

Lecture 6: "Buddhist travellers and China's Relations to the Outside World."

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1. Introduction

In her book *The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History* Joanna Waley-Cohen opens the first chapter entitled "Early Chinese Cosmopolitanism" with a reference to Xuanzang, a Chinese monk who travelled to India in search of Buddhist scriptures. Xuanzang's journey lasted from 629 to 645. In 646 he completed a description of his travels on imperial request. The "Journey to the West in the Great Tang Dynasty" (大唐西域記), as his description was called, became the basis for further dramatization of his epic journey for stage performance. Xuanzang's story was told and retold by storytellers all over China. Since then it has become a standard theme of popular literature. "As the saga of Xuanzang's journey was told and retold," Waley-Cohen asserts, "it embedded the idea of international exchange into the Chinese tradition from a very early period." (11) Similarly, when assessing the impact of Buddhist monks and merchants on the emerging East Asian world order, Charles Holcombe stresses that

[b]oth trade and Buddhism played critical roles in the process of forging a common culture for traditional East Asia, but both also transcended purely regional perspectives. By penetrating the barriers of East Asian civilization and linking it to a much wider world, these two related outside forces conspired to generate 'new cultural configurations' and draw 'new cultural boundary lines' in East Asia.¹

¹ Holcombe, *Genesis of East Asia*, 93.

Just as Chinese Buddhists travelled to India in search of Buddhist scriptures and learned teachers, so Japanese Buddhists journeyed to China. "Thus the network of international contacts forged in the Tang did not merely draw foreign imports into China but also spawned the outward extension of Chinese influence into much of East Asia" under the flag of what Charles Holcombe has called the "Buddhist Internationalisation."²

In this lecture I would like to take a closer look at the political, economic, and cultural exchanges between the East Asian states by specifically looking at the journeys of Buddhist travellers in the medieval period. In which ways did Buddhist travellers contribute to the making of an East Asian universal order? How did this emerging order influence the self-understanding of the Chinese empire as being co-extensive with all-under-Heaven?

Early Chinese contact with other civilizations occurred in three broad overlapping categories of equal importance: 1) politics, including both diplomacy and warfare; 2) religion and intellectual exchange; and 3) trade, in which Chinese silk and later porcelain figured prominently. I will try to show that Buddhist monks were involved in all three areas using examples from the period of the division between North and South through the Tang.

2. Monks and Merchants

169 Chinese monks are known today who travelled to India in quest of the dharma between the 4th and 8th centuries. In addition to these Chinese travellers, an unknown number of foreign monks travelled the central Asian overland routes which became the renowned "Silk Roads". "Silk road" is a term coined by the German geographer and explorer Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen in 1877. I use the plural "Silk Roads" in order to distinguish the northern Silk Road that branches off east of Dunhuang and runs along the northern rim of the Taklamakan desert from the southern route that encloses the desert in the south. Early contact between India and China and the initial transmission of Buddhism into China were undoubtedly achieved by camel caravans on the Silk Roads. However, after the Han dynasty sea

² Waley-Cohen, *Sextants of Beijing*, 31.

borne commerce became a strong rival to trade on the Silk Roads, especially in the maritime oriented southern state of Wu of the Three Kingdoms. We know of large numbers of Buddhist monks that arrived in South China on merchantmen. (More precisely: We know that merchantmen from Southeast Asia arrived at the South China shores only because Buddhist hagiographical sources contain information that those ships also brought foreign monks to China.

While the primary goal of the Chinese Buddhist travellers abroad certainly was to collect Buddhist scriptures and relics – relics means the bones and teeth of the Buddha - as well as to meet with famous masters in the homeland of their religion, we should not overlook that religious quest often went hand in hand with what could be called “religiously motivated trade” in “holy accoutrements”. Some scholars have estimated that the volume of this trade across the South Seas exceeded the older secular elite demand for luxury items. It is always difficult to get real numbers in Chinese social history, so the precise volume of this kind of trade is difficult to measure. We have no reason, however, to doubt the fact that the Buddhist pilgrimages stimulated the circulation of both goods and ideas.

