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From Kasaya to *Haiqing*: The Evolution of Monastic Robes and Identity Reformation in Chinese Buddhism

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Abstract

Religious clothing serves as the external manifestation of religious culture, and its evolutionary process not only reflects the developmental trajectory of religion but also demonstrates cultural exchange and social transformation in specific historical periods. This study focuses on the localization and evolution of Chinese Buddhism monks' robes as its research subject. Through analyzing historical documents, archaeological materials, and artistic works, it explores the transformation process from Indian Kasaya to Chinese *Haiqing* 海青 (Chinese Buddhist Ceremonial Robe) and its cultural implications. The research findings reveal that the localization process of Chinese Buddhism monks' robes exhibits characteristics of gradual Cultural Adaptation: while maintaining the core of Buddhist doctrine, it achieved organic integration with traditional Chinese culture through systematic reconstruction of material forms. This is specifically manifested in three aspects: formal adaptation responding to environmental constraints, the integration of craftsmanship and materials embodying cultural dialogue, and the color hierarchy system reflecting the dynamic interplay between secular power and religious authority. This process facilitated the reconstruction of monks' multidimensional Identity Reconstruction—forming a new balance model among religious transcendence, cultural belonging, and social participation. This study provides a theoretical framework for understanding the internal logic of religious localization and the adaptive mechanisms of Cross-cultural Communication.

Keywords: religious symbols; Chinese Buddhism; monks' robes; identity construction; cultural representation; clothing regulations

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1. Introduction

Clothing, as a collection of styles, fabrics, and colors (Perrot 1981), carries rich symbolic meanings. It is not only a non-verbal but powerful means of communication (Lennon and Davis 1989a, p. 43), but also embodies the political, ideological, cultural values and social norms of specific societies (Lennon and Davis 1989b, p. 2; Eicher and Higgins Roach 1992, pp. 15–21). In religious contexts, clothing possesses even more profound symbolic functions—it constructs the boundary between the sacred and the secular through unique forms and symbolic systems, becoming an important marker of identity for faith communities (Eliade 2022; Turner 2017, pp. 109–11).

In the process of cross-cultural communication, religions often face the dual challenge of maintaining tradition while adapting to local contexts. Religious clothing, as the most

intuitive cultural symbol, frequently becomes the concentrated embodiment of this cultural tension (Bell 1997; Heirman and Torck 2012). It must both carry the core essence of original religious traditions and respond to the climatic conditions, cultural customs, and social structural requirements of new environments (Tarlo 1996). This adaptation process not only reflects religious adaptive strategies but also reveals the inherent mechanisms of cross-cultural communication, providing an important material culture perspective for understanding religious localization.

Existing research provides an important foundation for understanding the cross-cultural adaptation of religious clothing. Scholars have explored the social functions of religious clothing from perspectives such as identity construction (Erel-Koselleck 2004, pp. 60–69; Droeber 2005), power relations (Silk 2008), and gender politics (Chung 1999). In the field of Buddhism research, Kieschnick pointed out that the evolution of monks' robes reflects profound religious adaptation processes (Kieschnick 2003, pp. 86–115), Mizuno revealed the cultural adaptation of Buddhist attire through comparative studies (Mizuno 1975), and Shinohara analyzed the role of monks' robes in religious transmission from a material culture perspective (Shinohara 2014). However, existing research mostly focuses on specific periods or localized phenomena, lacking systematic examination of the entire evolutionary process of religious clothing, particularly in-depth analysis of the power interaction and identity reconstruction mechanisms it reflects.

Chinese Buddhism, as a typical case of successful localization of a foreign religion, provides an ideal research subject for studying the cross-cultural adaptation of religious clothing. This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that integrates historical texts, archaeological evidence, and artistic works, following the principles of traceability and representativeness in data selection and analysis. The textual materials mainly include canonical writings, monastic codes, biographies of monks, and inscriptions that record institutional or symbolic information. The archaeological materials are drawn from sites and excavated textiles with clear chronological and religious attributes, while the visual materials consist of murals, sculptures, and paintings with well-defined regional and temporal contexts. Through comparative analysis across the three dimensions of time, region, and function, and based on cross-validation among textual, material, and visual evidence, a systematic research framework has been established. At the theoretical level, this study is informed by perspectives from religious anthropology and cultural studies, engaging in dialogue with Bourdieu's theory of cultural field, Turner's concept of ritual and liminality, Barthes's semiotic thought, and Hall's theory of cultural identity. Through a micro-level examination of material culture, the study seeks to reveal the complex interactions between religious tradition and secular power during the localization of Buddhism, and to illustrate how such interactions reshaped the multiple identity constructions of monastics. This research approach not only fills a scholarly gap in the systematic study of monastic robe evolution but also provides new theoretical and empirical insights into the underlying mechanisms of cross-cultural transmission in religion.

