

## **A Study of the Chinese Localization of Buddhism: The Integration of Buddhism and Traditional Chinese Cultural Beliefs in the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties Periods**

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### **Abstract**

After the Five-Hu Rebellion, the Xianbei Clan built the Northern Wei Dynasty in 386 A.D., and the implementation of Sinicisation led to sharp class conflicts. Confucianism was in danger and Buddhism was on the rise. In the Wei and Jin Dynasties, wars were frequent, and the literati pursued transcendence, and Wushisan became popular. Taoist metaphysics and Buddhism were in line with each other, influencing social trends. Wei and Jin metaphysical style, Buddhism through the spread of metaphysics, was recognised by the literati, and Confucianism and Taoism folk beliefs collision and integration. This paper analyzes Buddhism's fusion with traditional Chinese culture through ancient texts, Buddhist classics, and modern scholarship. It uses example analysis, focusing on grotto literature and religious books, and comparative analysis with Confucianism and Taoism in doctrines, ceremonies, social functions. It explores this fusion's manifestations in Wei, Jin, and North-South Dynasties, analyzing political, economic, and cultural factors. This fusion reveals ancient Chinese thought's plurality and inclusiveness.

**Key Words:** Buddhist, Traditional Cultural Beliefs, Wei, Jin and North-South Dynasties

### **Introduction**

According to the Shanmilu Vibhasha (zhao, 2014), in the time of King Ashoka, the Mahakala Maharaja was sent to the world of Yenna (original note: the land of the Han Dynasty), and the Mādhyamas were sent to the bordering country of Xueshan. In the first year of the Yuan Shou reign (2 BC) of the Han Dynasty, the King of the Great Yuezhi Kingdom asked Ichun to orally teach his doctoral disciple Jinglu the Fudu Sutra (Buddhist scripture), but what it was has been lost. In China, it is traditionally believed that the 42 Chapters of the Sutra were sent by Emperor Mingdi of the Han Dynasty to retrieve the Sutra from the Western Regions during the Yongping period (58-75 CE), which is the beginning of the spread of Buddhism to China (zhu, 2010). During this period, the spread of Buddhism took the form of oral teachings by monks in the Western Regions and a few translations of Buddhist scriptures. At that time, Buddhism was generally regarded as a kind of fairy magic to educate the Hu people, so Emperor Huan of Han Dynasty worshiped the Yellow Emperor, Laozi and Buddha together (zhan, 2018), “reciting the subtle words of Huanglao, and the benevolent ancestral temple of Faudu”, and treating the Shamans as the Fangshi. At this time, Buddhism had not yet integrated with traditional Chinese culture, and the influence of Buddhism in society was relatively limited.

During the Three Kingdoms period, Buddhist sages from Tianzhu, Anshi, and Kangju, such as Tanko Kara, Tanti, and Kang Shengjia, came to the capital of Wei, Luoyang, and engaged in the translation of sutras; Zhi Qian went to Jianye to propagate the Dharma. At this time, both Mahayana and Hinayana were practiced. The Hinayana classics emphasized Zen, focusing on guarding the spirit and nourishing the mind (“guarding the mind”); the Mahayana emphasized prajna. This stage laid the initial ideological foundation for the development of Buddhism during the Wei, Jin, and North-South Dynasties.

## **Literature Review**

In the field of the study of the localization of Buddhism in China, the period of the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties, as a key stage, has received widespread attention in the academic world. In his *History of Buddhism in the Han, Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties*, Tang Yutong systematically expounds the spread of Buddhism in this period with detailed historical data, analyzing its initial collision and fusion with Confucianism and Taoism, and laying the foundation for subsequent research (Tang, 2020). The *History of Buddhism in China*, edited by Ren Jiyu, provides an in-depth discussion of the development of Buddhism's sects during the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties, as well as its interactions at the political and social levels, revealing the complexity and plurality of the integration process. However, existing studies still have certain limitations (Ren, 2009). Some studies do not go far enough in exploring the integration of Buddhism with the cultural beliefs of ethnic minorities, and there is room for strengthening the systematic study of cross-regional and multi-ethnic integration.