To give you an idea of the amount and quality of commodities involved in this “holy trade” let me cite the example of the Tang monk Jianzhen 鑑真 (jap. Ganjin, 688-763), who in 743 had gathered the following items for shipment to Japan:

the Avatamsaka Sūtra, the Greater Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, the Mahāsamghāta Sūtra, and the Greater Nirvana Sūtra, all inscribed in gold, and one hundred other sutras and commentaries; of Buddhist images, a painting of the Five Buddhas of Wisdom and another of the Bejeweled Buddha, one gold-encrusted statue, and a six-panel screen depicting Buddhas and bodhisattvas; of ceremonial equipment, panels displaying the lunar calendric and solar cyclic charts, one hundred and twenty Bodhimandala banners, fourteen beaded banners, eight hand-banners with jade rings, fifty sutra containers inlaid with mother-of-pearl, twenty copper jars, twenty-four floral rugs, one thousand clerical stoles, one thousand clerical robes, one thousand chairs, four large copper canopies, forty bamboo-leaf canopies, twenty large copper basins as well as twenty more

of intermediate size and forty-four of a smaller size, eighty copper plates measuring a foot in diameter and two hundred more of a smaller dimension, sixteen white rattan baskets, and six polychrome rattan baskets.

Of medicines and aromatics, twenty globules of musk, and more than six hundred pounds in all of aloeswood, onycha, valerian, camphor, a perfume called *tan-t'ang*, benzoin, light aloeswood, essence of sweet basil, costusroot, and frankincense; some five hundred pounds of myrobalan, pepper, asafetida, crystal sugar, and sugar cane; forty gallons of bee's honey; and eighty bundles of sugarcane stalks. Included also were such items as ten thousand strings of bronze coins, another ten thousand of *cheng-lu* coins, five thousand strings of *tzu-pien* coins, twenty gauze hoods, and thirty linen shoes.³

Besides the seventeen monks, a number of jade workers, painters, and people skilled in carving, encasing, and casting also decided to travel to Japan with Jianzhen. After five futile attempts to reach Japan, Jianzhen finally arrived at the island in 754 on the ship of the Japanese ambassador and other high-ranking officials of the eleventh Japanese delegation to China. Twelve years had passed since the first attempt to travel to Japan in 742. Ganjin not only brought orthodox forms of the Buddhist *vinaya*, the monk's rules, to Japan, but also taught Chinese-style pharmacology.

It is possible that Jianzhen assembled the commodities listed above not for sale but as presents to his Japanese brethren and that "trade" is therefore a misnomer. Other Tang sources prove beyond doubt, however, that monks were involved not only in trade, but in the transmission of "food technology":

In the twenty-first year of the Zhenguan era [647], Magadha for the first time dispatched envoys to establish communication with the Son of Heaven. They presented the *bodhi* tree, a tree resembling the poplar. [Emperor] Taizong then dispatched envoys to obtain the method of boiling sugar. [When this was obtained], he ordered that sugarcane be submitted from Yangzhou. The juice

³ Inoue, *The Roof Tile of Tempyō*, 58-59.

was extracted by pressing [the cane in a mortar] as if [preparing] a dosage [of medicine]. It far surpassed that of the Western regions in color and flavor.⁴

Roughly a hundred years earlier, an embassy to the Liang dynasty from the state of Paekche in Korea requested and received not only copies of Buddhist scriptures but also physicians, craftsmen, painters, and specialists in the *Shijing*, the *Book of Songs*.

Now, while trade in Buddhist objects certainly flourished during the medieval period, one has to stress that this trade happened largely outside the state's tribute system. It was, in other words, private commercial activity. The Chinese state was often not in favour of unrestricted trade. The Tang dynasty, in particular, because it was vigorous and powerful and had the means to enforce the will of its rulers, has been relatively successful in regulating trade and securing its borders. In 714, for example, an imperial command enumerated various commodities that were not allowed to pass into the hands of foreigners living along the northwestern frontier. Another edict of 743 ordered the complete termination of trade across the western border despite its acknowledged profitability. The reasons were of a strategic nature. A strong dynasty could thus stifle economic development. Dynastic splendour was not always equivalent to general economic prosperity and vigorous international trade relations.

Besides their own commercial activities, Buddhist monks and institutions were involved in other kinds of business transactions. First hand evidence is scarce, but there is evidence that Buddhist monks in Dunhuang signed their names on treaties as arbiters of property disputes and witnesses of commercial deals. Other financial practices, for instance the running of pawn shops, mutual financing associations, the sale of auction or lottery tickets, were associated with the monasteries or the Buddhist establishment in general.⁵

3. Embassies and monks

⁴ Kieschnick, *Impact*, 257.