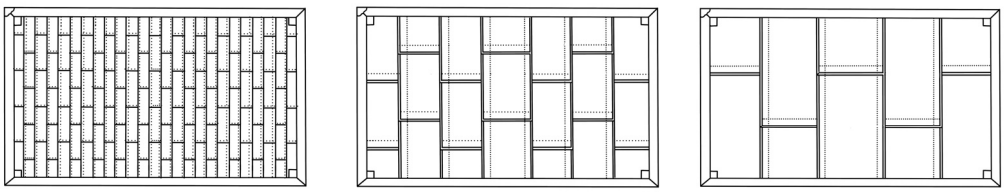
2. The Basic Regulations of Indian Buddhist Kasaya and Its Initial Adaptation in China

2.1. The Basic Regulations of Indian Buddhist Kasaya and Its Symbolic Meaning

Buddhist monks refer to their regulated clothing as "Dharma Robe" 法衣, meaning "robe in accordance with the Dharma" 如法衣 or "robe appropriate to the Dharma" 应法衣—that is, clothing established in accordance with and in compliance with Buddhist teachings. Laypeople sometimes call it monastic clothing or monks' robes, and monks occasionally use these terms as well. According to Buddhist monastic rules, the color of Dharma Robes should be "Kasaya Color", 坏色 which is called "color in accordance

with the Dharma." 如法色. The term "Kasaya Color" is called "Kaṣāya" in Sanskrit, derived from the name of a grass that produces reddish-brown dye, and was later used as a colloquial term for Buddhist Dharma Robes. In Chinese Buddhism, the transliterated term "*Jiasha*" 袈裟 was initially used. During the Eastern Jin period, Ge Hong 葛洪 added the "clothing" 衣 radical beneath "*Jiasha*" in his "*Ziyua*" 字苑[1], and since then the term "Kasaya"袈裟 has been used continuously to this day.

Indian Buddhist Kasaya, as an important marker of monk identity, possesses a complete regulatory system. According to Buddhist scriptures such as the "Dharmaguptaka Vinaya" (*Si fen lu* 四分律), the Buddha established the "Three Robes" (*sanyi* 三衣) system for the monastic community, namely Antarvāsa 安陀会 (inner robe), Uttarāsaṅga 郁多罗僧 (middle robe), and Saṅghāṭī 僧伽梨 (great robe) (Fotu and Zhu 1934). These three garments each have their specific purposes. Antarvāsa is used for non-religious work and daily life, also called the inner robe or dwelling robe. Uttarāsaṅga is used for assemblies and sutra recitation, also called the assembly robe, and because it is worn in the middle it is also called the middle robe. Saṅghāṭī is used for going out and formal social occasions, such as conducting business, alms-seeking, or entering the palace to see the emperor. Therefore, it is also translated as great robe, *zhong yi* 重衣 (heavy robe), *gaosheng yi* 高胜衣 (superior robe), or *Ru wang gong ju luo yi* 入王宫聚落衣 (robe for entering royal palaces and settlements), and is the most formal uniform of Buddhism. The form of all Three Robes is rectangular cloth, but they differ in size and number of strips (Figure 1): Antarvāsa measures seven feet two inches in length and three feet six inches in width; Uttarāsaṅga and Saṅghāṭī measure five cubits in length and three cubits in width. The so-called "number of strips" 条数 refers to the quantity of longitudinal piecing after cutting the cloth into strips. According to the "*Gen ben shuo yi qie you bu pi nai ye za shi*" (根本说一切有部毗奈耶杂事 Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya Miscellaneous Matters), Saṅghāṭī is divided into three grades: upper, middle, and lower, with each grade further subdivided into upper, middle, and lower. The specific specifications are lower grade with nine, eleven, or thirteen strips, each strip having two long and one short sections; middle grade with fifteen, seventeen, or nineteen strips, each strip having three long and one short sections; upper grade with twenty-one, twenty-three, or twenty-five strips, each strip having four long and one short sections. Antarvāsa is fixed at five strips with two long and one short sections, while Uttarāsaṅga has seven strips with three long and one short sections (Yijing 1934a).



(**a**) (**b**) (**c**)

Figure 1. Schematic diagram of Chinese Buddhism monastic attire: (**a**) Saṅghāṭī (twenty-five strip robe), (**b**) Uttarāsaṅga (seven strip robe), (**c**) Antarvāsa (five strip robe). Drawn by the author with reference to "*Fozhi Biqiu Liuwu tu*" (佛制比丘六物图 Illustrated Guide to the Six Items Prescribed by Buddha for Bhikshus).

In terms of material selection, early Indian Buddhism advocated using "Paṃsukūla" 粪扫衣, that is, clothing made from discarded fabric picked up from garbage heaps or cemeteries. The "*Shisong lu*" (十诵律 Sarvāstivāda Vinaya), volume 27, records the sources of Paṃsukūla materials: "cemetery cloth" 冢间衣 wrapped around the deceased and thrown in cemeteries; "donated cloth" 出来衣 wrapped around the deceased and then donated to the Buddhist community; "ownerless cloth" 无主衣 thrown in open spaces that no one wanted; and "earth cloth" 土衣 from garbage heaps. The "*Shi zhu pi po sha lun*"

(十住毗婆沙论 Daśabhūmika Vibhāṣā), volume 16, records ten benefits of Kasaya made from Paṃsukūla materials: "ability to generate a sense of shame and modesty; ability to resist cold, heat, and poisonous insects; demonstration of the monastic code of conduct; all celestial beings and humans who see this Dharma Robe venerate it as one would a stupa; not arising from greed or attachment; in accordance with the path of extinction, not for fostering afflictions; easy to detect when soiled; no need for other items for decoration; conforming to the Noble Eightfold Path 八圣道; diligent practice with a pure and undefiled mind" (惭愧; 障寒热毒虫; 表示沙门仪法; 一切天人见法衣, 尊敬如塔; 非贪好; 随顺寂灭, 非为炽然烦恼; 有恶易见; 更不须余物, 庄严故; 随顺八圣道; 精进行道, 无染污心). In summary, such Kasaya material selection not only symbolizes the monks' abandonment of worldly attachments, but more importantly, through the process of transforming waste into sacred Dharma Robes, it embodies Buddhism's transcendence of material attachments (Kumārajīva 1934).

