

**Understanding 21<sup>st</sup> Century China  
in Buddhist Asia: History, Modernity,  
and International Relations**

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### **Understanding 21<sup>st</sup> Century China in Buddhist Asia: History, Modernity, and International Relations**

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## **Preface**

It is not every day that we come across a book on China in the context of Buddhist Asia. This compilation of scholarly papers, as presented at the International Symposium on *Asian Perspectives on China and Tibet: Geography, History and Buddhism*, in Bangkok, October 2014 is so rich in contents fit for academics in the field of China and Buddhism while attracting the attention of non-professionals alike. The book is full of varied perspectives and well-researched back-ups. It stirs awareness and warnings of where and how China stands in the new century. There is no need to point out why it is important for Asian countries as well as the West to understand China through its historical, cultural and religious dimensions before we proceed onward to communicate, cooperate and integrate with this age-old nation. This book effectively serves to "present, position, and explore" China. It no doubt contributes significantly to the existing literature on both Buddhism and China.

I would like to applaud Professor Shih Chih-yu for all the work he so lovingly and efficiently put in for this book to materialize, not to mention the Conference that he painstakingly planned, pooled and organized to its success. In addition to documenting the articles, Professor Shih does not neglect to include Dr. Prapod Assavavirulhakam's contemplation on How Thai's Perspective on China Is Enlightened by Buddhist Scholarship, in his opening address at the Conference, one full of interesting observations and notes, indeed a valuable appendage to the book.

Certainly all authors of the articles contained here can pride themselves for their quality contributions.

The Asia Research Center of the Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies at Chulalongkorn University is proud to lend support to the publishing of this valuable book.

Prof. Prapin Manomaivibool, Ph.D.

15/12/2015

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## Introduction

### Transcending China via Buddhism?

*Chih-yu Shih*

While the China threat is one of the dominant themes in the international relations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it does not prevail everywhere. The legacy of historical Sinology as well as scholarly views on China plays a significant role in determining how strong, deep, and widespread the image of China threat can prevail in a particular intellectual tradition that is informed by civilizational knowledge and sited experiences. (Hebert 2010, Byong Moo Hwang 1998, Peter Katzenstein 2012, Ian Storey 2013, Brantly Womack 2010, Swaran Singh 2008) In Buddhist societies, referring primarily to those China's neighbors with the Buddhist traditions, fear of the China threat is significantly lower although a degree of disliking remains apparent. This lack of obvious anxiety inspires those scholars, who lack a Buddhist sensibility, into the suspicion that something about the Chinese civilizational, institutional, or historical legacies must have existed to thaw the alarm expressed in the West. Some sees a moral realism in the historical hierarchical order led by China to which its neighbors readily subscribe. (Yan Xuetong 2011) Others find a stable order in the Sinic world that guarantees smaller neighbors each an arguably secure place. (David Kang 2001) Few have ever looked into Buddhism as a plausible civilizational resource that prepares China into a less threatening image in Asia. (Tan and Uberoi 2009, Wang 2013) This brings one back to the intellectual history of China and Chinese studies.

The intellectual history of China Studies evolves differently at different sites, via different religious, historical and geographical perspectives. In neighboring societies as well as elsewhere, a number of parameters, such as "Asianism," "Chineseness," "civilization," "threat," "pragmatism," "Orient," "productive relations," "Han," etc., (Shih, Swaran, and Marwah 2012, Ngeow, 2014, Pisarev 2014, Lomova and Zadravova 2014, Shih 2013 Sinicizing) have emerged as key to the understanding of China, Chinese culture and Chinese people

## **A Review of the Scholarly Activities of Christian Missionaries and Indian Buddhist Monks in China with Special Emphasis on Ancient Chinese Documents: The Primary Sources of China Studies in India**

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*Visva-Bharati*

### **The Religious Origins of Perspectives on China**

China Studies implies an integrated, interdisciplinary approach to the study of China as a coherent whole. This approach is required because of the close interrelatedness of the many aspects of China's culture-language, social structure, political and economic institutions, the arts, religious and philosophical beliefs, and so on. This chapter will try to underline the fact that China studies is not a study of only a country but a civilizational process.

Major world religions, such as Christianity and Buddhism, show some ability to cut across different cultures, to win converts in a wide geographic area and amid considerable diversity. There have been Christians in Asia since the beginning, and more than twenty bishops were active between Kurdistan and the Caspian sea by the year 225 CE. Christian missionaries rode the wave of Spanish and Portuguese empire building. In a colony, arms could force people to accept a new language and religion, but it was a different with China's case. Jesuits and others believed that Christian teaching was universally applicable and adaptable to disparate cultures. Some sought martyrdom, but for the China mission, this fate was rare and 50 percent died at sea before reaching China.