## **Material and Methods**

This paper analyzes the integration of Buddhism and traditional Chinese cultural beliefs from the textual materials by reviewing ancient books, historical books, Buddhist classics and relevant academic works of modern scholars. Taking the examples of grotto literature and religious books, we will analyze the manifestations and characteristics of the integration in depth. Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between Buddhism and Confucianism and Taoism in terms of interpretation of doctrines, ceremonial processes, social functions and influences, etc., and explore the interactions in the process of integration. Explore the specific manifestations of the fusion of Buddhism and traditional Chinese culture and beliefs during the Wei, Jin, and North-South Dynasties, analyze the political, economic, and cultural reasons behind them, and explore the impact of the fusion on various aspects of the Chinese society, so as to reveal the characteristics of the fusion of ideas during this period.

## **Development of Buddhism during the Wei, Jin, and North-South Dynasties**

During the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties, Buddhism had a rapid development, and the emperors of the Southern Dynasties of Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen all revered Buddhism. During the Northern Wei Dynasty, the royal family presided over the excavation of Datong Yungang, Luoyang Longmen, Henan Gongyi and other royal grottoes. All over the north and south of the construction of monasteries, many members of the royal family and aristocrats frequented, held all kinds of Buddhist activities, greatly promoting the spread and development of Buddhism in the Southern Dynasties.

During the same period, the number of monks and nuns also showed an amazing trend. According to relevant historical statistics, the number of temples in the Northern Dynasty exceeded six thousand four hundred, and there were more than two million “professional” monks and nuns in the ruling area of the Northern Wei Dynasty alone, and there were as many as five or six hundred Buddhist temples in the Jiankang area of the Southern Dynasty (Lai, 2011). The large community of monks and nuns not only played an important role in the religious field, but also influenced the economic, cultural, and political life of the society, and was an inescapable part of the social structure of the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties.

The translation of Buddhist classics was also fruitful during this period, with Hatamarash meticulously translating a large number of classics such as the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, the Dharma Flower Sutra, and the Vimalakirti Sutra. These translations not only accurately conveyed the teachings and ideas of Buddhism, but were also easy to understand, making the Buddhist classics accessible and understandable to a wider range of people, and providing a theoretical basis for the widespread spread of Buddhism in China. At the same time, Buddhist sects were gradually formed. Long Shu's Zhong Lun, Twelve Doors, and Tipa's Hundred Discourses became the main classical basis of the San Lun

Sect, focusing on the exposition of the ideas of emptiness and Zhong Guan; the Tiantai Sect, with the Dharma Flower Sutra as its core classic, integrated meditation, wisdom and other cultivation methods, laying the foundation for the later generations. All these marked the beginning of the integration of Buddhism with China's indigenous culture, thought and social needs, and the development of Buddhism in China entered a new stage.

### **The Integration of Buddhism and Traditional Chinese Cultural Beliefs in the Wei and Jin Dynasties**

The Buddhist concepts of compassion and universality of all beings and the Confucian ethical ideas of benevolence, loyalty and forgiveness gradually penetrated and fused with each other during the Wei, Jin, and North-South Dynasties. For example, Buddhist stories in which the protagonist sacrifices his own body and interests in order to save his parents, the monarch, or all living beings are highly compatible with the concepts of loyalty and filial piety advocated by Confucianism. In Sujati Bunsen, Prince Sujati cuts off his own flesh to feed his parents in order to keep them from starving to death while they are on the run, an act that demonstrates Buddhism's emphasis on filial piety and echoes Confucianism's idea of "filial piety and fraternal duty as the basis". At the same time, Confucianism also influenced the secular ethical concepts of Buddhism. Buddhists began to emphasize respect for and repayment of kindness to the emperor and relatives, and incorporated Confucian ethical and moral concepts into the translation and interpretation of Buddhist classics, such as "filial piety and support for parents" being listed as one of the important elements of Buddhist cultivation, which made it easier for Buddhism to be accepted and recognized by the Chinese society. This makes Buddhism more easily accepted and recognized by Chinese society, and reflects the positive integration and adaptation of Buddhism to Confucian ethics in the process of spreading.

