light of the already existing intellectual and philosophical framework of pre-modern China. This particular trait in their personality could be assigned to their exposure to cosmopolitan life in and around the major centres of trade and commercial activities, as well as to their foundation in classical Chinese

scholarship. Most of these cultured and educated monk-scholars were not simple recluses, but, were rather representative members of scholar-gentry families with humble social standing. Their monastic affiliation could often be assigned to factors such as deep spiritual call or a growing disinterest in political affairs following disillusionment with political position and social ranks, or both. Not all of the Chinese monks, however, belonged to the category of families with average financial and social position, there were also amongst them who represented the affluent, financially stable, and politically powerful gentry families.

- The Chinese Buddhist monks who were actively involved in the propagation and popularization of Buddhist apologetic thought were particularly those who maintained close ties with both the influential laity of Chinese pre-modern society as well as members of the Chinese imperial bureaucratic circles. This could be made possible through the unhindered movement of the Chinese Buddhist monastic members between the northern urban centres of Changan, Luoyang and Pengcheng, locales that were in close proximity to the former capital of the Western Jin dynasty and the newly founded southern urban capital of Jiankang of the Eastern Jin dynasty. Their frequent association with members of the upper-class bureaucracy helped disseminate the philosophical teachings of Buddhism to the inner most core societal layer. Such close associations also motivated the ruling house members and elite class lay population in offering patronage and support to the Chinese Buddhist monastic Order and the Buddhist monastic clergy. The huge donations in the form of land holdings and wealth helped to support the survival of the Buddhist monastic community.

- Apart from their intellectual inclination towards metaphysical and ontological speculations surrounding the concepts of emptiness or detachment, or the theories of independent origination as prescribed in the Buddhist *prajñā* philosophy, the Chinese Buddhist monks also initiated the emergence of the *Amitābha* Buddha cult and the Pure Land Buddhist sect through the introduction of deep breathing exercises and intense mental concentration. The regular interactions between the cultured Chinese Buddhist clergymen and the sophisticated affluent Chinese Buddhist laity not only created possible avenues for the Buddhist lay devotees to rest their unconditional trust in the faith of Buddhism, but also to be able to secure their future after-life by the mindful chanting and concentration upon the name of Buddha *Amitābha*.

- The use of worship items, relics and reliquaries, incense and flowers also began to sow the early seeds of the relic veneration cult. The first signs of devotionalism were also witnessed owing to the emerging Buddhist practice of lay devotees offering their obeisance to images of Buddha *Maitreya* and Buddha *Amitābha*, and later to Bodhisattvas, *Mañjuśri*, *Avalokiteṣvara*, *Kṣitigarbha*, Buddhism, therefore, gradually began to penetrate deep into the inner most circles of Chinese society, breaking free from the narrow confines of Buddhist monastic life of the clergy.

- Although most of the Chinese Buddhist monks associated directly or indirectly with the propagation of Buddhist apologetic thought between the fourth and sixth century C.E., namely, Shi Sengyou, Baochang, Bo Yuan and Shi Daobao had contributed either spontaneously or consciously towards the clarification of doubts raised against the Buddhist discourses and practices, there were none

more influential than Shi Huiyuan. The series of letters of correspondence, treatises and explanatory notes attributed to him in the *HMJ* corroborate the fact that his systematized, analytical and argumentative explanations of certain Buddhist monastic and institutional obligations enabled to convince the fierce critics of Buddhism and the political rulers to realize that they did not harm or severe the age old civilizational ethics of the ancient Land of the Han, but instead helped reorient those very ethics better through the adaptation of Buddhist teachings. Whether it be justification of the Buddhist monastic practice of not bowing to the sovereign or the clarification regarding why the monks' shoulder remains bare, Shi Huiyuan is found to have successfully convinced the Buddhist opponents to finally withdraw their allegations and turn to the *dharma*.