In terms of manufacturing techniques, Indian Kasaya employs the "Cutting and Piecing Method" 割截, which involves cutting fabric into small pieces and then sewing them together to form a pattern resembling rice fields. The "Moheesengqilv" 摩诃僧祇律 (Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya) contains the following record. Buddha asked Ānanda: "Do you see how orderly the ridges of those rice fields are?" Ānanda replied: "I see them." Buddha then asked Ānanda: "Can this deep-colored robe be made to imitate the appearance of these fields?" (佛告阿难: 「汝见彼稻田畦畔齐整不?」 答言: 「见。」佛告阿难: 「此深摩根衣能法此田作衣不?」 (Fotu and Faxian 1934). This special manufacturing technique not only ensures the solemnity of monks' robes but also endows them with profound symbolic meaning. The "*Si fen lu*" particularly emphasizes that the Kasaya's appearance has the characteristic of imitating the crisscrossing patterns of water fields, hence it is called "Field-pattern Robe" 田相衣 or "Merit-field Robe" 福田衣. This design symbolizes worldly fields that grow grain, as people depend on food for survival, and grain fields nourish all sentient beings. The establishment of this symbolic meaning requires monks to maintain their original aspiration and constantly remind themselves of their cultivation mission. The "Cutting and Piecing Method" 割截 has extremely strict regulations. According to the "*Si fen lu*": the width of patches should not exceed four fingers, when sewing patches together with needle and thread, precision is not sought, it should be sewn in the shape of horse teeth or bird feet. Then the edges are trimmed neatly, wrapped with narrow cloth and sewn to secure the border, with the border width matching that of the patches (Fotu and Zhu 1934). The sewing method for Kasaya in Indian Buddhism also has strict disciplinary regulations (Heirman 2014, p. 481). According to the "Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya", Buddha prescribed that male monks should use the "backstitch method" 却刺针法 when sewing Kasaya, as shown in Figure 2, meaning that with each stitch, one must backstitch, and no skip stitches or skipped stitches should appear on the fabric surface. Garments sewn this way are bound to be more sturdy and durable (Fotu and Faxian 1934). This method differs from the straight stitch method used for secular clothing, which was prohibited by Buddha because it easily causes garment tearing. Additionally, the "Dharmaguptaka Vinaya" also mentions the drawbacks of the straight stitch method, pointing out that straight-stitched garments tend to tear after prolonged wear. Moreover, once torn, often a small break in the thread can cause the entire garment to split open (Fotu and Zhu 1934).

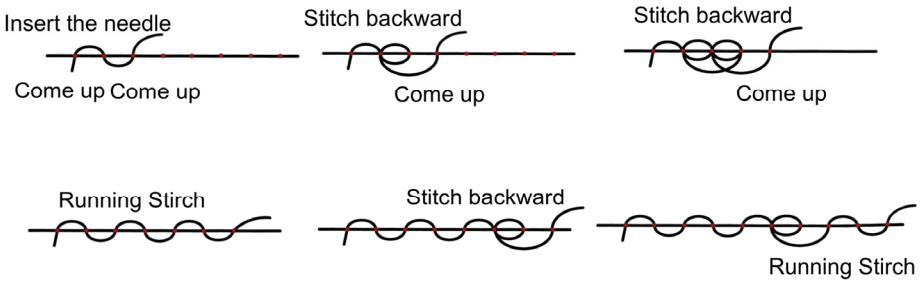


Figure 2. Demonstration of two types of backstitch method. The author drew it themselves.

The wearing method of Indian Kasaya generally involves holding two corners, wrapping from the left shoulder around to under the right side, and securing with cords 绦子 or clasps 扣襻. At this time the right shoulder is exposed, which should be done when paying respects to Buddha, called "*tongjian*" 通肩 (covering both shoulders), while during meditation it can be draped over both shoulders, called covering both shoulders. The "A Record of the Buddhist Practices from the Southern Sea" (*Nan Hai Ji Gui Nei Fa Zhuan* 南海寄归内法传) records the wearing methods of "covering both shoulders" and "baring the right shoulder" 偏袒右肩, and provides detailed regulations for dress requirements in different occasions (Yijing 1934b). "*Shi shi yao lan*" 释氏要览 quotes records from the "Śāriputra Paripṛcchā Sūtra" 舍利弗问经[2] to further clarify the dress requirements corresponding to different occasions: when providing food, one should leave the right shoulder bare only, as this facilitates work; while when conducting religious ceremonies or meritorious acts, one should cover both shoulders to display the solemnity and sanctity of the Field of Merit (随供食时, 应偏袒, 以便作事故; 作福田时, 应覆两肩, 现福田相故。) (Shi 1934). Specifically, occasions such as meeting Buddha, paying respects to Buddha, seeking permission from the three teachers, and entering the assembly should involve baring the right shoulder; while occasions such as meditation, sutra recitation, entering settlements, and sitting under trees should involve covering both shoulders to display the Merit-field Robe aspect of the Kasaya, making people respectful upon seeing it. If one covers both shoulders in front of Buddha, they will fall into the iron armor hell for five hundred lives. These dress code regulations not only established Buddhism's unique ritual system but also became important markers for distinguishing monastic and lay identities.