Buddhism has borrowed and integrated Confucianism in its political philosophy. Buddhism's teachings of "not killing" and "compassion" are similar to Confucianism's idea of "benevolent government". Both emphasize that rulers should care for the people, avoid violent wars, and pursue social harmony and stability. To a certain extent, Buddhism's compassion and exhortation to the people to be good were combined with Confucianism's idea of "benevolent government". At the same time, Buddhism gradually adapted to the Confucian political order during its spread. The management system of Buddhist temples drew on the Confucian hierarchy, and monks practiced and preached according to their rank, which was conducive to the standardized development of Buddhism and also in line with the concept of social order advocated by Confucianism. This fusion of political concepts enabled Buddhism to better cooperate with the ruling class during the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties, and also provided new ideas and additions to the continuation and development of Confucianism in the political realm, which positively influenced the political landscape of the time and promoted social stability and cultural integration.

The philosophical concepts of Buddhism, such as "emptiness" and "impermanence," and Taoism, such as "the Way" and "nature," were intertwined in the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the two philosophical concepts of Buddhism, such as "emptiness" and "impermanence," and the ideas of Taoism, such as "Tao" and "nature," were intertwined in the Wei and Jin dynasties. The rise of metaphysics in the Wei and Jin dynasties provided an opportunity for the fusion of Buddhist and Taoist thought. Metaphysics emphasized the exploration of the nature of the universe and the meaning of life, and interacted with Buddhist prajna. For example, the Ben Wu Sect, one of the "Six Schools and Seven Sects," borrowed the Taoist concept of "nothing" in its interpretation of the Buddhist concept of "emptiness," which is the essence of all things in the universe, and believed that "nothing" is the essence of all things in the universe, and that "nothing" is the essence of all things in the universe. In explaining the Buddhist concept of "emptiness", the Ben Wu Sect borrowed the concept of "nothing" from Taoism, arguing that "nothing" is the essence of all things in the universe, and that all things in the world are born from "nothing", which reflects the in-depth philosophical integration of Buddhism and Taoism [8]. At the same time, the thinking of Buddhist monks such as Zhituan and Sinzhao was also deeply influenced by Taoism, and they often cited Taoist

terms and ideas when expounding Buddhist teachings, such as Zhituan used the Taoist concept of “freedom” to explain the Buddhist practice realm, and Sinzhao used Taoist dialectical thinking to argue for the Buddhist idea of the middle ground, which made the Buddhist philosophy more easily understood and accepted by Chinese intellectuals. This made Buddhist philosophy easier to be understood and accepted by Chinese intellectuals, enriched the connotation of Chinese philosophy, promoted the development and innovation of philosophical thought, and laid the foundation for the diversified development of Chinese philosophy in later generations.

The Buddhist ways of meditation and cultivation and the Taoist attitudes towards life, such as health maintenance and seclusion, merged with each other during the Wei and Jin dynasties, forming a unique cultural trend. During the Wei and Jin Dynasties, the scholarly class was deeply influenced by the trend of metaphysics and pursued spiritual freedom and transcendence, and they combined the Buddhist practice with the Taoist pursuit of life, forming a style of “Qingtán” (清谈). In this cultural atmosphere, the scholars were keen on exploring Buddhist and Taoist doctrines and pursuing inner tranquility and peace through Buddhist practices such as meditation and contemplation (Lin, 2009), while at the same time adhering to Taoist concepts of health care, focusing on diet, living and physical conditioning, and pursuing a natural and simple way of life. This fusion was also evident in literary and artistic works, such as the rise of landscape poetry and idyllic poetry, in which poets depicted the tranquility of natural landscapes and expressed their understanding of Buddhist Zen and Taoist ways of nature, demonstrating a spiritual realm of transcendence and a return to the natural world. This fusion not only enriched the spiritual life of the scholars, but also had a far-reaching impact on the culture and art of the time, promoting the diversification of the aesthetic concepts and life interests in traditional Chinese culture, and allowing the ideas of Buddhism and Taoism to be more widely disseminated and passed on in the cultural field, becoming an important part of the spiritual realm and cultural traditions pursued by later generations of writers and ink masters.

