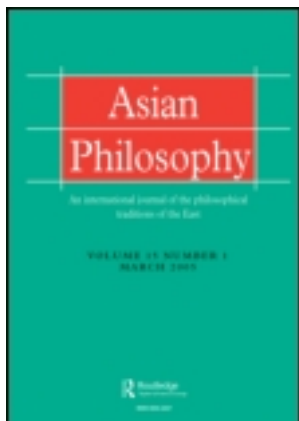


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# Buddhist Impact on Chinese Culture

Xing Guang

*The Chinese traditional culture includes three systems of thought: Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. The first two are Chinese culture, and Buddhism is a foreign religion introduced from India. Although there had been conflicts among the three systems of thoughts, but integration is the mainstream in the development of Chinese cultural thought. Thus, Chinese culture has developed into a system by uniting the three religions into one with Confucianism at the centre supported by Daoism and Buddhism. For over 2,000 years, Buddhism has interacted with all levels of Chinese culture such as literature, philosophy, morality, arts, architecture and religions. As a result, Buddhism has successfully integrated into the traditional Chinese culture and has become one of the three pillars. In this paper, I will discuss the Buddhist impact on Chinese culture from the following four points: (1) philosophy and moral teaching; (2) religions and popular beliefs; (3) language and literature; and (4) art and architecture.*

## Introduction

The Chinese traditional culture includes three systems of thought: Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. The first two are indigenous Chinese culture while Buddhism is a foreign religion introduced from India, and thus, the latter is quite different from the former in thought, tradition and beliefs. Although sometimes there were conflicts among the three systems of thoughts since the introduction of Buddhism in Han dynasty, harmony and integration are the mainstream in the development of Chinese cultural thought. Thus, Chinese culture has developed into a united system of the three religious thought with Confucianism at the centre supported by Daoism and Buddhism. For over 2,000 years, Buddhism has interacted with all levels of Chinese culture such as literature, philosophy, mores and behavioural norms, arts and architecture, and religions of all classes. As a result, Buddhism has successfully integrated into the traditional Chinese culture and became one of the three pillars. Arthur Wright, quoting from the French Sinologist Sylvain Levi, says,

Buddhism interacted through the centuries with all levels of Chinese culture: with literary and philosophic traditions, with economic and political institutions, with

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mores and behavioral norms, with indigenous traditions in art and architecture, with the religions of all classes and of all the subcultures of China. (Wright, 1957, pp. 17–42)

As Buddhism brought to China new thought and ideas, it promoted the development of Chinese philosophy, ethics, language, literature, arts, religions, popular belief etc. On the other hand, as Buddhism is not a cultural bound religion, it also makes use of and adapts to the local culture and thought. Arthur Wright has already made a historical survey of the development of Buddhism in China and its four phases of interaction with Chinese culture. In this essay, I will briefly discuss the Buddhist impact on Chinese culture from the following four aspects: (1) philosophy and moral teaching; (2) religions and popular beliefs; (3) language and literature; and (4) art and architecture. I will also briefly discuss the philosophical reasons why Buddhism can be integrated into Chinese culture.

### The Reasons for Buddhist Integration

There may be many factors contributed to the Buddhist integration in Chinese culture such as historical, social and other causes in the process of 2,000 years of interaction, but I will concentrate on the philosophical ideas and thought. The first and also the most important reason is the liberal attitude of mind in both Confucianism and Buddhism because for a culture or thought to integrate in another culture, both must be liberal and receptive, particularly the receiving party. The open-minded attitude of mind in Confucianism can be seen from the following saying found in the Confucius *Analects* or *Lunyu*, “The Master said, “The gentleman harmonizes (*he* 和), and does not merely agree (*tong* 同). The petty person agrees, but he does not harmonize” (*Lunyu* 13:23).<sup>1</sup> The saying itself may not be quite clear, but He Yan 何晏 (195–249) in his Commentary to the *Analects* made it explicit,

Gentlemen are in harmony in their minds but their opinions or thoughts may be different, so it is said not same. The inferior men have the same habit or indulgence, but they fight for profit, so it is said not in harmony. (Li Xueqing, 1999, p. 179)<sup>2</sup>

The importance of this saying is the tolerant and harmonious spirit of mentality in thought and culture. It is based on these ideas and thought that Chinese people emphasize on harmony and unity as Confucius said, ‘When it comes to the practice of ritual, it is harmonious ease (*he* 和) that is to be valued’ (*Lunyu* 1:12). The *Doctrine of the Mean* further explains, ‘This notion of equilibrium and focus (*zhong* 中) is the great root of the world; harmony then is the advancing of the proper way (*dadao* 達道) in the world’ (Ames & Hall, 2001, p. 89). It is because of this liberal and tolerant spirit of mentality that Chinese people could absorb good thought and practices from other culture. Confucius said, ‘When walking with two other people,

I will always find a teacher among them. I focus on those who are good and seek to emulate them, and focus on those who are bad in order to be reminded of what needs to be changed in myself' (*Lunyu* 7.22). 'With regard to the world, the gentleman has no predispositions for or against any person. He merely associates with those he considers right' (*Lunyu* 4.10). These ideas and thought have been influencing Chinese people for over 2,000 years.

On the other hand, Buddhism also has the liberal attitude of mind and accepts whatever is good as it is said in the *Uttaravipatti Sutta* of the *Anguttaranikāya*. Sakka asked the bhikkhu Uttara whether his talk comes from the Buddha or not, Uttara said, 'Whatsoever is well spoken, all that is the word of the Buddha.'<sup>3</sup> The saying is also quoted in the *Satyasiddhi Śāstra* and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra* both of which are translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva.<sup>4</sup> It is due to this attitude of mind, the Buddha advised his lay disciples even to make offerings to local gods as they are important part of the local culture.<sup>5</sup> This thought has influenced Buddhists tremendously and led to important consequences in the transmission of Buddhism to other cultures. Thus, Buddhism has not caused any conflict with hosting local culture, but absorbed local cultures wherever it has been transmitted. As a result, it becomes Chinese Buddhism with a Chinese cultural marks and colour when it comes to China as Buddhism absorbed many Chinese cultural elements in the last 2,000 years.