2.2. The Initial Adaptation of Kasaya in China: Challenges of Climate and Culture

During the initial period of Buddhism's transmission to China, Chinese monks still continued to use secular clothing. The earliest Chinese monks of the Han dynasty took the surname of their teacher when ordaining and did not wear Indian-style Kasaya. It was not until the Eastern Jin 东晋 period (317–420) that Master Dao'an 道安 formulated the "*Seng Jia Gui Fan*" (僧伽规范 Monastic Community Regulations)[3], which not only stipulated that all monks should take Śākya 释迦 as their surname, but also required monks to wear Kasaya during Buddhist ceremonies, sutra lectures, and other Dharma assemblies. This marked the beginning of the standardization process for Chinese Buddhism monastic attire.

However, the use of Kasaya as monks' robes in China immediately faced dual challenges from climate and culture. The development of clothing largely depends on cultural and environmental factors (Batten 2010, pp. 148–49; Harms 1938), such as climatic conditions (Kwon 1991, p. 41), and this also applies to religious clothing. India's climate is hot, so monks wearing only the Three Robes is sufficient for protection against cold. However, most regions of China have cold climates, especially the Northern China regions, where relying solely on the Three Robes is difficult to adapt to. The "A Record of Buddhist Practices Sent Home from the Southern Sea" records this: Indian monks only wear the Three Robes (the three types of Kasaya for Buddhist monastics) and have no undergarments. But North-

ern China is cold, so undergarments must be worn for warmth (Yijing 1934a). This reflects how early Chinese monks had to adapt the regulations for using monks' robes to suit the cold climate. Additionally, to adapt to the cold climate, Chinese monks also added accessories such as monastic shoes and socks. The "Monastic Rules of Monk Baizhang" (*Chi Xiu Baizhang Qing Gui* 敕修百丈清规) stipulates that monks cannot wear monastic shoes barefoot (Dehui 1934). This regulation indicates that monastic shoes and socks had become necessary components of Chinese monastic attire. Unlike China, regions mainly in tropical climates

Apart from climatic factors, the influence of traditional Chinese culture on monks' robes cannot be ignored. In Indian culture, baring the shoulder signifies respect. Conversely, traditional Chinese etiquette emphasizes proper dress and appearance (Yifa 2017). Therefore, the "baring the right shoulder" style of Indian monks' robes appeared to violate propriety in Chinese eyes. The "Biographies of Eminent Monks" (*Gao Seng Zhuan* 高僧传) records that during the Yixi 义熙 reign period (405–418) of Emperor An of the Eastern Jin 东晋, He Wuji 何无忌 and Master Huiyuan 慧远 engaged in debate over the issue of monks "baring garments", reflecting the conflict between Chinese and Indian cultures regarding clothing concepts (Huijiao 1934). The "Essential Overview for Buddhist Practitioners" records a solution to this problem: "People in the Wei court saw monks exposing one arm and considered this inappropriate, so they created a partial covering garment sewn onto the saṃkakṣikā (undergarment worn by monks). This style was gradually accepted by everyone and spread, becoming known) as 'Partial Robe' (魏宫人见僧袒一肘, 不以为善, 乃作偏袒缝于僧祇支上, 相从因名偏衫)" (Shi 1934).

The initial adaptation of Kasaya in China reflects the wisdom and innovative spirit of early Chinese monks when facing the dual challenges of climate and culture. While maintaining Buddhist tradition, they also actively absorbed elements of indigenous Chinese culture (Shang and Liu 2025, p. 6), laying the foundation for the comprehensive localization of monks' robes that would follow. It is worth noting that this adaptation process was not achieved overnight, but was a gradual and controversial process. For example, regarding the question of whether additional clothing should be added, there were different viewpoints within the monastic community. Some monks insisted on strictly adhering to Indian tradition, while others advocated for appropriate adjustments based on practical needs. This debate reflects the complexity and diversity of early Chinese Buddhism during its process of cultural adaptation.

2.3. The Inheritance and Transformation of the "Three Robes" System in China

The "Three Robes" system, as the core of Buddhist monastic attire, underwent a series of inheritances and transformations after its transmission to China. Initially, Chinese monks strictly followed the traditional Indian "Three Robes" system. As mentioned earlier, the "*Si fen lu*" (四分律 Dharmaguptaka Vinaya) recorded in detail the dimensions and manufacturing methods of the Three Robes. This regulation was earnestly implemented in early Chinese Buddhism. However, as Buddhism developed deeply in China, the form and use of the "Three Robes" gradually underwent changes.

Regarding dimensions, Yuan Zhao 元照 (1048–1116) of the Song dynasty specifically recorded the dimensional changes of the Three Robes in his "*Si fen lu xing shi chao zi chi ji*" (四分律行事钞资持记 The Explanation and Supporting Notes of the Fourfold Vinaya Conducts): "Now according to the regulations of the 'Sarvāstivāda Vinaya Vibhāṣā'萨婆多毗尼毗婆沙, the medium-sized Three Robes are five cubits long and three cubits wide; if of the largest size, they are six cubits long and three and a half cubits wide; if of the smallest size, they are four cubits long and two and a half cubits wide (今准《萨婆多》[4], 中三衣长五肘广三肘, 若极大者, 长六肘广三肘半, 若极小者, 长四肘广二肘半)"

(Yuanzhao 1934). This dimensional adjustment reflects the adaptation of Chinese monks to the needs of indigenous Chinese body characteristics.