The images of Buddhist deities have undergone a process of evolution and fusion in Chinese folk beliefs, interacting with the images of indigenous Chinese folk deities. Guanyin, one of the most revered Buddhist bodhisattvas, was mostly portrayed as a handsome Greek male in Gandhara before being introduced to China. After its introduction to China, its image gradually changed, especially during the Wei and Jin dynasties, from the initial male image to a neutral image or a distinctly feminine one, a change that matched the qualities of gentleness and compassion of the traditional Chinese female deities, and was more in line with the Chinese public's psychological expectations and aesthetic concepts of the deities. At the same time, Buddhist belief rituals are also intertwined with traditional folk rituals. In folk temple fairs and other events, Buddhist chanting, worship, and puja rituals are combined with traditional folk activities to form a unique cultural landscape. For example, in some areas of the temple fair, both Buddhist temples held a grand puja, monks chanting blessings, devotees worship, and folk artists performing traditional opera, acrobatics and other programs, such as the Yungang Double Dancer Kabuki image of “kicking the purple gold crown upside down,” the dance comes from the traditional dance of the Xianbei people.

Buddhism had a wide and profound influence on the folk culture of the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties, and many folk cultures were rich in Buddhist elements. In terms of festivals, the Buddha Bathing Festival and the Bon Festival became important folk festivals at that time. During the Buddha Bathing Festival, the people would hold grand celebrations and bathe the statue of the Buddha with perfumed water to symbolize their admiration and blessings for the Buddha, and at the same time, they also prayed for good weather and peace of the country and the people; the Bon Festival, on the other hand, was originated from the Bon Sutra of the Buddhists, in which the people expressed their thoughts and prayers to their deceased loved ones through the ceremonies of worshipping the ancestors and overcoming the dead, which not only had a strong Buddhist color but also had a strong Buddhist flavor. These festivals not only have strong Buddhist colors, but have also gradually become part of traditional Chinese folk culture, which has been passed down to the present day. In terms of funeral customs, Buddhist rituals such as transcending the dead are widely used, and people believe that by chanting sutras and reciting the Buddha's name by monks and other means, they can help the deceased go to the Pure Land and alleviate their sins. Such concepts and rituals have profoundly influenced

traditional Chinese funeral culture and become an important part of funeral customs, reflecting the influence of the Buddhist ideas of the cycle of birth and death and of karma on the values of the people. In addition, Buddhist stories of karma have been widely circulated among the people, and through oral tradition and literature, they have penetrated into people's daily life and become an important part of folk education and moral norms, guiding the people to be good and accumulate virtues, regulating their behavior and behavior, and shaping the values and lifestyles of the civil society in a subtle way, so that the ideology of Buddhism can be more widely spread and inherited in the civil society and inheritance.

### **Reasons for the Evolution of Indigenization of Buddhism in China during the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties Periods**

Mahayana Buddhism arose in the later stages of the later sectarian Buddhism in BCE. Marked by Ashoka sending Mataji to Syria, both Gandhara, to preach the Dharma. It established the Saying of All Things. So there is the concept of “three realities, dharma body eternal” dharma, and at the same time due to the influence of the popular ministry and other doctrines produced Mahayana Buddhism. In contrast to Hinayana Buddhism, there are several distinctive features that distinguish Mahayana Buddhism from Hinayana Buddhism, in addition to the difference between transmitting to others and transmitting to oneself. There are also several distinctive features. The first is the erasure of the status quo of Sakyamuni as the sole principal deity. That is why in the Avatamsaka Sutra there appeared Vairochana Buddha, and with him came the concepts of the Five-Fang Buddha, the Three-Bodied Buddha, and the Three Saints of Huayan. Among them, the Five Founder Buddhas and the Three Sages of Huayan are all centered on Vairochana Buddha. In the 2nd century A.D., Tantric Buddhism arose, and the main difference between Tantric Buddhism and Hinayana Buddhism is that Hinayana Buddhism honors Sakyamuni, while Tantric Buddhism, which honors Vairochana Buddha and Dainichi Buddha, is the main teaching. We can see in Buddhism the emergence of not honoring Sakyamuni as the main teacher. With this comes the emergence of different worlds. Each world has its own godhead. This cannot be separated from the social and political influences of the period of the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism supported by the emperors. There is an inseparable link between the imperial emperors and Mahayana Buddhism. The reason why the Bodhisattva, who does not occupy a prominent position among Hinayana Buddhists, occupies a considerable position in Mahayana Buddhism is that the Bodhisattva's identity on earth is that of the emperor. The emperor is called the Son of Heaven, and he acts as a bridge between the Lord God and the common people. In addition, during the Mahayana Buddhist period, there began to be a large number of myths depicting the Buddha, which merged with the concept of the emperor and the Chinese monarchy as the main political form. As an emperor, in such a political form, he played an intermediary role in the widespread spread of Buddhism. Therefore, in China, from the early Northern Wei Dynasty, the behavior of “worshiping the emperor is worshiping Nirvana” has already appeared. For example, Venerable Daoist An, in addition to the construction of the Yungang Grottoes. At the same time appeared a large number of master, from the position of the form. This also stems from the Chinese national conditions of the relationship between heaven and man, ruler and subject, honor and inferiority.