Second, Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism are Chinese religions that do not accept a divine revelation but they are inclusive in nature. So they are religions that do not exclusively claim truth as Vincent Goossaert says in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*,

Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism within Chinese religion do not function as separate institutions that provide their members an exclusive way to salvation, as in the nineteenth-century Western concept of religion; rather, their purpose is to transmit their tradition of practice and make it available to all, either as individual spiritual techniques or liturgical services to whole communities. (Goossaert, 2005, p. 1614)

Thus, the inclusiveness of the three religions provides the philosophical foundation for Buddhism to integrate into Chinese culture and thought. Chinese scholars such as Sun Chuo (314–371) started to promote the idea of syncretism of three religions from the fourth century onwards and he said that the sages Zhou and Confucius are like the Buddha and the Buddha is like the sages Zhou and Confucius (CBETA, 2011, T52, no. 2102, p. 17, a7). As a result of the successive Chinese Buddhists and scholars' efforts, Buddhism had fully integrated into Chinese culture by the tenth century and the three religions complement each other in the holistic cultivation of the person. Just as the Song dynasty Chinese scholars stated that Buddhism is for cultivation of the mind, Daoism is for the cultivation of the physical body and Confucianism is for the governing of state. Thus, the three religions have played an important role in the life of Chinese people and society.

### Buddhist Impact on Philosophy and Moral Teaching

The Buddhist interaction with Chinese philosophy started in Jin dynasty (265–420) with the rise of *xuanxue* (metaphysical learning) in the third century. Chinese intellectuals dissatisfied with the Confucian classical learning established since the Han dynasty and turned their attention to cosmological questions. Scholars such as He Yan and Wang Bi (226–249) concentrated on the explanation of the ontological questions of *you* (being or existence) and *wu* (non-being or nothingness), and they established the view that all beings ‘have their roots in *wu*’. But other scholars like Guo Xiang argued that ‘non-being (*wu*) cannot change into being’ so the phenomena comes into existence spontaneously. Guo Xiang was later named as those who valued *you* in contrast to those who valued *wu*. The Buddhist scriptures of the *Prajñāpāramitā* introduced in the second and the third centuries discuss the concept of emptiness which is translated in Chinese as *kong*, a word similar to *wu*. Thus, many Chinese Buddhist monks well versed in Laozi and Zhuangzi also participated in the discussion of *xuanxue*. The similarities between Chinese philosophy of Laozi and Zhuangzi and the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness attracted the Chinese intellectuals’ attention and interest so they also started to study the Buddhist teaching. This facilitated the Chinese reception of Buddhist philosophy which developed during the Sui and Tang dynasties and became the prominent thought in Chinese history. Thus, there came up eight different Buddhist schools of thought and four of them were more influenced by Chinese thought and became distinctive Chinese Buddhist schools. They are Tiantai, Huayan, Chan and Pure Land. Huayan scholars such as Chengguan 澄觀 (738–839) and Zongmi 宗密 (780–841) emphasized the learning of Confucian *Yijing* (the *Book of Change*).

The Confucian scholars in the Tang and Song dynasties took up the challenge to respond to Daoism and Buddhism and formulated sophisticated philosophical theories by assimilation of both ideas and thought from the other two religions. Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819), for instance, tried to reconcile and unite the Confucian and Buddhist doctrines into a pervasive and inclusive understanding from the Confucian perspective. He considered that Buddhist teachings are similar to the ideas found in the *Yijing* and the *Lunyu* so they are not different from those of Confucius and further explained that the importance of precepts in Buddhism is similar to the importance of *li* 禮 (ritual) in Confucianism. Li Ao 李翱 (772–841), on the other hand, further advanced Liu Zongyuan’s idea and assimilated Buddhist teachings into his thought as he interpreted Confucian thought of human nature by assimilation of Buddhist teaching.

Song dynasty Confucian scholars continued to assimilate Buddhist thought with an aim to revive Confucian teaching, but most scholars criticized Buddhism as a foreign religion. Ming dynasty Confucian scholars such as Wang Yangming (1472–1529) openly studied Buddhist philosophy and absorbed Buddhist thought into his system. Leading Confucian scholars in Song dynasty such as Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073), two Chen brothers 二程, Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1030–1200) all ‘studied Daoism and Buddhism for many years’. According to the

Chinese scholar Fang Litian, Buddhism influenced Chinese philosophy in Song dynasty in the following four aspects (Fang, 2006, pp. 256–260). First, just as the Buddhists emphasized their scriptures, Neo-Confucian scholars also emphasized the basic Confucian texts such as the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of Mean* which are known as the four books. Second, the major Buddhist, particularly Chan influence on Neo-Confucianism is the study of mind and its nature which was quite weak in early Confucian tradition. Third, Buddhism had a direct influence on Neo-Confucian scholars' theory of ontology that they also discussed the relationship between principle and phenomena. Fourth, Buddhism also influenced the way of thinking of Neo-Confucian scholars that they made use of the theory of principle and activity to discuss ontological questions. In the modern time, Buddhist philosophy, particularly Yogācāra thought, influenced modern Chinese scholars in their search for new ideas and thought to revive Chinese culture by criticizing Confucianism.

But Buddhism brought with it a whole set of total new ideas and thought which the Chinese people never heard of and which influenced the Chinese culture and thought. In the process of integration, there had been conflicts as well as absorptions and also interpenetration between the two philosophies and cultures. Wing-Tsit Chan once said,

If one word could characterize the entire history of Chinese philosophy, that word would be humanism—not the humanism that denies or slights a Supreme Power, but one that professes the unity of man and Heaven. In this sense, humanism has dominated Chinese thought from the dawn of its history. (Chan, 1963, p. 3)

In other words, Chinese people concentrate on human welfare and do not discuss metaphysical questions of the universe and after life as Confucius said, 'You are not yet able to serve people—how could you be able to serve ghosts and spirits?' when Ji Lu, a disciple of Confucius, asked about serving the spirits (*Lunyu*: 11.12). In another place, Fan Chi asked what constituted wisdom, 'The Master said, Working to ensure social harmony among the common people, respecting the ghosts and spirits while keeping them at a distance—this might be called wisdom' (*Lunyu*: 6.22). So Confucian teaching centres on man or humanity while respecting but no discussion with regard to gods and ghosts. However, death and after life are important issues in human's life, so Chinese, particularly the ordinary people naturally wish to know what happens after death, heavens and hells, but there is no discussion of these in Chinese philosophy. But Buddhism is a system of moral teaching complimentary with Chinese philosophy.