⁵ Liu, *Ancient India and China*, pp. 120-123.

We know from another source, the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* (Further Biographies of Eminent Monks) that the emissaries were Buddhist monks under the leadership of Xuanzang. The use of monks as emissaries is not unusual in medieval China. Japanese monks played a prominent role in relations between the Japanese court and the Tang court in Chang'an. 19 Japanese embassies were dispatched to the Tang court, the first one 630, the last one 894. Chinese rulers were generally interested in prominent monks – whether Chinese or foreign - arriving from abroad. In addition to new texts and doctrines the monks often brought valuable information concerning military matters, geography, customs and habits of foreign peoples; as the above example suggests they also brought rare objects or technologies how to produce them. In short, monks were crucial for gathering intelligence on foreign states in the broadest sense. It may be principally for this reason that Chinese emperors and local officials kept an especially close eye on the movements of well-known monks. According to Tang law, Chinese and foreigners, except for diplomats on official business, were “not permitted to leave or enter the country’s borders.”⁶ It might have been the experience of Xuanzang (600-664), who in 626 had been denied permission to leave the country, that prompted Jianzhen to conceal his travel plans. To avoid trouble, Jianzhen claimed that he was preparing for a trip to the Guoqing Temple at Mt. Tiantai (present Zhejiang Province) to make donations. More than once, however, information about the planned journey was disclosed to officials who tried to dissuade the monk from realising his intentions.

While the commercial character of the embassies and the aim to gather military intelligence is readily visible, some missions were also driven by more personal motives on part of the Chinese emperors. Tang Taizong (r. 626-649) is a good example. Taizong became severely ill toward the end of his reign and it was his failing health which sparked his interest in Buddhism. One major motive behind the embassy the Tang sent to India in 648 was the wish to obtain drugs which would help the emperor recover from his illness. The ambassador dutifully brought a physician to China who is reported to have been an Indian expert in preparing longevity drugs.

⁶ Wang Zhenping, *Ambassadors from the Islands of Immortals*, 210.

Why, on the other hand, were the Japanese interested in Buddhism? Buddhist sutras had first been brought to Japan in the sixth century (538) and in 607 a Japanese ambassador for the first time acquired a Buddhist scripture in China, a copy of the Lotus sutra. The Yamato ruler's interest in Buddhism was spurred by their desire to use Buddhism to promote political unification. They identified themselves with the Buddha and portrayed Buddha as occupying a higher plane than the native Japanese deities. When they had achieved political unification, the Japanese rulers advocated Buddhism as a protecting force for the nation and as a source providing ideological support.

4. Cross-cultural comparison and changing conceptions of the 'Other'

An interesting question, to which I have no ready answer, is to which extent Charles Holcombe's statement that "Buddhism promoted the notion that all people were alike and all regional differences [were] ultimately irrelevant" holds true. Surely, the East Asian Buddhist community was highly international. The great monasteries in Tang China frequently welcomed visitors like the Japanese monk Saichō who studied in China from 802 to 805. Prior to his departure, a Chinese government official wrote a dedication to Saichō's catalogue of manuscripts, saying that "in appearance the Priest Saichō is from a foreign land, his nature truly springs from the same origin [as the Chinese, TJ]."⁷ Was this an isolated statement or did the numerous contacts and exchanges that Buddhist travellers undoubtedly established also transform the Chinese view of themselves and of others on a deeper intellectual level.

The answer to this problem has to remain inconclusive.

In order to understand how the particular situation in the South had changed the perception of the 'Other' in the eyes of the literati elite, no approach seems to be more rewarding than a study of the monk Sengyou (445-518), "a typical example of the learned, urbane, metropolitan clerics of the period of the domestication of Buddhism in China."⁸ The *Hongming ji* (Collection Aggrandizing and Clarifying

⁷ Holcombe, *Genesis of East Asia*, 106.