Wei Jin and North and South Dynasties period, Chinese society is in violent turbulence and change, political regime change frequently, more than war, such as the three kingdoms, sixteen countries, as well as the North and South Dynasty confrontation and other situations continue. The long-term situation of division and fragmentation has plunged the society into a deep crisis (Jia, 2015). This unstable political environment brought great pain and uncertainty to people's lives, leading to the difficulty of traditional Confucianism in meeting the urgent need for spiritual support. The prevalence of the gatekeeper system and the solidification of social classes during this period made it difficult for the children of humble families to be promoted, while the great families of the lineage controlled a great deal of political, economic and cultural resources, which led to increasingly sharp social conflicts. At the same time, the agrarian system also changed, and a great deal of land was annexed, with peasants losing the land on which they depended for their livelihood and becoming sharecroppers or vagabonds, leading a life of great misery.

Against this background, the teachings of karma, reincarnation, and compassion preached by Buddhism provided a kind of spiritual solace and support for people in distress, making them believe that the sufferings of this life were the result of the karmic obstacles of their past lives, and that they could be blessed in the next life through cultivation and goodwill, thus alleviating people's painful feelings towards the reality of their sufferings.

Many rulers also realized the role of Buddhism in pacifying the people and stabilizing the social order, and began to vigorously promote Buddhism. For example, Xiao Yan, Emperor Wu of Liang in the Southern Dynasty, who was a firm believer in Buddhism, not only sacrificed his life to become a monk many times, but also vigorously built Buddhist temples throughout the country, organized translations of Buddhist classics, and held grand Buddhist events, which greatly promoted the spread and development of Buddhism in the Southern Dynasty.

In the Northern Wei Dynasty, the Northern Wei regime adopted a supportive policy toward Buddhism from the time of Emperor Tuoba Gui, and during the time of Emperor Tuoba Joon, the development of Buddhism reached a climax. The Yungang Grottoes were excavated during this period, and this magnificent treasure trove of cave art not only reflects the prosperity of Buddhism during the Northern Wei Dynasty, but also symbolizes the close integration of Buddhism and politics. The Buddha statues in the grottoes are beautifully carved and magnificent, demonstrating the high level of art and religious devotion at that time.

The behavior of these rulers not only provided political support and material security for the spread of Buddhism, but also made the status of Buddhism in society significantly improved, further promoting the integration of Buddhism with traditional Chinese cultural beliefs. The political turmoil and social changes created favorable conditions for the spread of Buddhism and its integration with traditional culture and beliefs, which led to the rapid development of Buddhism in the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties, and its gradual integration into all aspects of Chinese society.

The Wei, Jin, and North-South Dynasties were the first period of great ethnic integration in Chinese history, in which ethnic minorities such as the Xiongnu, Xianbei, Capricorn, Diersi, and Qiang entered the Central Plains and exchanged views with the Han Chinese and integrated with each other. This trend of ethnic integration greatly facilitated cultural exchanges and collisions, providing a vast space and rich materials for the integration of Buddhism with traditional Chinese cultural beliefs (Zhu, 2010).