This is because, on the other hand, Buddhism also concentrates on human welfare not metaphysical inquires as the Buddha never answered any questions concerning the universe and soul when other religious teachers at his time came to him for a debate.<sup>6</sup> However, when a disciple of the Buddha named Mālunkya putta who asked him the same metaphysical questions, he explained that human life does not depend on these views. Whatever opinion one may have about these problems, there is birth,



old age, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, distress, ‘*the Cessation of which* (nirvāṇa), *I declare in this very life*’.<sup>7</sup>

First, Buddhism influenced Chinese cosmology with its rich narratives. According to Livia Kohn, an expert in Daoist studies, the Lingbao school of Daoism created ‘a new central deity, named Yuanshi Tianzun (Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning), who was a merging of the Shangqing creator god and the Buddha and was known as *shizun* or “World Honored One”’ (Kohn, 2001, pp. 95–98). Just like the Buddha in the Buddhist scriptures, Yuanshi Tianzun also gives sermons in reply to learned questions.

It is well known that there are much description of heaven and hell in Buddhist literature and the name of hell is already mentioned in the translations of An Shigao and Dharmarakṣa.<sup>8</sup> Daoism has absorbed these ideas and thoughts and incorporated into their system of thought and it has become an important part of the popular beliefs in China. For instance, we find the description of heaven in the Daoist scripture *Yunji Qiqian* 《雲笈七籤》 and the description of hell in the Daoist *Lingbao Jing* 《靈寶經》. The Daoist scripture *Yunji Qiqian* 《雲笈七籤》 describes ten continents around China, and the four directions around China are called Fuyudai 弗於岱 (Pūrvavideha) for East, Yanfuli 閻浮利 (Jambudvīpa) for South, Yuyanni 俱耶尼 (Aparagodānīya) for West and Yudan 郁單 (Uttarakuru) for North (Xue, 2006, pp. 17–19).<sup>9</sup> These four names are actually old translations for the four continents around Mt. Sumeru in Buddhist scriptures. The Daoist *Lingbao Jing* 《靈寶經》 describes twelve hells and the Daoist *Sanshi liubu jing* *Yuqing jing* 《三十六部經玉清經》 describes twenty hells, the names of these hells suggest that they are taken from Buddhist sources (Xue, 2006, pp. 17–19). Thus, the information about the continents and hells is actually taken from the Buddhist sources.

Second, Buddhism filled a gap in Chinese philosophy regarding next life by its teaching of rebirth as Confucius refused to discuss after life and Daoist teaching concerning next life is also not clear, particularly regarding one’s bad deeds. According to the Chinese scholar Tang Yijie 湯一介, there is no idea of retribution in the next life in ancient Chinese thought (Tang Yi-Jie, 1999, p. 164). This is supported by the *Mouzi Lihoulun* 《牟子理惑論》 written in the second- or third-century CE, according to which, Chinese people did not believe in next birth at that time. A critic asked: ‘the Buddha’s teaching says that after death people must be reborn. I just cannot believe this opinion!’ (Keenan, 1994, p. 94). But Buddhism teaches the doctrine of karma and rebirth, one may be reborn as human, gods, ghosts or even animals including insects depending on his or her own karma which means intentional actions.

To be reborn as gods and ghosts is easy to understand for Chinese people as this kind of belief was already there at the time when Buddhism was introduced (Ren Jiyu, 1985, pp. 11–18). But it is quite foreign to Chinese people when they learn that human beings can be born as animals or even insects. Therefore, He Chengtian 何承天 (370–447) asked how a human being could become an insect in next life (CBETA, 2011, T52, no. 2102, p. 22, a2–4).

Third, death is an important issue in Buddhism so the discussion of it is found in many Buddhist scriptures. There is nearly no discussion on death in Chinese philosophy when Buddhism introduced in Eastern Han dynasty (25–220) as Confucius said ‘You are not yet able to serve people—how could you be able to serve ghosts and spirits?’ (*Lunyu*: 11.12). This is also evidenced in the *Mouzi Lihoulun*,

A critic asked: Confucius says: ‘You are not able even to serve man. How can you serve the spirits? While you do not know life, how can you know about death?’ These are recorded words of the Sage. But nowadays, the Buddhists blurt out opinions about the realities of life and death and the affairs of the spirits. This dangerous course is against the clear words of the sage. One who treads the way must indeed abide tranquilly in emptiness and return his attention to basic simplicity. Why then do they discourse on life and death, thereby dissipating their resolves? Why speak of the various deeds of the spirits? (Keenan, 1994, p. 100) 孔子云：『未能事人，焉能事鬼？未知生，焉知死。』此聖人之所紀也。今佛家輒說生死之事，鬼神之務，此殆非聖哲之語也？

This passage shows that the critic quoted from the *Lunyu* to challenge the Buddhist discussion on death. However, the Buddhist attitude to death is, just as to all other problems in our life, to face it rather than to escape from it because death is an inevitable fact of life, the sooner we know our condition the safer are we, for we can then take the steps necessary for our betterment. Therefore, death is included in the first of the four noble truths as one of the eight kinds of sufferings to discuss openly. Buddhist monks are even advised to meditate on death.<sup>10</sup>

Fourth, Buddhist teaching of karma filled a gap in explaining man’s fortune in the world because Confucianism never really discusses man’s fortune in society, their sufferings and their positions. All these are attributed to heaven without explanation as it is said, ‘As to what lies beyond the six realms of Heaven and Earth, East and West, North and South, the sages set aside without discussion’ (Wang Rongpei, 1999, p. 31). The Confucian philosophy of life is entirely confined to this life itself, and it teaches people to actively participate in life and contribute to society.