Persian missionaries were engaged in mission work among the Turkish and Mongol tribes living there. They reached Samarkand by the fifth century and soon reached Turfan and Dun-Huang. This place was not far from China and it is believed that two Persian monks smuggled silkworms from China to West in 551 CE.

a remarkable level of inculturation and adaptation in Tang China, suffered persecution along with Buddhism.

The founding of the Yuan dynasty by the Mongol conquerors saw a second blossoming of Christianity. Once again, Christian churches and Buddhist temples were in close proximity, although it was not often heard of co-operation between individuals from these two religions.

In the sixteenth century, European Christian missionaries first came to China. In meeting the Buddhists of China, the missionaries saw many things that reminded them of Christianity. They saw similarities in the Buddhist and Christian services and also witnessed similarities in Christian and Buddhist books and doctrines. The early Christian missionaries were disturbed by these apparent similarities. Many Christians have thought they saw ancient Christian influence in the teachings of every sect of Buddhism.

To succeed in China, the Jesuits built close linkages with the emperor's court and with the educated class in Peking. They also dressed in silk robes imitating the Chinese fashion. To facilitate communication they looked into Confucianism and argued that it was not a religion but a secular system of politics and ethics. Hence, its practices could be recast within a Christian mold.

A fascinating aspect of the China mission was the Jesuits' use of science for their goal of religious conversion. Science provided them the power of prediction, particularly in astronomy. They discovered the fissures in Chinese knowledge and corrected the Chinese calendar, which played a role in selection of auspicious dates for activities. Several Jesuits pursued careers as writers, translators of European scientific texts, cartographers, and scientific advisors. Several collaborated with Chinese scholars to produce world atlases and treatises on astronomy and mechanics. Typically, Jesuits are praised for transmitting European science and technology to China.

There is a general consensus among the scholars that 'Chinese Studies' was initiated by the Christian Catholic Missionaries of the Jesuit order who lived in China since the last decade of the Ming

In the year 635 A.D., a party of foreigners from the distant West, a vague area known to the Chinese for many centuries as 'Da Qin', reached the capital city of the Great Chinese Empire, Chang'an, during the early years of the Tang dynasty. They pointed out that it was a religious mission to bring to the empire knowledge of the doctrines and salvation of Jesus Messiah. The emperor gave them permission to practice their religion which they officially named the 'Da Qin jiao', the Da Qin religion.

In the year 635 a Persian missionary known to us only by his Chinese name Alopen (possibly a Chinese pronunciation of Abraham) arrived in the capital of China, the city of Chang'an. He proceeded to found a church in the city and to translate the New Testament into Chinese. The next great figure in the history of the Chinese church is Qiqing (Chinese for Adam).

The other religion of dominance in China at the time was Buddhism, which had come from India. As early as the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D., Buddhism had followers all over China and was already beginning to exercise some influence.

In the 9th century, however, things started to go wrong. Christianity had to face Confucian bureaucracy and Taoist hierarchy and also the growing power of Buddhism, rich in lands, monasteries and shrines, gold, goods, slaves, devoted activists and hundreds of thousands of monks and nuns. From 841 onwards, in order to appropriate its possessions, the imperial court turned against Buddhism, and many monks and nuns were forced to return to normal life, and a number of temples and places of pilgrimage were ordered to be destroyed. The Christian and Zoroastrian monks suffered the same destiny. Buddhism was later again allowed to function, but it had suffered a massive blow.

### Christian Missionary Activities in China

Very often scholars compare the failure of Christianity with the success of Buddhism in China. The lack of inculturation is often accused for this supposed failure. But Christianity, which had achieved

Dynasty. An interesting fact is that Christian Catholic Missionaries and Chinese cooperated for the translation into Chinese and in 638 a book 'Jesus the Messiah' was published. The Chinese emperor even declared that there was nothing subversive to the Chinese traditions and allowed that the Gospel be preached in China.

Of all the evidence of the activity of the Christian missionaries in China which have come to light in the era of modern history, none has been more dramatic than the report of the discovery of a stone Monument by a Jesuit priest in 1625. It was discovered by Chinese workmen near Chinese ancient capital Chang An. The earliest group of documents seems to include four from a period between 635 and 641, the period when, according to the Monument, the first group of missionaries, led by Alopen, or Abraham, reached the capital of Changan. The imperial record of Chinese dynasties and rulers can be assumed to be accurate, testifying as they do of Alopen's arrival and translation work, before 641.