- The Chinese Buddhist laity population comprised socially influential, politically stimulated, affluent high-ranking elite class societal members, some of who were direct holders of imperial positions or were close to the ruling aristocratic families. They were mostly from well-read gentry-families where they received formal Chinese classical education which made them expert analysts of diversely complicated philosophical discourses, both of Buddhist doctrines as well as the emerging intellectual trends of *xuanxue*, *mingjiao* and *qingtan*.

- The Chinese Buddhist laity accepted the Five Precepts of Buddhism which prohibit killing, stealing, adultery, lying and drinking alcohol, along with the additional precepts of burning incense sticks, listening to Buddhist sermons and preachings, and engaging in deep philosophical discussions with monastic

members every fortnight during the fasting ceremonies. But that which brought the monastic and laity community together was their unrestrained, candid discussion on philosophical issues with deeper ontological and gnostic implication, owing to each of their strong foundations in Chinese classical education. Moreover, many of the entries made in the apologetic text *HMJ* had been authored by the Chinese laity, all of who possessed the skill of syncretizing Buddhist teachings with parallel discourses in the Confucian and Daoist Classics.

- The Chinese Buddhist lay followers also reportedly engaged in extensive translation activities along with members of the Chinese Buddhist clergy and functioned as chief collaborators in these translation projects.

- The Buddhist *sūtra* that cast the most profound influence upon the lives of the Chinese Buddhist laity was the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* which preached the ability of Buddhist householders to attain the status of *Bodhisattva*, as had been the case with the chief protagonist of the *sūtra,* Vimalakīrt*i* himself. The *sūtra* also propagated the idea that a Buddhist lay follower could be more adept in the wisdom of Buddhist scriptures than a Buddhist monastic member. Despite being a householder, Vimalakīrti was representative of that particular societal member who utilized his wealth, social status and intellectual capacity to work towards the benefit of all sentient beings. There were many factors that contributed to the growing appeal for this *sūtra* amongst the members of the fourth century lay members in China. First, in this *sūtra* the Chinese Buddhist laity found an extraordinary path that could allow them to be of use to society, very much in alliance with the Confucian concept of striving to become the prefect gentlemen

(*junzi*). The other factor that popularized the *VKNS* for the Chinese lay followers was the philosophical content of this *sūtra*, that being the Buddhist concept of 'non-duality' and 'emptiness', something that fell in line with the philosophical and ontological speculation of the fourth-sixth century China and was of great interest to the Chinese intellectual laity.

- The societal group comprising of Chinese intelligentsia of pre-modern fourth and fifth century C.E., could not clearly be distinguished from the Chinese Buddhist lay population. The points of commonality included their affiliation to elite households of gentry-official background, their formal education in Chinese Classics, their close bonding with influential bureaucrats and imperial ruling house members, and their strong affinity for Buddhist *prajñā* philosophical discourses. However, they differed from the Chinese Buddhist laity in their natural disposition and philosophical quest for unravelling the mysteries of mystic learning like *xuanxue* by delving deep into deliberating upon abstract concepts of 'being', 'non-being', 'absolute being', and of deeply contemplating over Buddhist concepts of emptiness and dependent origination of all matter. Many of the Chinese intelligentsia also included such members who had a strong artistic and aesthetic bent of mind, with some of them being skilled in the art of calligraphy and painting, while others being composers of new genres of literature. Their vagabond lifestyle also characterized their psychological orientation.

- The most significant contribution that was made by both members of the Chinese lay population and the intelligentsia between the fourth and sixth century C.E., was their open, free, candid interactions with persons of social and

political repute on a regular basis, and even with those of the highest-ranking officials and rulers of the imperial court. This in turn, facilitated the penetration of Buddhism into the inner-most core circles of pre-modern Chinese society, especially the imperial house, which eventually created avenues for granting of official protection and patronage to the foreign faith of Buddhism. The authoring of several apologetic treatises by these affluent and influential societal members also helped to grant credibility to the activities and practices of the Chinese Buddhist monastic Order which was otherwise being challenged by the Confucian and Daoist opponents.