The Chinese ancient text *Yijing* 《易經》 has the following idea, ‘The families that accumulate goodness will have good fortune, the families that accumulate bad things will have misfortune’ (Tang Yi-Jie, 1999, p. 164).<sup>11</sup> According to Tang Yijie, this means that ancient Chinese people believed in some kind of retribution. If the doer does not experience the consequences of his own actions, then his offspring will experience it (Tang Yi-Jie, 1999, p. 164). However, this is very different from the Buddhist teaching of karma which is an individual responsibility. Daoism, based their thought on this idea, developed the theory called *Chengfu* 承負 to explain retribution. According to this theory, future generations will suffer the consequences of their fore fathers’ bad deeds. But according to the Buddhist teaching of karma, each one is responsible for his or her own deeds. In other words, one will experience the result of one’s own deeds but not his or her fore fathers’ deeds. Thus, the Buddhist explanation of man’s fortune in society is more reasonable. As a result, the Buddhist teaching of karma spread fast in Chinese society and it has been quickly accepted by Chinese



people. Thus, today Chinese people's belief is a combination of Daoist teaching of *Chengfu* and Buddhist teaching of karma.

Furthermore, there is no theory in Chinese philosophy to retaliate or punish the people who want to do bad things. Daoist teaching of *Chengfu* does not cover this. But the Buddhist teaching of karma is a theory to fill up this gap. So according to this theory, bad people will never escape but will definitely suffer the consequences of their bad actions. So people will think twice when they want to do bad things. Thus, it is conducive to promote social peace and harmony.

Fifth, there was hierarchy in traditional Chinese society and the well-known *Xiaojing* (The Classic of Filial Piety) discusses five classes of people: emperors, princes, high ministers and great officers, inferior officers and common people. Buddhism teaches the equality of all people, particularly Mahāyāna Buddhism teaches that all sentient beings have the potentiality to attain enlightenment and become Buddhas. It depends on oneself whether he or she works diligently or not, but it does not depend on someone else or other outside supernatural power. Ordinary people at the bottom of the Chinese society saw some hope so Buddhism spread quite fast during the third to the six centuries.

### Buddhist Impact on Chinese Religions and Popular Beliefs

When Buddhism was first introduced into China, the Buddha was worshipped together with other Chinese gods like Laozi 老子 and Yellow emperor (Huangdi 黃帝), the two ancient Chinese sages. It is reported by Xiangkai 襄楷 in 166 CE that even in the imperial court, there were altars for Yellow emperor and Laozi as well as for the Buddha as recorded in the *Houhanshu* 《後漢書》, the *History of Latter Han* written by Fanye. The second example is found from Sichuan that a Buddha statue probably made in late Han to Shanguo 三國 shows that Buddhist practices were mixed with folk religious beliefs. The Buddha was considered as a god like Xiwangmu 西王母 by Chinese people at the beginning (Nanjing Bowuyuan, 1991). Later as systematic Buddhist teachings as well as many Bodhisattvas and gods were gradually introduced in China, it influenced Chinese religions and some Buddhist bodhisattvas became very popular and are worshipped by Chinese people throughout the year.

Most of the Chinese scholars are of the opinion that Daoism became an organized religion due to many reasons, but one of the important reasons is the Buddhist influence. Here, I just quote Tang Yijie's discussion and he says,

Third, the introduction of Buddhism into China had greatly stimulated the development of Chinese religion. From the time Buddhism spread to China during the Western Han till after the middle of the Eastern Han, it maintained a steady level of propagation. Buddhism, acting like a catalyst, escalated the development of Daoism (Taoism). (Tang Yi-Jie, 1991, p. 70)

Tang Yijie further says,

Thus, from the end of the Han dynasty, through the Three Kingdoms, till after the Western and Eastern Jin, there emerged Daoists like Ge Hong, Lu Xiuqing, Kou Qianzhi, Tao Hongjing and others who, in an attempt to fulfill the requirement of the time, not only integrated some of the Daoist and Confucian ideas but also absorbed some of the Buddhist elements to enrich Daoism (Taoism). (Tang Yi-Jie, 1991, pp. 73–74)

According to Tang Yijie, Buddhism had served as a model for the establishment of Daoism in China as an organized church, with a religious canon and a spiritual community. Daoist masters organized their scriptures into three sections named Sandong 三洞 as the Buddhist scripture of three baskets, Sanzang 三藏 and they even copied from Buddhist scriptures. They also established a religious organization with a permanent membership of disciples, together with a body of clergy and church leaders by modelling the Buddhist Sangha. They established Daoist seven immortals, the highest of which was occupied by the first three: the Primal Lord of Heaven (Yuanshi Tianzun 原始天尊), the Daoist Lord on High (Gaoshang Daojun 高上道君) and the First Divine Daoist Lord (Yuanhuang Daojun 元皇道君) by modelling the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in Buddhism and they even absorbed ritual performances from Buddhist tantra in Tang dynasty. Thus, Daoism became an organized religion in Northern and Southern dynasties.

Buddhism also inspired many religious movements in Chinese history such as the White Lotus Society 白蓮教 established in Song dynasty as a society practicing Pure Land and recitation of Amitabha with Mao Zhiyuan 茅子元 as the founder, but later it developed into a secret society. Another is the White Cloud Society 白雲宗 which was originally a branch of the Huayan school, but towards the end of Song dynasty, Kong Qingjue 孔清覺 (1043–1121), a monk from the White Cloud monastery advocated vegetarian meal to attract many lay people. Thus, it was named.