The other three manuscripts of this group seem to be linked together by notations at the end and are doubtless the ones written prior to 641, that is, between 635 and 638. The first of the three is "The Jesus-Messiah Discourse," it is obviously intended as an effort to present the essentials of the Christian religion to the imperial court. The astounding thing is the writer's dependence on Buddhist expressions, perhaps another indication of the early nature of this manuscript, revealing the new missionary's lack of knowledge of the language and complete dependence on a Buddhist translator. The next document which seems to fit in with this group has no title, but at the end is written "The Parable, Part II." The third, almost as long as the first, is called "The Discourse on the Oneness of the Ruler of the Universe, Part I," and like the others has a lot of Buddhist phrases. The fourth, dated on 641, covers the material in the Sermon on the Mount and the highlights of the Gospels, and demonstrates a much improved understanding of the meaning of the characters chosen for phonetic sounds. All four of these manuscripts, which are associated with the arrival of the first Christian missionaries, were obtained in China by W. G. de Groot in 1916 and are now kept in Kyoto.

However there are several reasons for the failure of the missions of Christian missionaries to China. It may be summarized as follows:

- i) The difficulty of winning the Chinese who were culturally strong and who, in their prosperity and abundance of ancient religious beliefs, felt no need for the gospel.
- ii) Temporizing with Buddhist concepts in their eagerness to make the gospel intellectually acceptable to the court elite, thereby causing it to lose its uniqueness.
- iii) The missionaries in China failed to train native leaders, lay and clergy.
- iv) The loss of the imperial favour and support in the ninth century with the banning of Christian and Buddhist monasteries in 845.
- v) The monogamic principle of the Christians was unpopular with the polygamic Chinese.
- vi) Another important factor was the language barrier. The writings of the early missionaries of 635 illustrates that they did have the gospel, and obviously they wanted to communicate it, but they faced the impossible task of quickly fulfilling the emperor's order for an immediate translation of some of their doctrinal writings.

Three decades later, in 1582, led by several figures including the prominent Italian Matteo Ricci, Jesuits once again initiated missionary work in China, ultimately introducing Western science, mathematics, astronomy, and visual arts to the imperial court, and carrying on significant inter-cultural and philosophical dialogue with Chinese scholars. At the time of their peak influence, in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries, members of the Jesuit delegation were considered some of the emperor's most valued and trusted advisors, holding numerous esteemed posts in the imperial government. Many Chinese, including notable former Confucian scholars, adopted Christianity and became priests and members of the Society of Jesus. The history of the missions of the Jesuits in China in the early modern era is one of the notable events in the early history of relations between China and the Western world, and an outstanding example of relations between two cultures and belief systems in the pre-modern age. The missionary efforts and other work of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits between the 16th-17th century and eighteenth century played a significant role in

introducing Western knowledge, science, and culture to China. Members of the Jesuit delegation to China were perhaps the most influential Christian missionaries in China between the earliest period of the religion up until the nineteenth century. The first attempt by Jesuits to reach China was made in 1552 by Saint Francis Xavier, Spanish priest and missionary and founding member of the Society. Xavier, however, died the same year without reaching the mainland. St Francis Xavier (1506-1552) in his travels across Asia came to understand that Christianity would only be accepted by Chinese if Christianity was willing to adapt itself to their own cultural standards and it would not succeed if it tried to turn Chinese into Europeans before making them Christian.

Christianity received wider acclamation and acceptance in China only after the Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) started his missionary work in China. Understanding the ideal established by St Francis Xavier, Ricci sincerely believed that Christianity must adapt itself to the Chinese way if it is to be accepted by the Chinese. His first idea was to have his group of Christian missionaries come into China looking and acting like Buddhist monks. Interestingly enough, while this allowed the Jesuits to achieve limited success in China, they impressed the Chinese more by their technical, scientific knowledge than with their attempt to act as Buddhist monks. Ricci developed a rather intricate foundation for Christianity based upon the Confucian classics. Through Ricci's efforts, the Chinese believed Christianity contained the same moral and cultural tradition as was prescribed in their literary classics. The emperor respected Ricci and his Jesuit companions because he saw them as helping him in his desire to keep the empire together. Ricci introduced for the Chinese his knowledge in the sciences of Mathematics, Mechanics and Astronomy and the humanities like Philosophy, Literature and poetry. He also mastered the Chinese language thoroughly and understood all the Chinese classics and Confucian documents. Between 1583 and 1588, Ricci and Ruggieri started compiling what was to be the first bi-lingual European-Chinese that is 'Portuguese - Chinese' dictionary. In 1584 Ricci published his famous book in Chinese 'Tian Zhu Shi-lu' (The True Account of God) where he discussed the existence and attributes

of God. He explained how a man might know God through the natural law, the Mosaic law, and the Christian law.