The material requirements for the "Three Robes" also underwent changes. The "*Shi Men Zhang Fu Yi*" (释门章服仪 Ceremonial Dress Regulations for Buddhist Monastics) records: "Nowadays, the Three Robes are mostly made using *shijuan* 絁绢 (a type of coarse silk fabric), and some are also made with cloth (今时三衣, 多用絁绢, 亦有用布)" (Yuanzhao 1934). This change manifests on two levels: first, the evolution from the original coarse hemp cloth to diversified choices, and second, the widespread adoption of silk fabrics unique to China As shown in Figure 3, the bronze seated Buddha statue of the Song dynasty exhibits soft drapery and smooth folds, clearly conveying the sense of fluidity and luster inherent in the material. This subtle transformation in texture not only indicates the refinement of the monks' robes material but also implies the process by which Religious Clothing gradually integrated into the secular aesthetic context.



Figure 3. Song dynasty bronze seated Buddha statue, currently housed in the Palace Museum, Beijing, China. Image source: The Digital Cultural Relics Database of the Palace Museum.

In terms of wearing methods, Chinese monks, while retaining the traditional "covering both shoulders" and "baring the right shoulder" styles, also developed new wearing methods such as the "half-draping" 半披 style. These new wearing methods considered both warmth requirements and the demands of traditional Chinese etiquette (Kim 2025, p. 3). Building on this foundation, Tang dynasty monks made deeper improvements by sewing the partial robe together with a skirt to form the "*Zhiduo*" 直裰. Monks' *Zhiduo* was made according to Kasaya styles while also referencing the *Zhiduo* form worn by laypeople. Its characteristic feature is a relatively loose style with a straight center line running down to the hem; hence, it is also called "straight body" 直身. This design both maintained the solemnity of Kasaya while improving wearing convenience. *Zhiduo* became one of the more enduring monastic garment styles, with monks still wearing *Zhiduo* during the Song, Yuan, and Ming periods. This continuity indicates that *Zhiduo*, as a transitional form, both met the needs of religious ritual and adapted to indigenous Chinese wearing habits.

Furthermore, the evolution of the Three Robes system in China also manifested in distinguishing the identities of different categories of monks. In the Buddhist institutional system, the traditional "Three Robes" were specifically for bhikshus and bhikshunis who had received full ordination, while for novice monks and nuns (śrāmaṇera and śrāmaṇerī) who

had only received the ten precepts, the Buddhist community developed different clothing regulations. The "Collection of Translated Terms and Meanings" 翻译名义集 records: "Plain Robe 缦衣 refers to clothing made from a single piece of fabric, without any traces of division or piecing. All those who have received the Buddhist precepts should wear this garment (缦衣者, 缦为一幅, 并无坛隔割截之相。 凡受十戒者, 皆着此衣)" (Fayun 1934). This new clothing regulation system reflects Chinese Buddhism's identity definition for monks at different stages of practice, serving as a localized supplement to the traditional Indian Three Robes system.

Through analysis of these historical materials, it can be seen that the inheritance and transformation process of the "Three Robes" system in China both maintained basic religious traditions and continuously adapted and innovated in practice. This transformation was not a simple negation of tradition, but rather a positive response to practical needs while maintaining core values.

3. The Localized Innovation of Chinese Buddhism Monastic Attire

3.1. The Creation of Haiqing and Its Cultural Connotations

The emergence of *Haiqing* is an important marker of the localization of Chinese Buddhism attire. *Haiqing*, also called great robe, evolved from the ancient Chinese wide-sleeved robes and is the outer garment worn by Chinese Buddhism monks during occasions such as worshipping Buddha, sutra recitation, and formal assemblies. In terms of style, *Haiqing* is characterized by a wide waist, broad sleeves, round collar, and square lapels, making it appear more voluminous compared to other monastic garments, while simultaneously enhancing its solemn quality of distancing from worldly concerns and cultivating self-discipline, as shown in Figures 4 and 5. There are multiple explanations for the origin of the name *Haiqing*, with the most historically documented being that the Wuzhong 吴中 region (Currently located in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China) called wide-sleeved garments "*Haiqing*", and monastic robes adopted this name due to their broad sleeves. Additionally, the character "*hai*" (海 sea) draws meaning from the ocean's vastness and capacity to contain all things, symbolizing that monks should possess broad hearts and universal compassion; the dynamic and free-flowing nature of ocean waves signifies that monks should not be constrained by worldly things. The character "*qing*" (青 blue/green) draws meaning from "blue emerges from indigo" 青出于蓝, expressing expectations for monks to practice diligently and transcend the ordinary.



Figure 4. Diagram showing the wearing effect and style of *Haiqing* monastic robes. Drawn by the author.

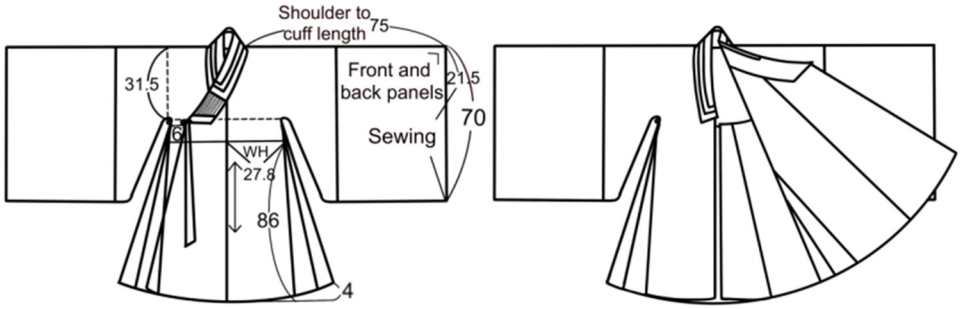


Figure 5. Diagram of *Haiqing* pattern-making process and lining display. Drawn by the author.