Apart from Daoism, Buddhism also influenced popular religions in China and many Buddhist bodhisattvas and Buddhas became popular gods in China. The most popular Buddhist bodhisattva in China is Avalokiteśvara, the Chinese name of which is Guanyin who is worshipped by most of Chinese people as the goddess of mercy. The images of Guanyin either in painting or in sculptural form are found in many homes in China, many of them may not be Buddhists.

Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is introduced from India but it became popular from the Southern and Northern dynasties and continues to be the most popular Buddhist deity not only in China but also in all East Asia. Daoism also introduced Guanyin into their temples and named it as the True Man of Compassion 慈航真人, Great Person of Compassion 慈航大士. The Daoists of the Lingbao 靈寶 school even created Jiuku tianzun 救苦天尊 (the Heavenly Venerable Saviour from Suffering) by imitation of the Buddhist Guanyin.

The second most popular Buddhist Bodhisattva is Maitreya, the Chinese translation is Milefo 彌勒佛 who became the Chinese Laughing Buddha 笑佛. He is also called Mile with a bag 布袋彌勒, Mile with big belly 大肚彌勒, Happy Buddha 歡喜佛, Peace Buddha 平安佛, Buddha for good fortune 幸運佛, Buddha for wealth 發財佛 etc.

The Chinese Milefo is inspired by the Indian concept of Maitreya, but it is different from Maitreya. According to Zhanning's 贊寧 (919–1001) *Biography of Eminent Monks* 《高僧傳》, during the late Tang and Five dynasties, there appeared a short and fatty Buddhist monk with a big belly who often visited and helped common people with a bag in Southeast China. So people called him the Monk with a bag 布袋和尚 (CBETA, 2011, T50, no. 2061, p. 848, b23–c8). After he died, he was identified as the Maitreya. Today, Maitreya or Milefo is usually depicted in art according to the Chinese monk with a big belly and laughing. This tradition is accepted by mainstream Chinese Buddhism, and the Laughing Buddha is usually found in the first Shrine Room when you enter a Chinese monastery. So Milefo or Maitreya Buddha in China today represents humanistic, practical and happy attitude of life with a spirit to promote peace and prosperity in society.

The third is the belief of the ten kings in hells with the Ksitigarbha and the King of Eastern Mountain 東嶽大帝 are the chieftains who manage the hells. Ksitigarbha is a Buddhist Bodhisattva Chinese named him as Dizang. In other words, he will save all the suffering beings in hells. The ten kings of hell are the creation of Chinese people modelled after the concept of Yama, the king of hell in Buddhist tradition with the Chinese ideas of human court on earth. It is believed that after death, a person will be taken to different kings in hell for punishment according to his or her deeds on earth. Some people pray Dizang for help for their relatives in hell because according to the Buddhist teaching, Bodhisattva Dizang made vows that he will save all the beings in hell.

The fourth is the belief of the ghost mother of child 鬼子母. This is also from Buddhist tradition and according to which a female Hariti (ghost) who has five hundred children used to eat other people's children. Upon hearing this, Sakyamuni came and hid the youngest child so Hariti could not find it. Then, she asked Sakyamuni to help and Sakyamuni taught her to compare herself with other women who also have children. Hence, she realized her wrong deeds and became a protector woman who always protects children. Today, she is worshipped in China as the mother who delivers children to childless women 送子娘娘. She is depicted as a middle aged woman with many children around her and one child in her arms.

There are also many Buddhist inspired festivals in China such as the Buddha's birthday which falls on the eighth of the fourth month Chinese lunar calendar. Of course it is mainly celebrated in Buddhist monasteries throughout China, but ordinary people who are not particularly Buddhists also come and attend the celebration.

The second is Yulanpen Festival or popularly known as the Ghost Festival which is celebrated on the fifteenth of the seventh month Chinese lunar calendar. The name Yulanpen is a Buddhist term from the *Yulanpen jing* or *Ullanbana Sūtra* which tells a story of how Maudgalyayana, a disciple of the Buddha, saved his mother from hell. So it is a text to teach filial piety. This festival became quite popular in the Tang dynasty (618–906) that Daoism also created their own festival called Zhongyuan 中元 celebrated on the same day with the same purpose to save all souls from hell as there is no mention of such a festival in Daoist history before Tang dynasty, although the term Zhongyuan is found in early Daoist books. Today, this festival is celebrated by

all Chinese people no matter they are religious or not, because the aim is for ancestor worship.

The third is the Laba Festival 腊八 which falls on the eighth day of the twelfth month in Chinese lunar calendar. La means the end of the year and ancient Chinese people used to make offering to gods and ancestors at the end of the year for good fortune and blessing. So the twelfth month is La month among the common people and they made offering to eight gods such as the harvest god and insect god so it is called Laba. After its introduction, Buddhism became widely spread and influential in Northern and Southern dynasties and Buddhists celebrated various birthdays for Buddhas and bodhisattvas. According to the Buddhist tradition, Sakyamuni attained enlightenment on the eighth day of the twelfth month by practicing meditation under a Bodhi tree after he ate congee offered by a young lady. This took place after he realized the futility of practicing ascetic life for six long years. From the Song dynasty onwards, Chinese monasteries offer congee to people every year on this day, and thus, it became a tradition for people to enjoy congee for good luck and happiness. Thus, the Laba festival is celebrated with both Chinese and Buddhist characteristics.

### Buddhist Impact on Language and Literature

From the very beginning of Chinese Buddhism in the second century, Chinese Buddhists started to translate Buddhist scriptures into Chinese and this activity lasted for more than a 1,000 years. As a result, there is a large number of Buddhist scriptures translated into Chinese and they themselves are important additions to Chinese literature. This huge amount of Buddhist literature has had a profound impact on Chinese language and literature because together with the Buddhist literature new ideas and thoughts, new concepts and theories have also been introduced into China.