The Jesuits did not limit their work to science. They were able to explore at the same time the various fields of the humanities. They continued in the 17-18th centuries to translate at the beginning often in Latin difficult classics like 'the book of changes', 'the Analects', 'the Book of Rites' etc. Although there were various problems due to a projection of Christian ideas on the Chinese texts, the Europeans could read for the first time original Chinese philosophical texts. Nicolas Trigault, another European Missionary arrived in Macao in 1610 and compiled a larger dictionary called 'Xi Ru Er Mu Zi' "An aid for the ears and Eyes of Western Scholars" published in Hangzhou in 1626. During that time, the Christian Missionaries also recorded their observations. One of this was the observations of Matteo Ricci. Nicolas Trigault edited these memories and translated them into Latin. The book entitled 'On the entry of the Society of Jesus and Christianity into China' describes vividly the name and geographical position of China, the natural products, the government, art, culture, literature, customs, superstitions etc. After this some other important works on this field were 'Report on the Great Monarchy of China' by Alvarez Semedo, 'A new Report about China' by Gabriel de Magalhaens, Martino Martini, the European Missionary reached China in 1643 and sketched the best collections of Chinese map during that time.

On the field of scientific research, the Christian Missionaries also made immense academic contribution. Johann Adam Schall became famous for reforming the Chinese calendar. Another Christian Missionary, Michael Piotr Boym carried out extensive research on Chinese flora and their pharmacological usage in Chinese medicine. In 1623 or 1624, a stele was discovered near China's ancient capital Changan. It was engraved on the stele that it was built in 781 to commemorate 'the propagation of the Da-Qin Luminous Religion in the Middle Kingdom'. The Christian Monk Jesuit Emmanuel Diaz Junior made a description of the stele in his essay 'Correct Interpretation of the praise on the Tang stele of the Luminous doctrine' and it was published in 1644 with the complete Chinese text and commentary.



over the centuries, took a trip along the Silk Road in search of doctrinal instruction in Central Asia and India and Buddhism became the dominant religion of China by the 5th century

Two characteristic features of Buddhism enabled it to make a specific impact on Southeast Asia: First, the Buddhists were imbued with a strong missionary zeal, and second, they ignored the caste system and did not emphasize the idea of ritual purity. By his teaching as well as by the organization of his monastic order (Sangha) Gautama Buddha had given rise to this missionary zeal, which had then been fostered by Ashoka's dispatch of Buddhist missionaries to Western Asia, Central Asia, Sri Lanka and Burma. Buddhism's freedom from ritual restrictions and the spirit of the unity of all believers enabled Buddhist monks to establish contacts with people abroad, as well as to welcome them in India when they came to visit the sacred places of Buddhism. Inspired by China's official recognition of Buddhism, a large number of Indian Buddhist scholars went to China from various countries of the Western region (a Han Dynasty term for the region west of Yumenguan, including what is now Xinjiang and parts of Central Asia). The dominating force of this trend were the foreign nationalities living in various Central Asian Nations including Parthians, Sogdians, Kuchians as well as Khotanese etc. In the early stages of development of the India-China relationship, it was the people of these countries who acted as a bridge and medium between the two countries, and these Buddhist scholars played the most important role in the establishment of Buddhism in China and the development of China Studies in India. In 65 A.D., Buddhist missionaries from India began their visits to China and the first Indian missionaries who reached China were Dharmaraksha and Kasyapa Matanga who translated a great number of Buddhist works into Chinese.