VI.C. Chapter Three: *Mingjiao, Xuanxue* and *Qingtan*: Buddhism as a Socio-Cultural Phenomenon in Pre-modern China

- During the last few decades of the second century C.E. onwards, the centralized governing system in China was on the verge of collapse, autocracy had disintegrated, and multiplicity of states with regional ruling clans was gradually becoming the order of the day. With the collapse of the Western Jin dynasty and the incident of the mass exodus of the immigrant population from the northern capital of Luoyang and later Chang'an to the southern capital of Jiankang, witnessed the growing authority of these influential distinguished families of great repute. However, given the political chaos of the times, not all of the members of the affluent elite class families could or even wanted to engage in official obligations. There was a growing tendency among these newly displaced gentlemen-scholars retired willingly from services to engage in the speculation of ontological issues, abstract thoughts and metaphysical deliberations.

- While most of these members of the Chinese intelligentsia, either belonging to the southern influential provincial families or to the newly displaced humble gentry households, were very well-read in the Chinese Confucian and Daoist Classics, they were mostly interested in streamlining all available discourses from diverse fields of thought and applying them to a newly created reality of their own. It was not that all of these intellectuals agreed with each other's perspective on issues of gnostic speculation, but, their candid debates through light conversation, namely *qingtan* helped them break free from the narrow confines of compartmental and linear scholarship, and to be able to view and internalize the profundity of the abstract.

- This Wei-Jin period was a period of profound intellectual activity, artistic and aesthetic engagement, and hybridization and syncretism of concepts and ideas. This period witnessed the emergence of three new, reoriented, diverse, yet converging avenues of philosophical speculation, the *mingjiao*, *xuanxue*, and *prajñā*, which were based upon the re-interpretation of ancient wisdom contained in the teachings of the Logicians, Legalists, Mohists, Daoists, *yin-yang* proponents, and *Yijing* exegetes. Through the spontaneous process of selective adaptation and assimilation, the philosophical deliberations of this historical period centred around ontological speculations on the perception of name and reality, non-being, being and final being, and on non-activity and emptiness and vacuity.

- An easy-going, spontaneous, carefree lifestyle, marked by a passion for artistic creation, literary composition, philosophical pursuit further brought together the Daoists, Confucians, and Buddhists on a common intellectual platform of open

interactions that facilitated the emergence of a vibrant intellectual atmosphere hitherto unprecedented in the socio-cultural history of pre-modern China.

- Not only was this Wei-Jin period made distinctively unique by the rise of newly oriented systems of thought, but also by the presence of defiant philosophers who had the courage and the intellectual depth to explore beyond the words of the ancient Chinese scriptures, and establish new insights into the ancient philosophical concepts. While Confucianism now became Daoist Confucianism or Yin-Yang Confucianism, Daoism emerged into Neo-Daoism. With regard to the context of Buddhism, on the other hand, its north and south intellectual divide blurred out, only to emerge as a southern hybrid gentry form of syncretic Buddhism which later came to influence the rise of various indigenous schools of Chinese Buddhism, which was uniquely Chinese.

- The Wei-Jin period also closely witnessed the infiltration of Buddhist concepts and notions among the innermost core societal members comprising of the ruling class by virtue of the close interactions between the Buddhist clergymen and Daoist masters on the one hand, and the ruling aristocracy on the other. However, as an additional feature, one could eventually notice increasing administrative control and even imperial intervention over religious institutions, both Daoist religious communities and Buddhist monastic institutions around this time. Imperial-sponsorship for large-scale translation activities and for the establishment of Buddhist libraries, alongside huge land endowments to Buddhist monasteries also became commonplace. Since the traditional credibility of the emperor as the Son of Heaven was being put to question and even doubted, and the credibility of the local and regional rulers was on the way

to seek justification, the thesis argues that it was Buddhism with its re-interpretation along the Confucian ideology of ideal rule, and its focus upon the bodhisattva *cakravartin* ruler that served to offer the said legitimacy. Given this situation, the association between regional rulers and the religious clergymen became more profound and interdependent.