⁸ About Sengyou see Arthur E. Link, "Shih Seng-yu and his writings," in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80:1 (1960), 17-43 (quotation on p. 17); Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, *Das Hung-ming*

[Buddhism]), Sengyou's collection of apologetic essays recording the debates of Chinese Buddhists with their Confucian and Daoist opponents, is probably our richest source for ideological debate during the period of disunity in China. The book was completed between ca. 515-518 AD, ten years after Liang Wudi's 梁武帝 (r. 502-549) conversion to Buddhism in 504 and a few years before his bodhisattva ordination in 519. At the time when Sengyou compiled his collection, Buddhist influence on the Emperor and the southern aristocracy reached its zenith. Chinese Buddhists had every reason to be self-confident, an attitude that also becomes apparent in Sengyou's postscript to the *Hongming ji*. The text opens with a statement by its author claiming that in his collection he has

assembled enlarging and illuminating [writings] for the defence [of Buddhism] against insults. [These writings] consist of elegant disquisitions of clear-sighted people and profound explanations of famous scholars. They provide the rams for the destruction of false teachings and erroneous views and the moats [needed] to enlarge the Dao and protect the Law. However, [while] the wise are not deluded, the deluded oppose wisdom. [Therefore,] when one instructs people with the unfathomable Law, in the end there is nobody who understands [its meaning]. This is the reason why I have collected these writings that have been handed down to us. Through reference to [concrete] events, I gain evidence. My words are unadorned, the truth returns into its material reality. All people who have gone astray will soon return and completely resolve all doubts. Thus, I say: enlarging and illuminating.⁹

According to Sengyou's testimony, the motive behind his compiling the *Hongming ji* is the limitation, even provinciality of the traditional Chinese teachings of his time:

chi und die Aufnahme des Buddhismus in China (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1976). A short biographical sketch by Gao Guanru 高觀如 is included in the second volume of *Zhongguo fojiao* 中國佛教 (Beijing: Zhishi chubanshe, 1981), 69-72.

⁹ *Hongming ji* 弘明集 (Ed. Taishô) 14, T.52.95a3-8.

The Buddhist teaching in its emptiness and stillness embraces the Three Worlds in its manifold aspects. The ordinary teachings, however, are narrowly confined (*fengzhi* 封滯) [in their intellectual outlook]. They limit their mind to one country. Whenever the mind is limited to one country, everything outside the reach of one's eyes and ears becomes doubtful. Only if one impartially contemplates the Three Worlds, the principle of divine change becomes permanently illuminated. The reason why [people] are forever drowned [in this world], is that they hold on to their doubts, which lead them away from enlightenment.¹⁰

For Sengyou, doubts and, as a consequence, criticism on Buddhism does not *primarily* result from the fact that his contemporaries were *per se* unable to grasp the essence of Buddhist teaching. The seeming incompatibility of Buddhism and indigenous teachings does, after all, not exist. In an interesting twist Sengyou argues that the false impression of incompatibility arises from the fact that the Chinese have lost an appropriate understanding of their own tradition, a failure that equally results from the erosion of Confucian teachings and the inability to experience the teachings of the Master in a concrete fashion.

Upon examining the ordinary teachings one finds that they are all modelled on the Five Classics. What they honour is only heaven; what they imitate is only the sage [Confucius]. However, none has ever measured out the form of heaven; none has ever looked into the mind of the sage. Although [the people] believe respectfully, they remain blind and ignorant. How much more is this the case in relation to the Buddha who is more honourable than heaven and whose Law is more profound than that of the sage [Confucius].¹¹

On the one hand, the followers of the “ordinary teachings” (*su jiao* 俗教) – a term used to refer to Confucians and Daoists primarily – are unable to fully grasp the meaning of their limited teachings, not to mention the much more comprehensive

¹⁰ *Hongming ji* 14, T.52.95a9-12.

¹¹ *Hongming ji* 14, T.52.95a12-15.

teaching of Buddhism. On the other hand, the acceptance of Buddhism, so Sengyou's implicit argument, is a prerequisite that would also enable the adherents of other teachings to fully grasp the potential inherent in their own creed.

A good example to illustrate Sengyou's line of argumentation is his refutation of the anti-Buddhist claim that the foreign teaching is not in accordance with Chinese customs. The example is also interesting as a reflection of the fact that China had apparently lost its centrality in the world given the simultaneous existence of rivalling centers of political and cultural authority elsewhere. In his postscript to this work, Sengyou discusses the "geopolitical" situation of his time as well as possible Chinese attitudes towards the "barbarian" teaching of Buddhism. A short section of the text pertaining to the topic of this paper reads as follows:

Some people might suspect that because the teaching of Buddhism developed in the Western Regions it is nothing that would suit China. This would mean that the former sages selected a [particular] territory to establish their teachings instead of establishing a teaching in order to transform the customs [of all the people].