Inspired by China's official recognition of Buddhism, a large number of Buddhist missionaries went to China from various countries of the Western region (a Han Dynasty term for the region west of Yumenguan, including what is now Xinjiang and parts of Central Asia). During the middle of 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D., a Parthian king, 'An Shigao' after converting to Buddhism, appeared in China's western border with Buddhist scriptures. He gave his throne to his uncle and converted to

In about 1687, Philippe Couplet, Prospero Intorcetta, Wolfgang Herttrich and Francois de Rougemont composed an important book entitled "A straight Forward Explanation of the Four Books in Chinese Language". Ferdinand Verbiest, a specialist in Manchu language was the author of the first 'Manchu Grammar' also entitled 'Elements of the Manchu language'. In the area of linguistics, Joseph Henri Marie de Premare composed 'Note on the Chinese language' in Guangzhou in 1728. In the field of History, Dominique Parrenin made a literal translation of Sima Guang's 'Zi zhi tong jian gang mu - qian bian' (A prologue to Comprehensive Mirror to aid in Government) in French entitled 'History of China'. In 1711, Francois Noel composed "Chinese Philosophy" in which he collected quotations of Chinese philosophers speaking about their conception of the Celestial Being, the connotation of the rites honoring the ancestors and the moral duties in family and social life. In between 1723 and 1773, during the reign of Chinese Emperor Yong Zheng (1723-1736) and Qian Long (1736-1796) few Christian missionaries made significant scholarly contributions. One of them Antoine Gaubil wrote a book on astronomy entitled 'A Brief History of Chinese Astronomy', published in Paris in 1729. He wrote another book on history entitled 'History of Genghis Khan and of the Mongol Dynasty' published in Paris in 1739. He also made some important translation of Shu Jing (Book of Documents), Yi Jing (Book of Changes). Later on the Christian Missionaries continued their activities in China till the establishment of People's Republic in 1949.

### Indian Buddhist Monks in China

Buddhism was the first of the great missionary faiths to take advantage of the mobility provided by the Silk Road to extend its reach far beyond its native ground. Buddhism had wide appeal, and its universalism enabled it to cross boundaries of space, language, and ethnicity with ease. The arrival of Buddhism in China was officially noted by the imperial court in the mid-first century CE, and the faith spread rapidly in China thereafter, helped by both official and private support for the building of temples and monasteries. Buddhist missionaries from Central Asia began an active program of translating sacred texts into Chinese, and a number of Chinese priests and monks,

Buddhism at a very young age. There is no specific data about his going to India. It is possible that he spent his childhood in some Buddhist study center concentrating on learning Buddhism. The names of many Sogdian translators appeared who translated Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. Among them, the most important one was Kang Senghui. During the rule of Emperor Kanishka, the status of Buddhism almost reached to that of national religion. On being encouraged by his Buddhist teacher, Emperor Kanishka expressed his immense interest in propagating Buddhism in territories outside his empire. From the beginning of 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. till the end of 6<sup>th</sup> century, during the time of about 300 years, there were continuous disputes in the political history of China due to the invasion of foreign tribes and internal battles. But China's cultural life was not shaken. The various aspects of life in the entire country moved in a similar rhythm. It was this rhythm that triggered a great creativity especially in the field of art. But Buddhism also won its benefits when the intellectual scholars from the fields of art, religion and literature developed a general interest towards Buddhism. The most outstanding men of letters and intellectuals of that time gradually delivered speeches and issued articles to safeguard Buddhism. The Chinese Buddhists were no longer satisfied with the doctrines preached by the non-Indian Buddhist missionaries. They urgently needed to establish direct contact with India. The Indian Buddhist scholars also didn't abandon this excellent opportunity. Hundreds of scholars went to China via land or sea routes and brought along all the Buddhist scriptures which were not there in China. The biographies of the most important and eminent Indian monks who went to China at that time were also preserved in the history of China. These biographies confirmed the ideals pursued by the Buddhist scholars and their most significant contributions made to China and have been an important source for further research on China.

### **The Scholars from Kashmir**

Kashmir played an exceedingly important role in directly propagating the Buddhist tradition to China. In this period, the number of Buddhist scholars who travelled to China from Kashmir was far more than the total number of scholars from all the other places of India.