This ankle-length robe with round collar, square lapels, and wide sleeves preserved the basic form of Han dynasty clothing and produced different color expressions under different regional cultures across various regions of China (Sun 2016, p. 70). The "*Shi shi yao lan*" records: "Nowadays monks in regions south of the Yangtze River mostly wear black and red monastic robes, sometimes also with mixed colors of blue and yellow, called yellowish-brown and stone lotus brown. The Dongjing 东京 (Currently located in Kaifeng City, Henan Province, China) and Guanzhong 关中 (Currently located in the central part of Shaanxi Province, China) regions favor brown monastic robes, while Bingzhou and Youzhou regions favor black monastic robes" (Shi 1934). Generally, black *Haiqing* can be worn by all monastics, while yellow *Haiqing* is limited to abbots and great masters who preside over Dharma assemblies.

Some scholars believe that the design of *Haiqing* likely drew from the basic form of the emperor's yellow robe from the Sui dynasty (581–618) (Bai 2009, p. 20). The collar design of *Haiqing* is particularly unique, consisting of three overlapping collar pieces sewn together, called the "Three Jewels Collar" (*Sanbao lin* 三宝领). The three collar pieces of the Three Jewels Collar, respectively, symbolize the Buddha, Dharma (Buddhist teachings), and Sangha (the community of Buddhist monastics) (Kuo 1999). In the middle section of the front collar, fifty-three rows of blue thread are densely sewn, which is said to symbolize "*Shan cai tongzi wu shi san can*" (善财童子五十三参 Sudhana's Fifty-Three Pilgrimages)[5]. In reality, this design's original function was primarily to enhance the collar's durability, and only later was it endowed with religious symbolic meaning. However, *Haiqing* was not a simple imitation of secular clothing, but rather underwent improvements suited to monks' identity. The most significant evidence is that *Haiqing*'s sleeve cuffs adopt a closed design rather than the open style of secular clothing. This detail adjustment both demonstrates respect for Buddhist precepts and reflects the designer's consideration of monks' daily life needs. The creation process of *Haiqing* also reflects Chinese Buddhism's practice of the concept of "convenient". Needing to maintain the unique image of monks while adapting to China's cultural environment, *Haiqing*'s design precisely achieved this balance.

3.2. The Reconstruction of Monastic Robe Color System and Hierarchical Structure

The reconstruction of the monastic robe color system in China directly reflects the interaction between Buddhism and secular power. The "Kaṣāya Color" tradition followed during the initial transmission of Buddhism in the Eastern Han (25–220) period encountered a major turning point during the Northern Zhou period (557–581). The "History of the Northern Dynasties" (*Beishi* 北史), volume 51, records: "Before the Northern Qi there was a fortune-teller who said: 'Those wearing black clothes will destroy the Gao family.' From then on, whenever Gao Huan 高欢 (founder of Northern Qi) went out, he did not want to see monks, because they often wore black monastic robes" (Li 1974). Emperor Wu of Zhou 周武帝 (543–578), being wary of this prophecy, ordered the prohibition of monks wearing black robes and changed them to yellow. The "*Shi shi yao lan*" also

records: "Now, the color of robes worn by monks in Moling 秣陵 (present-day Nanjing) imitates the black robes worn by ancient Indian monks. But during the Later Zhou period, because of wariness about the 'black clothing' prophecy, Later Zhou monks no longer wore black robes but changed to yellow robes, a custom that began with the Later Zhou (今秣陵比丘衣色仿西竺缁衣也。又后周忌闻黑衣之谶, 悉屏黑色, 著黄色衣, 起于周也)" (Shi 1934). This reform not only reflected the forced intervention of secular political power in monastic robe colors, but also became a turning point for the penetration of traditional Chinese color concepts into Buddhism.

During the Tang dynasty (618–907), monastic robe colors began to become associated with secular hierarchical systems. The "Brief History of Monks of the Great Song" (*Da Song Seng Shi Lue* 大宋僧史略) records the beginning of "*ci zi*" (赐紫 Imperial Grant of Purple Robe)[6]: "According to the 'Book of Tang' (*Tang Shu* 唐书), when Empress Wu Zetian 武则天 was emperor, monk Falang 法朗 retranslated the 'Great Cloud Sutra' (*Da Yun Jin* 大云经). They told Wu Zetian that the Buddhist scripture contained a prophecy saying that Wu Zetian was the reincarnation of Maitreya Buddha and should be the emperor of the entire world. Wu Zetian changed the dynastic title to 'Zhou' 周, and Falang 法朗, Xue Huaiyi 薛怀义, and seven others were all enfeoffed as county dukes. The emperor bestowed gifts of varying ranks upon them, and each received purple Kasaya and silver turtle-shaped pouches (案唐书, 则天朝有僧法朗等, 重译大云经。 陈符命言, 则天是弥勒下生, 为阎浮提主。 唐氏合微, 故由之革薛称周, 法朗薛怀义九人并封县公, 赐物有差, 皆赐紫袈裟银龟袋)" (Zanning 1934). Subsequently, during Emperor Xuanzong's 玄宗 reign (712–756), the system of "*ci fei*" (赐绯 Imperial Grant of Crimson Robe appeared). The same book records that there was a monk named Chongxian 崇宪 in the Tang dynasty who was highly skilled in medicine and very effective in treating patients, and thus received crimson Kasaya bestowed by Emperor Xuanzong (Zanning 1934). The appearance of purple and crimson Kasaya marked the formal incorporation of monastic robe colors into the official hierarchical system. The establishment of this system broke the traditional monastic community's ranking by "*jie la wei xu*" 戒腊为序, which determined hierarchy based on the chronological order of monks' ordination. This tradition of positioning by ordination seniority originally embodied Buddhism's emphasis on individual cultivation journey. However, eminent monks who received purple and crimson robes were endowed with social status similar to officials in addition to their religious identity. The emergence of this dual identity caused monks' status determination to become associated with secular power systems.