In the process of their entry into the Central Plains, the ethnic minorities brought their unique cultural traditions, including religious beliefs, customs, art forms, etc., and these cultural elements interacted with and infiltrated the traditional culture of the Han Chinese. For example, the Xianbei tribe established a powerful regime during the Northern Wei Dynasty and pursued a policy of Sinicization, actively learning from the advanced culture and systems of the Han, while at the same time incorporating their own cultural characteristics into the development of Buddhism. Emperor Xiaowen moved the capital to Luoyang and implemented a series of Sinicization policies, including the reform of official uniforms, the study of the Chinese language, and intermarriage, etc. These reforms not only fully accepted the Han's political system and cultural traditions in the economic, political, and cultural aspects, but also promoted the integration of the various ethnic groups in terms of economy, culture, and customs. For example, the intermarriage between the Hu and the Han and the convergence of the Hu and the Han ethnic groups in economic life made the natural differences of the ethnic groups gradually disappear and formed a situation of ethnic integration.

As a result of the Taihe reform, in accordance with the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Dharma, the beliefs characterized by honoring only Sakyamuni were diluted, forming the basis of belief in the theme of the two Buddhas sitting side by side. And the emperor appeared for the first time in China as a provider, is a typical feature of the growing nationalization and secularization of the Buddha figure theme. Whether it is the combination of traditional cultural characteristics of the characters, the composition presents the concept of hierarchy, the characters of clothing and hair style and umbrella

and other ceremonial system to see. All show the “use of summer and barbarians” the purpose of localization, Emperor Xiaowen Chinese achieved remarkable results.

The war in the late Wei and Jin Dynasties made the literati indifferent to politics and pursued a high spiritual level, which led to the popularity of Wushisan in the society. At the same time, metaphysical thought also coincided with the Buddhist idea of avoiding the world. Consumption of five stone powder people become thin, people for the immortal style of Taoist bone and obvious favor, so the show bone clear like a large number of appearances. During the Wei and Jin Dynasties, the metaphysical trend among the scholars flourished, coupled with the high abominations that had the effect of infiltrating the Buddhist teachings into the metaphysical theory, effectively utilizing the metaphysical science to spread Buddhism. Under the joint promotion of Confucianism and Taoism, Buddhism, as a foreign culture, was re-created in the Chinese cultural soil. The metaphysics of the Wei and Jin dynasties provided the medium and opportunity for the spread of Buddhism in the Middle Kingdom. A large number of artistic manifestations of the unity of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism appeared.

As can be seen in the Dunhuang Cave 285, built in 538 A.D., whether it is the early application of green landscape, the Taoist dome and the Buddhist main dome, or from the concave-convex haloing method to the commendable clothes and sash statues full of lines, we can see that the artist perfectly combined the mythological images of Buddha and Taoism through fantasy.

As a foreign religion, Buddhism, in order to take root in China and spread more widely, must take the initiative to adapt to China's local cultural environment and social needs, which formed the internal impetus for the Chineseization of Buddhism.

In the process of translating and interpreting Buddhist doctrine, senior monks were adept at applying Chinese philosophical concepts to explain Buddhist classics. For example, in interpreting the “emptiness” of Prajnaparamita, the “Six Schools and Seven Sects” of the Wei-Jin period drew on the Taoist “nothingness” and the metaphysical “essence”. “ of Taoism and the concepts of “original nothingness” of metaphysics, and put forward different views such as “mind is nothing,” “that is, color,” “original nothingness,” and so on. “Although there are some differences in these views, they all reflect an attempt to integrate Buddhism with local Chinese philosophical thought, to explain the esoteric teachings of Buddhism in a way of thinking familiar to the Chinese, and thus to bring the philosophical thought of Buddhism closer to the cognitive level and habits of thought of the Chinese people.

In terms of missionary strategy, Buddhism also adopted a flexible and diversified approach. It used the support of the rulers to expand its influence. As mentioned earlier, the strong promotion of Buddhism by Xiao Yan, Emperor Wu of Liang, greatly enhanced the status of Buddhism in the Southern Dynasties, the number of temples and monks and nuns increased rapidly, and the spread of Buddhism became more widespread.

The formation of Buddhist sects was also a concrete manifestation of the Chineseization of Buddhism. The masters of Zen Buddhism also adopted the Chinese style of teacher-disciple transmission, and inspired their disciples' enlightenment through unique teaching methods such as the machine and the stick, giving Zen Buddhism a strong Chinese cultural character and making it one of the mainstream sects of Buddhism in China, which has had a far-reaching influence on various fields of Chinese culture, such as leaving a deep imprint on literature, art, philosophy and other aspects.