During that period, Kashmir was the most prosperous Buddhist study center in India and was also the center of the most formidable Buddhist school in North India—the Sarvastivada school. The successive Kushana spurred the prosperity of Buddhism in Kashmir to support Buddhism. Sanghabhuti was one of the first Kashmiri scholars to reach China in A.D. 381. He translated a large number of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. The most important work among them contains detailed annotations about the Vinaya Pitaka of the Sarvastivada School. While Sanghabhuti was still translating scriptures in China, another famous Buddhist scholar from Kashmir arrived in China's capital. He was Gautama Sanghadeva who came to Changan in A.D. 384. According to the records of the Chinese biographers, he was an extremely accomplished scholar. The names of two other eminent Kashmiri monks Punyatrata and his student Dharmayasa were linked with the numerous Chinese translations of the scriptures of Sarvastivada School. Around the same period, there was another Kashmiri scholar who had close relations with Kumarajiva—Vimalaksa. At first Vimalaksa went to Kuci to work together with Kumarajiva and later Kumarajiva brought him to China. During A.D. 406 and A.D. 413, he stayed in Changan all along to work together with Kumarajiva. Vimalaksa also translated numerous scriptures himself and explained the translations of Kumarajiva to the Chinese scholars. Many Kashmiri monks also reached the southern parts of China during this time via mountain and sea routes. Buddhajiva was one of them who went to Nanjing in A.D. 423. Another eminent monk Gunavarman also travelled to Nanjing after visiting Java through the sea route.

### **The Buddhist Scholars from other regions of India**

Buddhist scholars from other parts of India went to China during this period and the names of a few such scholars are extraordinarily prominent in the records of the Chinese historians. Among them many Buddhist scholars were from Madhyadesa. The Chinese authors were accustomed to referring the entire Northern India from Punjab to Bihar as Madhyadesa. This is also a reason why we cannot know from which region the Buddhist scholars went to China. Nalanda had at that time not yet developed into an important university. Ayodhya

(or Oudh) and Pataliputra (or Patna) were the two major cities of that time, and both were ancient centers for Buddhist studies. There is a huge possibility that the Buddhist monks living in the temples of these two major cities understood the course of activities of the Kashmiri monks and were inspired by them. If we say that during the Eastern Han dynasty, the Buddhists of China were all basically court aristocrats and dignitaries, then during the Three Kingdoms Period, there were already many civilians in China who believed in Buddhism. Therefore the first tide of Indian Buddhists who came to preach in China arrived during the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. According to 'The Biography of Eminent Monks', the major Indian monks who came to China in this period were: Dharmakala from Madhyadesa, Samghavarti from Kapsia came to China in 381 and translated Buddhist scriptures. In AD 516, a Buddhist scholar from Benares called Gautama Prajnaruci reached China through the land route and settled down in Northern China. Till A.D. 543, he continued translating Buddhist scriptures from various region of China. Several of the books translated by him have been handed down over the years. Another well known monk Gunabhadra went to China around the same time through the sea route and was engaged in translating Buddhist scriptures in Southern China and in A.D. 435 he reached Canton. Soon afterwards, he travelled to Nanjing and found a position in the Qihuan monastery. Until his death in A.D. 468, Gunabhadra stayed in Nanjing and witnessed the great political change between A.D. 453 to A.D. 454. However this did not had an impact on his work and he continued to get support from the authority. Among the Buddhists working in Northern China around the same time, there is information about three East Indian monks. Three famous monks who went from Bengal and Assam during this period were Jnanabhadra, Jinayasa, Yasogupta. But due to lack of evidence, it is only known that they worked in Northern China since the latter half of 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Upasunya and Paramartha were two other Buddhist scholars who went to China from Western India during this period. Both were from the important centre for Sanskrit studies of that time – Ujjain. Probably it was over the mountains or through the sea route that Upasunya reached China and settled in Nanjing. He worked there all along through the latter half of the sixth century.

Historical records tell us about a Buddhist scholar Gunarata who probably went to China in A.D. 546 through the sea route along with a Chinese diplomatic mission who was during that time on a tour to Magadha. Gunarata carried with him a large number of Buddhist scriptures. He worked with great concentration until A.D. 557. Later on due to political turmoil he was forced to travel from place to place. During this period, three famous Buddhist scholars went to China from North West India namely Buddhahadra, Vimoksasena and Jinagupta. In A.D. 559, Jinagupta and his teachers Jnanabhadra and Jinayasa arrived in China's ancient capital Changan. During that time, the Emperor specially gave orders to build a monastery for them. These three scholars translated a large number of scriptures but they had to stop their work midway as political dispute broke out and they were forced to leave China and returned to India. In A.D. 581, with the establishment of Sui dynasty, political order was established in China and Jnanabhadra was again invited to return to China. He returned to China in A.D. 585 and again guided the translation of scriptures. In the Tang Dynasty, which was regarded as the most prosperous and flourishing era in China, thousands of Indians could be seen in the big cities of China and several among them were merchants or common tourists but there were also several Buddhist monks and scholars. One of the most famous scholars of Nalanda University, Prabhakarmitra, was the first scholar of Nalanda University to go to China during the Tang Dynasty. He translated a large number of Buddhist scriptures and those Chinese translations have also been handed down to us over the generations.