In olden times, the Three August Ones practiced non-action, the Five Emperors transformed [the people] through their virtue, the Three Kings ruled with ceremonials and penal law, and the seven states relied on their destructive power. The territory remained always China (Zhuxia 諸夏), but the teachings of the world changed according to the times. [...]

Yü 禹 emerged from among the Qiang in the West, and Shun 舜 was born among the Yi 夷 in the East. Who would dare to say: Because the land is inferior we dismiss its sages. [Kong] Qiu 孔丘 wanted to live among the Yi and [Lao] Dan 老聃 set out to live among the Rong 戎 in the West. How could it be possible that the land determines where the Dao is? An ordinary sage establishes his teaching without confining himself to either China or the barbarian's [land], not to speak of the Buddha, who embraces the whole universe. How could he limit the transformation to the Western Regions?

In *Li[ji]* 禮記, chapter *Wangzhi* 王制, it is said: “The territory within the Four Seas covers three thousand square *li*.” The territory of the central plain is already less extensive. The rivers Yi 伊 and Luo 洛 were originally Chinese, but now they completely belong to the deserted land of the Rong barbarians. Wu 吳 and Chu 楚, originally belonging to the territory of the Yi barbarians, have been transformed into Chinese districts. While the Dao is flowing endlessly, the land does not change continuously. Moreover, [the earth] generously supports [the innumerable beings] without limitation, while political divisions separate what makes up a whole.

The North Star is in the Northwest; therefore one knows that India occupies the center. Now, the tiny area of the central plain is designated as “Glorious [Land]” (*Hua* 華) in order to ward off the true Law. But even if one wants to ward it off, the spiritual transformation will still be universal.¹²

In a first step, Sengyou rejects the view that Buddhism might not be appropriate for China. The sages, so goes his argument, did not confine their teachings to a particular country, but understood it as a means for the salvation of the entire world. China, in its long history, has seen different teachings and methods of government, their quality declining from the oldest one to the latest one. In a final step, Sengyou reminds his readers that the most honoured sages of Chinese history either did not emerge from China proper or had left their home country to live among those people now commonly referred to as “barbarians.”

We see here that for Sengyou, the political division of the earth has only a temporary character and is therefore artificial. In the same vein, ethnic differentiation such as that between “Chinese,” “Yi” or “Luo” are meaningless in light of the ever-changing nature of Dao and the fact that the same earth supports all beings. Designations such as “Hua,” which are used to mark off a particular area, only bespeak the provincialism and parochialism of their inventors.

¹² *Hongming ji* 14, T.52:95c6-20.

It is worth noting that Sengyou's sophisticated concept of inclusion goes far beyond the simple claim that Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism should peacefully coexist or that Buddhism should replace the Chinese teachings. Only by opening up, both politically and intellectually, will China be able to form an active part in the flow of the Dao. The monk takes the sting out of accusations brought forward against the Buddhists by arguing that Buddhism and Confucianism are not at all irreconcilable, but that Buddhism would lead the Chinese back to a deeper understanding of their own Confucian truths. **To put it simply: Becoming a Buddhist does make one a better Confucian.**

A second, no less important part of the strategy of inclusion is the attempt at reconstruction of the earliest past according to the new realities. For instance, in a passage that precedes the one quoted above, Sengyou cites the book of *Liezi* 列子 to support his claim that the history of Buddhism goes back to the early times of King Mu of Zhou 周穆王 (r. 956-918 BC).¹³

That Sengyou, a renowned Buddhist cleric with excellent connections to aristocratic circles at court, sought to propagate Buddhism as the most superior teaching and to protect it against invectives issued by its opponents is not surprising. But that is just one side of the medal. There is a further point that is relevant for the topic of this lecture. That is Sengyou's readiness to further engage broader issues of cultural change. We have to see this readiness against the backdrop of his generation's insecurity concerning the validity of cultural values. It is clearly motivated by more than the mere wish to legitimate and secure Buddhism's position against its enemies. After all, Buddhism's place, though always potentially precarious, *was* comparatively secure during Sengyou's lifetime. Rather, Sengyou's interest reflects an earnest desire to re-define the cultural co-ordinates of aristocratic identity by delineating the cultural differences between the past and the present, or between the inhabitants of China and elsewhere. This early form of cross-cultural comparison, which is rather implicit in the "Postface," is spelled out more fully in other texts to which I will now turn.