In order to express these new ideas, thoughts and concepts, the translators created a large amount of new vocabulary and some of them became daily used words. The well-known Chinese linguist Wang Li 王力 said that the Buddhist terminology contributed to Chinese vocabulary tremendously and some of these terms have already embedded in the blood of Chinese language that people do not even know that they are originally from Buddhist literature (Wang, 1990, pp. 678–686). He has given the following as examples. Today, we use Shijie 世界 to mean ‘world’, but ancient Chinese people used Tianxia 天下 to mean world. Shijie 世界 is originally from Buddhist literature, shi 世 denotes time, jie 界 denotes space. Others are such as *xiang ru fei fei* 想入非非 originally means thinking of the highest heaven which is named ‘neither thought nor non-thought’, but it has changed to unrealistic thinking. *Si da jie kong* 四大皆空 originally means that the physical body, which is made of the four great elements of earth, water, fire and wind, is empty, but it has changed to mean everything is empty. *Xin xin xiang yin* 心心相印 originally means that Chan master’s transmission of the Dharma to his disciple is called mind to mind transmission, but later it has changed to mean that two people know each other heart-to-heart when they are in love.

These new ideas and thought in turn also gave rise to many new forms of literature such as novels, *Bianwen* 變文 (popular literature), *Baojuan* 寶卷 (religious literature), *Tanci* 彈詞 (script for singing) etc. According to Fang Litian 方立天, a Chinese Buddhist scholar, Buddhist scriptures influenced Chinese literature both in form or style and contents. There are two aspects in contents (Fang, 2006, p. 266).

First, the early Chinese literature such as *Shijing* 《詩經》 emphasizes the description of humans and events while Zhuangzi was specialized in discussion of the metaphysical thinking and *Han Ode* 漢賦 emphasized on description of natural things such mountains and rivers. But Buddhism teaches the impermanence of everything in the world and emphasized the changes as universal reality. This enriches the thought and ideas of Chinese literati in their writings. As a result many literati from the Tang dynasty onwards started to criticize the world and human life by explaining the Buddhist thought of causality, praising the good and denouncing the bad.

Second, the traditional Chinese literature emphasized on the description of actuality and was lacking in imaginative and creative thinking that transcend time and space. Even the descriptions of Daoist immortals are very limited in imagination. But the Buddhist ideas are unlimited in imaginative thinking without limit of time and space. So we find in the Buddhist literatures words such as ‘the 18 hells’, ‘the 33 heavens’, ‘the 3,000 great chilicosmos’, etc. to describe space and words such as *kalpa* (eons) *mahakalpa* (great eons) etc. to describe time, words such as ‘as many as the sands in Ganga River’, ‘infinite and unlimited’ etc. to describe number. So it is this strong romantic sense that inspired Chinese romantic literature to develop.

Let us discuss Buddhist impact on Chinese language first. As discussed above there are many new words introduced into the Chinese language together with Buddhist translation. Some are new creations with existing Chinese words as above; others are transliterations such as *Chan* 禪 for *dhyana* or meditation, *Ta* 塔 for *Stupa* or *Pagoda*, *Louhan* 羅漢 for *arhat*, worthy one, *Nianpan* 涅槃 for *nirvāṇa*; still others are translation of the meaning such as *Rulai* 如來 for *Tathāgata*, thus come one, *Guiyi* 皈依 for *śaraṇa*, to take refuge in, *Jingtu* 淨土 for *Sukhāvatī*, Pure Land, *Jiantuo* 解脫 for *mokṣa*, liberation, *Lunhui* 輪回 for *saṃsāra*, round of birth and death etc. These new words have enriched the Chinese language and strengthened its power of expression of abstract ideas and thoughts.

Second, with the Buddhist translation literature, there is an increase in the use of disyllabic and polysyllabic words. But in the traditional Chinese literature, there were more monosyllabic words. This is already demonstrated by scholarly studies such as E. Zürcher’s study ‘Late Han Vernacular Elements in the Earliest Buddhist Translations’.

Third, according to Chinese scholars, Buddhism also influenced in phonetic syllabary for instance Qieyun 切韻 and the four tones 四聲. Chinese people became aware of the phonetic syllabary after the introduction of Buddhism and the study of Sanskrit language. Sanskrit is a language with a strong phonetic syllabary emphasis and there was a systematic study of it. Some Chinese people even tried to establish a

Chinese alphabet. The well-known Chinese literati, Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 even wrote the *Fourteen Phonetic Sounds* 《十四音訓序》 to discuss the matter.

Fourth, in the traditional literature, only the literary and refined language is used, but with the introduction of Buddhist literature there was an increase in the use of vernacular language. This is because there are so many difficult and new concepts and ideas in the Buddhist literature so it is quite difficult to use the literary Chinese to translate these ideas and thoughts. The Chinese Buddhists freely used vernacular to express these ideas because the Buddhist teaching allows such things as the Buddha said, 'I allow you, monks, to learn the speech of the Awakened One according to his own dialect'.<sup>12</sup> This in turn gave rise to a huge number of vernacular literatures both within Buddhism and in public.

Now let us turn to literature. According to Victoria Mair, it was 'under the influence of the Sanskrit theory of poetic defects, Shen Yue 沈約 and his followers invented tonal prosody in order to reproduce, in Chinese, the same euphonic effect achieved by meter in Sanskrit' (Mair & Mei, 1991, pp. 379–380).

Fang Litian, the Chinese scholar also expresses similar ideas that Buddhist ideas in the *Prajna* literature influenced Chinese literati in their writing of poems from the Wei Jin Dynasties from the fourth century onwards (Fang, 2006, pp. 269–270). The Buddhist monk Zhi Daolin 支道林 (314–366) who was well versed in Chinese literature was also a Buddhist poet. He had many friends such as Sun Chuo 孫綽, Xu Xun 許詢, Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361) etc. who were famous for their philosophical poems that were full of metaphysics. They had been influenced by Buddhist teaching of emptiness.