Among the famous scholars who later came to China was a Buddhist monk from Southern India, Bodhiruci. He arrived in China in A.D. 692 through sea route. In A.D. 706, Bodhiruci reached the capital Changan. There he translated a voluminous work called 'Ratnakuta' which is one of the major classics of Mahayana Buddhism. When Xuanzang went to India to collect Buddhist scriptures, he had taken back the original Sanskrit text of 'Ratnakuta', but Xuan Zang died just after starting the translation. Bodhiruci started translating it from A.D. 706 and completed it in A.D. 713. This time Indian scholars who helped Bodhiruci in translation work were both fluent in Chinese

Han empire. They wanted to outflank them by going over to the west. When this envoy, Zhang Qian, got there he found some products from China. At that time there were no known trading relations between Bactria (now part of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and as a smaller part, Turkmenistan) and China. He reported to Emperor Han Wudi about what he has heard and saw. He said that he has seen bamboo and cloth that was from China's Shu state (a state in the Zhou dynasty, comprising the present day Chengdu area in Sichuan Province), so he asked where they got these goods from and they said it came through India. So, this shows that there was a trade route from south western China into India through the North East, (from Sichuan to Yunnan region of China, Myanmar, Assam and into India). People have tried to document it in archaeological terms, but were not very successful. However it is still possible that there was this trade route as early as the 1st century B.C. The key point here is that probably relations began with trade.

Zhang Qian described Sindhu as a country lying about 1000 miles South East to Bactria. He described the climate as hot and humid, the people fought battles with the help of elephants and sometimes there were flood. Thus, this description clearly reflected the characteristics of India- its climate, elephants and big rivers as the boundary. As the cloth and other products came through Sindhu, it signifies that there was communication between Sindhu and ancient Shu State of China. Zhang Qian, was very eager to go to India and several times he made his effort to go to India. During Zhang Qian's second mission to the Western Region, he went to some of the tributary states within Sindhu. This proves that at least during the period of Emperor Han Wudi, there was direct contact between China and ancient India. Ban Gu's book 'Western Biography from Book of Han' is the continuation of 'Dawan Biography' from 'Book of History'. Ban Gu's younger brother Ban Zhao provided Ban Gu first hand information about the Western region. According to him, a new state appeared in India outside the Pamir Plateau and that is Kapsia. Based on the account of the Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zang, who visited India in A.D. 644, it seems that in later times Kapisa was part of a kingdom ruled by a Buddhist Kshatriya king holding sway over ten neighboring states, including Lampaka.

and Sanskrit. Among them were Dharma as well as Prajnagupta from South India. The last batch of teachers who went to China to propagate Buddhist teachings were Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra. In A.D. 720, Vajrabodhi went to Guangzhou where he received many disciples. Among them the most famous was the Indian disciple Amoghavajra. From A.D. 723 to A.D. 730 Vajrabodhi translated a large number of scriptures belonging to Esoteric Buddhism. The main disciple of Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra was very well known in China having a Chinese name "Bu kong". Amoghavajra stayed with his master Vajrabodhi in Luoyang from A.D. 724 to A.D. 731, later Vajrabodhi asked Amoghavajra to return to India and collect Buddhist scriptures. However Vajrabodhi passed away in A.D. 732, postponing Amoghavajra's return to India. In A.D. 736 Amoghavajra left China and embarked on an arduous sea voyage for Ceylon. Amoghavajra and his envoy returned to China in A.D. 746. From then on until his death in A.D. 774 Amoghavajra all along stayed in China propagating Buddhism and Esoterism. Amoghavajra translated many tantric classics and also urged the Chinese Buddhist disciples to start believing in tantra. The above mentioned Buddhist monks were the distinguished Indian scholars who went to China during the Tang dynasty to spread Buddhism and Buddhist literature. But at the same time there were also several less reputed scholars who did similar work, but their records are very few and in many cases only their name is known today. The work of translating Indian Buddhist texts continued throughout the first millennium. Through translations and commentaries, the Chinese collection has preserved a number of texts of the vast Sanskrit canon of Buddhism, while the originals were lost in India.