VI.D. Chapter Four: The Ruling House and the Buddhist Clergy: A Critique of Chinese Political Response to a Growing Buddhist Monastic Order

- During the initial years of Buddhist dissemination into China (first-third century C.E.) there were two distinct observable trends, the first, being the oral transmission of fragmentary, piecemeal information about some of the very basic teachings of Buddhism which percolated into the illiterate and semi-literate immigrant population of China, the second, being the random engagement of some of the local rulers with the ritualistic practices of making offerings to the Buddha and the *Huang-lao* cult, which was far from anything that could be equated with the original Buddhist practices, either concerning the monastic community or the laity.

- During the first three centuries of the common era, it was also noted that there were occasional episodes of contact or communication between the provincial ruling house members and individual Buddhist masters of the clergy, or with Buddhist communities of decent size located regionally. Such interactions were rather spontaneous. On some occasions, there were reportedly initiatives undertaken by the regional aristocrats in building large Buddhist temples (浮圖祠), in arranging for mass gatherings, inviting the followers of the Buddhist

faith (好佛者), mostly belonging to the laity, to venerate large images of the Buddha, decorated with brocade and silken streamers. The concept of worshipping and making offerings to the Buddha must have been an indigenous Chinese practice which came to be applied for Buddhism as well.

- Between the third and fourth centuries, there was quite an impressive movement of Buddhist masters and monk-scholars between the regions of north and northwest India, the central Gangetic plains, the central Asian oasis kingdoms and the cosmopolitan trading centres along the trans-continental Silk Road. But most of the activities of the itinerant monks and clergymen involved the rendition of Buddhist doctrinal scriptures into Chinese, that remained confined within the community of Buddhist monastics only.

- Till the end of the third and beginning of the fourth century, the rise and transmission of Buddhism within the diverse layers of Chinese society did not produce responses or reactions to an extent, such, that could be recorded in either secular historical or Buddhist literature. The study therefore argues that despite its conspicuous presence at major centres like Pengcheng, Luoyang and Chang'an, Buddhism could not or did not win over the inclination of the larger or influential sections of pre-modern Chinese society, apart from few random, occasional encounters.

- However, the changing political scenario after the downfall of the Western Jin dynasty, the occupation of the imperial capital of Chang'an by the western Tuoba and later by several ethnic non-Han confederacies, like those of the Xiongbu, Xianbei, Jurchen, the shifting of the Han ethnic population, mostly affiliated to the former ruling house and their re-settlement in the southern

regions of Jiankang, at the newly founded capital of the Eastern Jin during the fourth century (311-420 C,E.) created a paradigm shift in the nature of association between the cultured upper class, gentry officials and members of the bureaucracy, as well as those of the cultured Buddhist monk-scholars, hailing from gentry households. The intellectual atmosphere of the times mentioned was deeply and closely influenced by the fast-changing political landscape.

- With the growing interest of the Chinese aristocratic family members and elite class provincial rulers in their engagement with Buddhist ontological speculation and re-interpretation of Chinese indigenous Classics, there was reportedly regular and intense lines of communication established between the Buddhist monastic organization and the Chinese ruling house at the institutional level. Buddhist monasteries became important centres for intellectual exchange of gnostic ideas between clergymen and aristocratic members where the latter were frequent visitors, while imperial courts emerged as the new venue for philosophical debates and deliberations, where Buddhist monk-scholars were cordially invited.