Traditional Chinese cultural beliefs have a strong inclusiveness and innovativeness, which provides fertile soil for the integration of Buddhism and traditional cultural beliefs.

Confucianism, as a core component of traditional Chinese culture, although faced with challenges from Buddhism and Taoism during the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties, it still maintained an open attitude, actively absorbing and integrating the essence of other thoughts and

cultures to meet the needs of social development. Confucian scholars actively introduced Buddhist philosophical concepts such as “mindfulness,” “ontology,” and so on, and integrated them with the traditional Confucian concepts of “nature and goodness,” “heavenly destiny” ideas of traditional Confucianism. For example, Huang Kan of the Liang Dynasty of the Southern Dynasty borrowed the Buddhist way of thinking to interpret Confucian classics in his “*Analects of Confucius*”, and interpreted concepts such as “benevolence” and “nature” in a more in-depth and abstract way, which was no longer confined to the traditional level of moral admonition, thus expanding the philosophical depth of the Confucian theoretical system and enhancing its theoretical depth. This expands the philosophical depth of the Confucian theoretical system and enhances the discursive and systematic nature of its theories, so as to better respond to the impact of Buddhist philosophy and to satisfy the pursuit of profound theories by the intellectual class. Confucianism absorbed part of the Buddhist concepts of cosmogony and reincarnation and reinterpreted the traditional relationship between heaven and man. In “*Wenxin Diao Long (文心雕龙·原道)*”, Liu Innocenti put forward the idea that “the origin of the humanities originates from the Taiji” (人文之元, 肇自太极), linking the origin of humanities in Confucianism to the fundamental law of the universe, and constructing a grand cosmological structure, which provided more transcendent theoretical support for the Confucian social ethics and values of life.

Taoist thought also had in-depth exchanges and interactions with Buddhism during this period, influencing and promoting each other. During the Wei and Jin dynasties, metaphysics was prevalent, which integrated the ideas of Taoism and Confucianism and was also influenced by Buddhist prajna. The cosmic essence and the meaning of life explored by metaphysics had similarities with the philosophical thinking of Buddhism, and the two developed together in mutual exchange. For example, metaphysical propositions such as “forgetting one's own words” and “words have no meaning” echoed Buddhist ideas such as “not to write words” and “to transmit the mind to the heart. They echoed Buddhist ideas such as “no writing” and “transmitting the heart through the mind,” reflecting the fusion of the two cultures in their ways of thinking and philosophical concepts.

In literature, Buddhist allusions, imagery and ideas were often incorporated into the poetry, prose and novels of the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties, such as Tao Yuanming's poetry, which embodied a sense of the Buddhist view of nature and the realm of life.

In the field of philosophy, the three schools of thought, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, interpenetrate and complement each other, together constructing the rich connotation of traditional Chinese philosophy and providing a profound ideological foundation for the development of Chinese culture.

The inclusiveness and innovativeness of traditional cultural beliefs have enabled Buddhism to find a growing ground in the Chinese cultural environment, and to learn from and integrate with Confucianism, Taoism and other schools of thought and culture, which have jointly promoted the prosperity and development of Chinese thought and culture, forming a pluralistic, integrated and colorful pattern of Chinese culture.

## **Conclusion**

To summarize, the reasons for the integration of Buddhism and traditional Chinese beliefs during the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties are manifold and inevitable. The political turmoil and regime change made the people in urgent need of spiritual support, and the Buddhist doctrine of liberation was at the right time; the pluralistic cultural exchanges in the process of national integration created a relaxed environment for it, and the metaphysical theories of the literati provided the basic cultural soil for Buddhism.

Buddhism provided the basic cultural soil for Buddhism. At the level of its own development, Buddhism sought to take root in China and took the initiative to adapt its teachings and methods of dissemination, while traditional Chinese beliefs such as Confucianism and Taoism, with their inclusiveness and openness, embraced and transformed Buddhist elements. Economically, the rise of

the monastic economy also prompted Buddhism to become more deeply embedded in the social fabric, and these factors intertwined to promote the fusion of the two, making it an inevitable trend in cultural development during this period.

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