### Ancient Chinese Documents

Now, looking at the various ancient Chinese documents, we find umpteen number of reference of India. The term 'Sindhu' in the 'Dawan Biography' from 'Book of History' is the earliest records of India in Chinese history books. The first recorded evidence of contact says that in the Han period in China, around the 1st century CE, the emperor sent an envoy to what they called the Western Region, in order to form an alliance against the nomadic people who were troubling the

Nagarahara, Gandhara, and Banu. The chapters in the book, 'History of Later Han Dynasty', discussed about further strengthening the communication and contact between India and China and deepening Indian Cultural impact on China during the Eastern Han period owing to the establishment of Kushana Emperor in India and the opening up of sea route between India and China. In the biography of Western region and biography of Ban Zhao in 'History of Later Han Dynasty', it referred to a significant transformation in the exchange between the two countries, i.e. it became two way exchange from one way and sea route became the main channel of communication. The records of India in "History of Later Han Dynasty", provided us with some important information. It gives us information for the first time about the spread of Buddhism in India, how it spread in the Ganges river valley region and how King Ashoka made immense contribution for the development of Buddhism within India and also in the World. The 'Western Biography' chapter in "History of Later Han Dynasty" also provided us information about the products manufactured in India and also about India's foreign trade. The Records of the Three Kingdoms, also known by its Chinese title 'Sanguozhi', written by Chen Shou, is a Chinese historical text which covered the history of the late Eastern Han dynasty and the Three Kingdoms period. Together with the Records of the Grand Historian 'Shiji' History of Han 'Han Shu', and History of Later Han 'Hou Han Shu', the book was part of the early four historiographies of the Twenty-Four Histories canon. In the fifth century, almost a century after the death of Chen Shou, the work was further annotated by Pei Songzhi. The chapter 'Diwang Shiji' 'The Era of Sovereigns' recorded for the first time that Buddhist Scriptures were transmitted to China from India.

The early facts concerning cultural relationship between India and China are found in various Chinese books, such as "Lie-Zu" or 'The Book of Wonders of Zhou', "Lie-Xian-Zhuan" or 'The biography of Fairies', "Qi-Lu" or 'The Seven Records', etc. but this is only a bare enumeration, not any adequate, systematic description. According to the records of a Chinese book called "Li-Dai-Gao Seng-Zhuan" or 'The biographies of Great Monks' in various ages, there were two hundred Chinese monks who studied in India with great success, and

twenty-four Indian sages who preached in China with marvellous achievement. The Old Book of Tang or the new Book of Tang which was the historical work about the Tang dynasty, in several chapters had a number of accounts of political, economic and cultural interaction between ancient India and ancient China. In the 'History of Sung Dynasty, there was a description of the country of 'Chu Lien', which was most probably the state of 'Chola'. 'The History of Ming Dynasty' records 'Meng-jia-li' as having diplomatic relations with China in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of Emperor Yung Lo (1408) and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Emperor Chen Tung (1438). 'Meng-jia-li' was evidently the Chinese version of Bengal. 'Ying-Ya-Sheng-Lan' or 'Scenes beyond the seas' by Ma Huan, 'Xing-Cha-Sheng-lan' or 'In a Boat Floating towards a Starry Land' by Fei Sin described the customs and institutions of Bengal in those days. Apart from this above mentioned standard historical works, there are also references to India in other works of sub-historical nature. 'Tong Tian' or 'General Institutional History of China' by Tu Yu, 'Tang Hui Yao' or 'Essential Records of the Tang Dynasty' by Wang Pu, incorporated materials of historical interest with reference to India, although they are very much scattered in various parts and needs further meticulous research.

## Conclusion

Primary sources enable the researcher to get as close as possible to what actually happened during an historical event or time period. A primary source reflects the individual viewpoint of a participant or observer. China has taken great care and made much effort to preserve, to cherish, to cultivate, and to magnify what she has got from India at different ages. The above mentioned sources are simply few illustrations which may lead to further research and more fruitful result. The translations done by the great Buddhist scholars are really a precious treasury of parts of ancient Indian culture and is the groundwork of China studies in India and greatly deserve our patient investigation. The ancient documents of China, including the history books in various dynasties emphasize the important relationship that China shares with India in ancient times. What is more, Chinese records are the most authentic, continuous and comprehensive primary sources for

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reinterpretations and discovery of new data and continues to play an important role for pursuing China Studies in India.

The comparative intellectual history in this chapter clearly demonstrates that the spread of Buddhism to China was a multicultural process that included people and cultural elements from regions beyond South Asia. It transcends China's boundary and was undertaken by people from diverse ethnic and geographical backgrounds, who facilitated the flow of cultural elements from different parts of Asia that then mixed with Chinese ideas and beliefs.

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