When Chan Buddhism became a distinctive school in Tang dynasty, it influenced many Chinese literati. They studied Chan teaching and also practiced Chan meditation themselves. Then they wrote poems to express their experience, their attitudes towards life and the world which are called Chan Poems. Wang Wei 王維 (701–761 or 689–759) was the most influential Chan poet in Tang dynasty and he was also a Chan painter and musician. He was called the 'Poet Buddha' 詩佛. Here is an example of his poems: 'Empty mountain without a human, but human voice is echoed. The sunshine penetrates into the deep forest and reflects on the lichen'.<sup>13</sup> 空山不見人，但聞人語響，返景入深林，復照青苔上。 Other Tang poets influenced by Buddhism are such as Meng Haoran 孟浩然, Wei Yingwu 韋應物, Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 etc. who wrote poems full of Buddhist ideas and Chan thoughts. In Song dynasty, Chan poems continued to flourish with many new poets such as Su Shi 蘇軾, Wang Anshi 王安石, Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅, Lu You 陸遊 etc. who wrote many poems with Buddhist Chan ideas. This continues through Ming and Qing dynasties until now.

It is influenced by Buddhism many vernacular literatures developed such as *Bianwen* 變文 (popular literature), *Baojuan* 寶卷 (precious scrolls), *Tanci* 彈詞 (script for singing), *Yulu* 語錄 (recorded speeches) etc. These kinds of literature were first used in Buddhism accompanied by singing and discourse in order to teach the general public who knew little or no literary Chinese at all. Later in Ming and Qing dynasties, there came up many such literatures teaching Buddhist morality. This



in turn gives rise to novels. Buddhism also provided the contents and story for traditional novels such the well-known *Travel to the West* 《西游記》.

Buddhism also influenced literary theory criticism because there is a close relationship between the Buddhist dialectical thinking and intuitive realization and theoretical thinking of literature writing. For instance, the Buddhist idea of 'inexpressible' 言語道斷, 'sudden enlightenment' 頓悟, 'wonderful enlightenment' 妙悟 etc. are similar to literati appreciation of the beauty and the expression of it. Song dynasty Wu Ke's poem on learning poetry is an example.

Learning poetry is like learning meditation, many years of practice on mattress and bamboo bed, until one realizes the essence of it, then one can produce the wonderful.<sup>14</sup> 學詩渾似學參禪，竹榻蒲團不計年，直待自家都了得，等閑拈出便超然。

### Buddhist Impact on Art and Architecture

Buddhist influence on Chinese art and architecture is tremendous. According to Fang Litian, without Buddhist art, Chinese art would not be so splendours and flourished during Han to Wei dynasties and some sub-fields in Chinese arts may have never been developed. Buddhist influence on Chinese art is mainly in painting and sculpture.

First, let us discuss Buddhist influence on Chinese painting. After Buddhism had been introduced into China, Buddhists also brought images of Buddha and Bodhisattva to spread the Buddhist teaching as well as for worship. Chao Buxing 曹不興 in the period of Three Kingdoms (220–280) was the first ever known Chinese artists to learn from Buddhist paintings and images brought by Kang Shenghui 康僧會 from western region. Later, Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 in Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420) painted the well-known Vimalakirti image on the wall of a monastery in Nanjing, and it became a great painting at the time. Cao Zhongda 曹仲達 of Northern Qi 北齊 (550–577) occupied a special place among the contemporary artists. He was known for his painting of Indian style images 梵像 and created the Cao model, the characteristics of which is described by Tang artists as 'Caoyi chushui' 曹衣出水 which means the cloth of Buddha image painted in such a way that it is just like coming out of water. This is a direct influence of Indian style.

In the Tang dynasty (618–906), the well-known painter Wu Daozi 吳道子 painted numerous Buddhist paintings and his paintings are described as 'Wudai dangfeng' 吳帶當風 which means that the drawing of cloth flying up as if there is wind blowing. Thus, he created the Wu's Model. Zhou Fang 周昉, another Tang dynasty painter, who was specialized in figure drawing, created the first ever Water-Moon Guanyin 水月觀音. Later, many Chinese artists imitated his drawing, and thus, Water-Moon Guanyin became very popular since the Tang dynasty til now. There are many such Buddhist paintings found in Dunhuang 敦煌, Maijishan 麥積山 at Tiansui, Binglingsi 炳靈寺, Yungang 雲岡 and Longmen 龍門.

One of the special paintings created during the Tang dynasty is Chan painting also known as Literati Painting that emphasized simplicity and spontaneity and often only water and ink were used. This is in contrast to the traditional painting called *Gongbi* 工筆 often referred to as 'court-style' painting practiced by professionals at the Imperial Academy of Painting, and it was meticulously done and full of colour. People usually consider Tang dynasty Wang Wei 王維 as the pioneer of Chan painting as he was a Buddhist practiced meditation and painting daily as well as writing poems when he was old and retired from his official post. Chan artists emphasized directness of expression which stood for sudden enlightenment and insight for experience most highly valued by the adherents of the sect. This gave rise to a tradition among the literati in Song dynasty who painted Chan paintings to express their ideas of life and attitudes towards the world. Chan paintings are mostly drawings of natural landscapes such as mountains and waters. Many critics consider landscape to be the highest form of Chinese painting. The time from the Five Dynasties period to the Northern Song period (907–1127) is known as the 'Great age of Chinese landscape'.

Apart from paintings, sculpture is the second of Chinese art largely influenced by Buddhism. Today, we find many Buddhist images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arahats as well as other figures in Dunhuang, Maijishan at Tiansui, Binglingsi, Yungang and Longmen which show the development of Buddhist art from imitating Indian style to pure Chinese ones. Yungang is a good example. The main Buddha images of caves No. 17 to No. 20 which were made during the Northern Wei (386–534) display Indian style of Buddhist robe with one piece of cloth and one shoulder is uncovered. But the other image on the side of this Buddha statue covers both shoulders. From the Tang dynasty onwards, all Buddha images are covered with both shoulders because according to the traditional Chinese culture, it is not a good manner if any part of the body is uncovered.

Dai Kui 戴逵 (326–396) was specialized in making Buddha images. It was said that Dai Kui used to make a wood image of Amita Buddha of five meters high together with other images of bodhisattvas. In order to make a new style, he sat behind a curtain listening to people's criticism and then modified the image. Thus, he spent three years to complete one Buddha image. Thus, Dai Kui created Chinese style of Buddhist images. Later, Buddha images became more of Chinese in style rather than Indian. Thus, Buddhist sculpture enriched Chinese sculpture in contents and style by absorbing the Indian style or even Greek style because Indian Buddhist sculpture was influenced by Greek style.