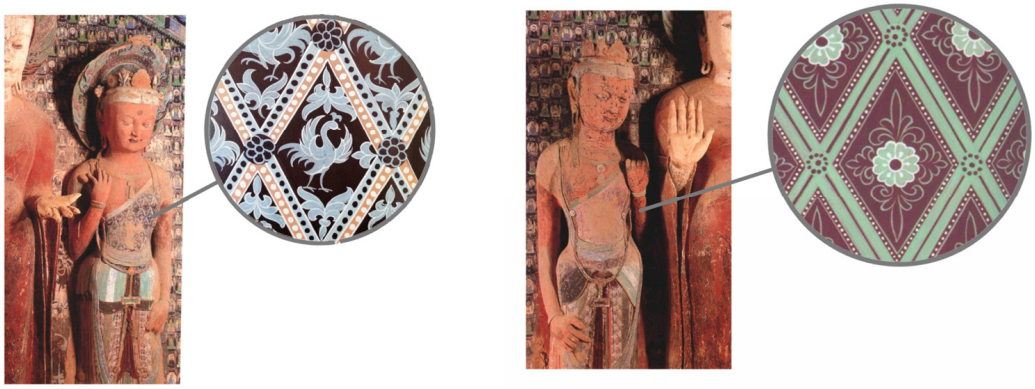
During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the monastic robe color system was further systematized. The "History of the Ming Dynasty" 明史 (Imperial Garments Volume 3) records regulations from the fourteenth year of the Hongwu 洪武 reign (1381): Chan monks normally wore tea-brown clothing with blue sashes, and their Kasaya were jade white; Lecturing monks normally wore jade white clothing with green sashes, and their Kasaya were light red; Teaching monks normally wore black clothing with black sashes, and their Kasaya were light red (Zhang et al. 1974). These detailed color regulations reflect the important role of monastic robe colors in expressing identity and hierarchy. Through hierarchical differences in clothing colors, they established order within the monastic community. Different combinations of regular robes, sashes, and Kasaya colors formed a strict visual identification system, making monks' categories and functions immediately apparent, reflecting the court's demand for standardized management of the monastic community.

The localized reconstruction of the monastic robe color system in China profoundly influenced the internal order of the monastic community. Kasaya, originally symbols of cultivation identity, transformed into markers reflecting monks' hierarchical status. This

transformation deeply reflects Chinese Buddhism's absorption of traditional Chinese hierarchical concepts during its institutionalization process.

3.3. Localized Transformation of Monastic Robe Materials and Manufacturing Techniques

Beyond innovations in form and color, Chinese Buddhism monastic robes also achieved profound localized transformation in materials and craftsmanship. As mentioned earlier regarding the transition of Three Robes materials from coarse hemp cloth to silk, the application of silk in monastic robe production most significantly embodied this transformation. However, the significance of this material innovation extends far beyond the change in material itself, lying more in the technical innovation and aesthetic expression reconstruction it brought about. The "Biographies of Eminent Monks" (*Gao Seng Zhuan*) records this historical moment of transformation: "There was an eminent monk who was a precious talent of a great nation, but he did not accept noble rank, did not accept high salary, and did not pursue wealth and honor. Since wealth and honor could not match his virtue, how should we commend his character? From now on, fine silk and brocade should be used to make clothing for him, and ornately carved carriages should be provided for his use" (Huijiao 1934). This record indicates that by no later than the Northern and Southern Dynasties period (420–589), silk had already been used in the making of monks' robes. The use of silk not only enhanced the texture of the monks' robes but also provided new possibilities for the presentation of intricate patterns. As shown in Figure 6, the Bodhisattva statue in Cave 427 of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang displays brocade patterns of phoenixes, linked pearls, and lozenge-shaped floral motifs, which fully embody the profound integration between Buddhist visual Culture and the indigenous Chinese aesthetic of patterned silk weaving (Chang 1986, pp. 26–27). The use of these patterns both displayed the aesthetic characteristics of traditional Chinese motifs and injected new expressive power into Buddhist art. Additionally, traditional Chinese embroidery techniques were also introduced into monastic robe production, with Tang dynasty monastic robes commonly featuring exquisite embroidered patterns. This not only increased the decorative quality of monastic robes but also endowed them with more symbolic meanings (Ge 2011, pp. 43–44).



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 6. (**a**) Brocade pattern with phoenix bird and linked pearl motifs from the colored sculpture of a bodhisattva in Mogao Cave 427, Dunhuang. From the China National Silk Museum, reformatted by the author; (**b**) Brocade pattern with linked pearl and diamond flower motifs from the colored sculpture of a bodhisattva in Mogao Cave 427. From Dunhuang Book Workshop, reformatted by the author.