¹³ *Hongming ji* 14, T.52.95b29-c5.

While the previous section served the purpose to describe Sengyou's strategy of inclusion of a cultural "Other" into Chinese culture, the following section will present some examples that illustrate different Chinese perception's of the Other – in this case the perception of India as the homeland of Buddhism. The first example is a passage from a late fifth-century anti-Buddhist polemic of uncertain authorship entitled "Discourse on the Triple Destruction" (*Sanpo lun* 三破論):¹⁴

The Hu-barbarians have no humanity. Unyielding and violent, they are without manners and are no different from birds or animals. They do not believe in humility or deference. When Laozi entered the Pass [into Central Asia and India] he intentionally created a doctrine of images and idols to convert them. ...The Hu-barbarians are crude and unrefined. Desiring to terminate their evil seed, he therefore laid down rules that men should not take wives or women husbands. If the whole kingdom were to submit to his teaching, the population would disappear of its own accord.¹⁵

The perception of the "Hu-barbarians" follows a simple friend-foe-differentiation. The Chinese, representing the human race, stand in a sharp contrast to the barbarians, whose animal-like savage nature is stressed. The differentiation into humans, on the one hand, and animal-like creatures, on the other, simultaneously serves as a justification for the perfidious plan of self-annihilation via a marriage-ban.

Probably already some time earlier, 467 AD, the Daoist Gu Huan 顧歡 (430-493) wrote his "Discourse on Barbarians and Chinese" (*Yixia lun* 夷夏論). Although the author stubbornly defends the Chinese superiority over the "barbarians," he nevertheless concedes that both peoples have something in common.

¹⁴ According to Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, the *Sanpo lun* was written by Zhang Rong 張融 (444-497) on behalf of an unknown Daoist master. The original text is lost, fragments of the text have however been preserved in chapter eight of the *Hongming ji*. See Ren Jiyu, *Zhongguo fojiao shi* 中國佛教史, vol. 3 (Beijing: Shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1988), p. 105-08.

¹⁵ *Hongming ji* 8, T.52.50c20-23. Translation from Richard Mather, "Chinese and Indian Perceptions of Each Other Between the First and Seventh Centuries," in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112:1 (1992), p. 4.

At present [some misguided people] are trying to make the nature of the Chinese conform to the doctrines of the Western Barbarians. These two peoples are, on the one hand, not entirely the same; nor, on the other, are they entirely different.¹⁶

A further step towards the acceptance of Buddhism on an equal basis is documented in a treatise entitled *Bianzong lun* 辯宗論 (“Discussion on Distinguishing What is Essential”). Its author, the famous poet and lay-Buddhist Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433) presents a summary of a discussion on the problem of sudden vs. gradual enlightenment between lay-Buddhists and six monks:

The differences between [Buddhism and Confucianism] are essentially the differences that have grown out of the different localities and environments [of India and China]. *To make a large overall comparison*, they reflect the people [of these two lands]. Chinese people find it easy to perceive Truth intuitively, but difficult to undergo instruction ... The Indians, on the other hand, find it easy to undergo instruction, but difficult to perceive truth intuitively. ... Precisely because Chinese people gain insight into Truth without gradations, they falsely claim that the Dao is perceived without study. The Indians, for their part, who gain insight through learning, falsely claim that perceiving the Dao has gradations. Thus, even though Provisional Truth and Absolute Truth are ultimately the same..., their methods of attainment are different from each other...¹⁷

The simple friend-foe-differentiation we encountered in the first text has been replaced by a much more complex perception of India and its people. The Other is no longer the object of the description; it is the partner in a dialogue. What was once considered as ‘foreign’ is now regarded as ‘different.’ Buddhism and Confucianism are fundamentally different, but each of them mirrors the strengths and

¹⁶ *Nan Qishu* 南齊書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 54.931. Transl. by Mather, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁷ *Guang Hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (Ed. Taishō) 18, T.52.224c-225c. Transl. by Mather, op. cit., p. 5. Emphasis added.

shortcomings of the other. The treatise records an early example of cultural comparison, in which both cultures are treated on equal terms.