- When such communication between the Buddhist monastic institutions and the imperial courts rose to unprecedented levels, there was a feeling of insecurity among adherents of the Daoist faith and proponents of Confucian orthodoxy. Regular imperial donations of land and material wealth to the Buddhist monastic Order, large endowments of imperial ranks and positions to Buddhist masters, unhindered and unrestricted movement of Buddhist clergymen into the imperial quarters and bureaucrat mansions put to question the credibility of the

Buddhist monastic institutions, Involvement of individual monks in mundane activities related to trade or business, and their growing involvement with the imperial court as political advisors drew in severe criticism and anti-clerical sentiments from Confucian officialdom and Daoist laity.

- The financial burden incurred by the imperial house and the affluent laity householders in patronizing the Buddhist monastic community witnessed waves of protest. It was against this backdrop that eminent Buddhist monk-scholars as well as upper class elite householders formulated strategies that could help prevent the persecution of Buddhism, compilation of Buddhist apologetic texts and treatises like the *Hong Ming Ji* and the *Guang Hong Ji* being one of them. It was through the large-scale circulation of such propagandistic treatises that all doubts, delusions, misinterpretations and allegations against Buddhist raised by its opponents could be removed.

- The rise of Buddhist apologetic thought around the sixth century C.E. was thus both the cause and the consequence of an unprecedented increase in the degree of involvement and engagement between the elite class members and monastic members of pre-modern Chinese society.

Based upon the above critical observations and major findings, the study reiterates the final proposition that it was primarily owing to the rise and circulation of Buddhist apologetic thought and propagandistic literature between the fourth and sixth century common era, and specifically through the popularization of the apologetic treatises and writings compiled in the *Hong Ming Ji*, that Buddhism as a faith or system of thought, and Buddhist monastic institutions as an organized community, could address the rising waves of opposition, and counter the continuous currents of anti-Buddhist clerical

sentiments emanating out of the elite literati and officialdom. Using various tactical methods of framing arguments in defence of the *dharma*, Buddhist apologetic thought enabled Buddhism to survive several rounds of severe persecution and prevented it from obliteration. The intellectual atmosphere of pre-modern China (fourth-sixth century C.E.) was stimulating enough to generate open and free exchange of ideas on ontological issues between the educated upper class cultured intelligentsia and Buddhist clergy. As a consequence of the above, Buddhism could successfully draw in scholar-members from the ruling class, influential provincial families, magistracy, bureaucracy to delve deep into philosophical discussions that could transcend the narrow boundaries of Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism, and could create a new intellectual consciousness of the 'absolute void' and 'ultimate being'.

The propagation of Buddhist apologetic thought in pre-modern China also helped Buddhism to penetrate deep into the inner most, influential circles and the imperial court which eventually guaranteed its survival and prosperous flourishing in the coming times, owing to the large-scale imperial patronage that the Buddhist monastic institutions began to receive. Buddhism thus from sixth century onwards became a way of life for both the common masses and the members of elite class society.

The research findings also suggest avenues for future research which could focus upon the subsequent rise of relic veneration, Buddhist devotionalism, indigenous Chinese schools, rise of the Bodhisattva cult, and the evolutionary history of Neo-Daoism and Neo-Confucianism thereafter.

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  a. *Fascicle One-Mouzi Lihuo Lun* 牟子理惑論

  b. *Fascicle Two-Ming Fo Lun* 明佛論

  c. *Fascicle Three-Yudao Lun* 喻道論

  d. *Fascicle Five*

    - *Shen Bu Mie Lun* 神不滅論
    - *Shamen Bu Jing Wang Zhe Lun* 沙門不敬王者論
    - *Shamen Tan Fu Lun* 沙門袒服論
    - *He Zhen Nan Nan* 何鎮南難

  e. *Fascicle Six-Shibo Lun* 释駁論

  f. *Fascicle Seven-Rong Hua Lun* 戎華論

  g. *Fascicle Nine-Da Liang Huangdi Li Shen Ming Cheng Fo Yi Ji* 大梁皇帝立神明成佛義記

  h. *Fascicle Eleven*-Lu Shan Hui Yuan Fashi Da Huan Xuan Quan Ba Dao Shu 廬山慧遠法師答桓玄勸罷道書

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