The third is the Buddhist influence on Chinese architecture. Buddhist architecture is designed with its purpose of use, and it can be divided into the following three: (1) the main hall to enshrine Buddhas and other halls to enshrine Bodhisattvas for worship, which resemble traditional Chinese palace architecture, (2) Pagoda or stupa to enshrine the relics of the Buddha or eminent monks, (3) Scripture Pillars, the Chinese name is Jingchuang 經幢, which is a construction for memory and propagation purposes often found at the gate or near a stupa on which are engraved

relief of various kinds of things such as dharmacakra (wheel of dharma), humans and animals.

Pagodas or stupas are a kind of new architecture introduced together with Buddhism. The earliest form of stupa is in the shape of a dome such as the Sanchi stupa in India, and it is mainly for enshrining the relics of the Buddha Śākyamuni. This kind of stupa is also found in China such as the White Stupa in Beijing. However, Chinese people gradually modified the shapes of the Buddhist stupa and there are many different forms of stupas found in China such as bottle-shaped and tower-shaped. Chinese people love the tower-like stupas which are found all over China and they are constructed with wood, bricks, stones and even irons, usually three- to nine-storey high. Wooden stupas are difficult to preserve and one of such stupas found in Yingxian 應縣木塔, Shanxi province is a rare piece of art work which is a totally modified version of typical Chinese stupa.

Pillars or Jingchuang are important construction for Buddhism such as the Asoka's pillars in India found in many important sites such as the Buddha's birth place and the place for his enlightenment for commemoration and others are for propagation as the inscriptions on the pillars described edicts about morality based on Buddhist tenets. In China, this kind of pillars is called scripture pillars because there are scriptures engraved on it. Scripture pillars are mostly made of stones and a few with iron, and they are typically cylindrical, hexagonal or octagonal which comprises three parts, pedestal, body and top. There are scriptures, mostly Dharanis engraved on the body of the pillar while the pedestal and top are decorated with floral and cloud patterns, even Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. There is a good example, a well-known scripture pillar in the Foguang Temple on Mt. Wutai, Shanxi province built in the late Tang dynasty. The other one is the Zhao Prefecture Dharani scripture pillar (18m high) in Zhao County, Hebei Province, built with stones in the Northern Song dynasty. All these added special feature to Chinese architecture.

In conclusion, over the last 2,000 years of interaction and integration since its introduction, Buddhism has influenced Chinese culture tremendously at all levels and all aspects. This is reflected in many aspects of Chinese people's life, particularly in their popular beliefs in the next life connected with karma which I will explore in the next paper.

## Notes

- [1] The English translation is adapted from Slingerland (2003, p. 149). Hereafter all the English translations of the *Lunyu* are adapted from the same source.
- [2] Translation is my own.
- [3] *Anguttaranikāya* iv, 164; *The Book of Gradual Sayings* iv, 112.
- [4] *Chenshilun*: 'As the sūtra says, "all the wonderful words in the world come from my (Buddha) teaching"' (CBETA, 2011, T32, no. 1646, p. 244, c26–27). *Dazhidulun*: 'Furthermore, in the *Shitihuanying dedao jing* (Śakradevendrābhisambodhi sūtra), the Buddha said to *Jiao shi jia* (Kauśika): "The truths (*satya*), good words (*subhāṣita*), words that are skilful and well spoken, spread throughout the world, all constitute my doctrine"' (CBETA, 2011, T25, no. 1509, p. 66, b7–8).

- [5] We find the idea of making offerings to gods in two suttas: *Pattakamma* (*Anguttaranikāya* ii, 67–68; *The Book of Gradual Sayings* ii, 73–77) and *Adiyasutta* (*Anguttaranikāya* iii, 45; *The Book of Gradual Sayings* iii, 37–38).
- [6] The ten classical questions which the Buddha never gave any answers are (1) is the universe eternal or (2) is it not eternal, (3) is the universe finite or (4) is it infinite, (5) is soul the same as body or (6) is soul one thing and body another thing, (7) does the Tathagata exist after death, or (8) does he not exist after death, or (9) does he both (at the same time) exist and not exist, or (10) does he both (at the same time) not exist and not not-exist. *Dighanikāya* i, 187–188; *Majjhimanikāya* i, No. 25 *Nivāpa Sutta* 157, No. 63 *Cūḷamālunkya Sutta* 426, No. 72 *Aggivacchagotta Sutta* 484; *Samyuttanikāya* iii, 213 sq., 258; iv, 286, 391; v, 418. But in *Madhyamakakarika*, 22, 2, Nagarjuna gave the number as fourteen. They are as follows: (a) Whether the world is (1) eternal, (2) or not, (3) or both, (4) or neither. (b) Whether the world is (5) finite, (6) or infinite, (7) or both, (8) or neither. (c) Whether the Tathagata (9) exists after death, (10) or does not, (11) or both, (12) or neither. (d) Whether the soul is (13) identical with the body or (14) different from it.
- [7] *Majjhimanikāya*, i. 430, *Cūḷamālunkya Sutta*.
- [8] For instance, in An Shigao's translation of the *Sigalovada Sutra*, hell is already mentioned (CBETA, 2011, T01, no. 16, p. 252, a25–26). Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Ullambana Sutra* already mentions that Maudgalyāyana went to hell to save his mother.
- [9] According to Ding Fubao's *Buddhist Dictionary*, these terms are ancient translations.
- [10] *Anguttaranikāya* iii, 312. Death is mentioned in many places in the Chinese translation of the *Ekottarāgama* (1.1–10), (2.1–10), (40.5), (46.8), (47.1).
- [11] Translation is my own.
- [12] *Cullavagga*, V. 33.1. The translation is adapted from *The Book of Discipline*, V. 194.
- [13] The translation is my own.
- [14] The translation is my own.

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