In the selection of dyeing materials, Chinese monks developed a distinctive indigenous dye system while inheriting Indian traditions. The "Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya"

摩诃僧祇律 provides detailed records of three types of Kaṣāya Color dyes (Buddhabhadra and Faxian 1934). The blue color system mainly includes three categories: first is copper verdigris obtained by covering containers of vinegar with copper vessels, utilizing copper oxidation; second is indigo dye made from indigo grass, called long-nurtured blue; third is stone blue dye made from natural minerals. In the black color system, Chinese monks developed two dyeing methods. One is called "specifically named black pigment mud" 有名之泥, made by mixing fruits such as haritaki 呵梨勒, vibhitaki 醯勒, and amalaki 阿摩勒 in iron vessels. The other is called "non-specifically named black pigment mud" 无名之泥, which directly utilizes natural mud such as pond silt or well bottom silt. This method is simple and practical, and more in keeping with Buddhism's simple spiritual tradition. Most distinctive to local characteristics was the development and application of magnolia color dye. When Vinaya Master Daoxuan personally witnessed the dyeing effects of magnolia bark in the Shu Region, he praised its reddish-black intermixed color and elegant fragrance. He wrote in "*Si fen lu shan fan buque xing shi chao*" (四分律删繁补阙行事钞 The Si fen lü, Unnecessary Details Removed and Gaps Filled from Other Sources): "I personally saw magnolia tree bark in the Sichuan region, which is reddish-black in color, bright in hue, and can be used for dyeing. Magnolia bark also has a slight fragrance, so some people also use it as incense" (予于蜀郡, 亲见木兰树皮赤黑色鲜明, 可以为染。微有香气, 亦有用作香者) (Daoxuan 1934). This indigenous dye both maintained Buddhism's traditional requirement for "Kaṣāya Color" while expressing traditional Chinese aesthetic taste through its unique beauty of color and fragrance. As its use expanded, magnolia color gradually became one of the most esteemed Kasaya color tones among Vinaya school monks.

Furthermore, in the evolution of monastic robe styles, an important turning point was the adoption of the "loose robes and wide sashes" (*bao yi bo dai* 褒衣博带) style. This design, originating from Eastern Han clothing styles, became widely popular during the Wei-Jin 魏晋 periods (220–420) under the influence of metaphysical philosophy and the aristocratic system. Characterized by wide robes with large sleeves and broad sashes, it presented an aesthetic style of transcendent elegance. Literati and aristocrats of that time sought self-transcendence and spiritual liberation precisely through this loose-robed and wide-sashed attire. After the reforms of Emperor Xiaowen 孝文 of Northern Wei (467–499), this style was introduced into monastic robe design, and Buddhist statue clothing also departed from the early close-fitting styles, turning instead to adopt the Sinicized style of wide and voluminous garments. The seated Buddha statue with flowing robes and broad sashes from the Northern Wei dynasty, as shown in Figure 7, serves as a direct visual illustration of this transformation. Its smooth drapery lines and wide sleeves clearly demonstrate the transition from the tight-fitting Kasaya to the style characterized by loose garments and broad sashes. The undulating folds of the robe not only convey a sense of serenity and composure but also symbolize the Cultural shift in *Buddhist* sculptural aesthetics—from the austere and rustic ideal of asceticism to an expression of elegance and tranquility. This transformation not only influenced monks' daily attire but also became the main style for Buddhist sculpture clothing of that time, fully demonstrating the profound influence of indigenous aesthetic concepts on Buddhist attire.



Figure 7. Stone Maitreya Buddha statue created by Yang Tianren 杨天仁 and others, remaining height 33 cm, excavated in 1954 from the Xiude 修德 Temple site in Quyang 曲阳, Hebei. Currently housed in the Palace Museum, Beijing, China. Image source: The Digital Cultural Relics Database of the Palace Museum.

4. Discussion: Power Relations and Identity Reconstruction in the Evolution of Monastic Robes

4.1. Harmonious Mechanisms of Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Cultural Capital Accumulation

The evolutionary process of Chinese Buddhism monastic robes reveals a unique mechanism of cross-cultural adaptation. The core of this mechanism lies in the inclusive attitude and creative transformation capacity demonstrated by traditional Chinese culture, which stems both from cultural confidence and is rooted in the open characteristics of non-monotheistic thought systems (Tang 2015, p. 292). Unlike simple cultural appropriation or superficial imitation, Chinese culture, when facing foreign religious elements, was able to achieve organic integration through active cultural transformation and recreation while maintaining its own characteristics, establishing deep dialogical relationships between different cultures without damaging their respective features.

Further, this process of cross-cultural adaptation has accumulated rich cross-cultural capital, which refers to the abilities and resources that cultural agents gain through cross-cultural interaction (Pöllmann 2013, p. 1). It not only reflects the interactivity and generativity inherent in cultural exchange but also reveals how religious culture continually renews and reproduces itself through social practice. In this regard, the findings of this study resonate with Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus, further extending their explanatory power in the context of cross-cultural religious interaction. The continuity and reproduction of monastic robe forms and ritual practices substantiate Bourdieu's insight into the embodiment and social reproduction embedded in religious practice. Meanwhile, the analysis also aligns with Stuart Hall's theories of cultural identity and re-presentation, suggesting that religious cultural identity is not static but is constantly reshaped and regenerated through cross-cultural exchanges and symbolic practices. Accordingly, the practice of monastic robes in the Chinese context not only reflects the continuity of religious habitus but also demonstrates the dynamic reproduction of cultural identity across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This mechanism of cross-cultural interaction has not only facilitated Buddhism's cultural adaptation within Chinese society but also driven its deep localization at the levels of ideology, social practice, and identity formation, resulting in a form of Buddhism with distinctively Chinese characteristics.

As a result, this process of deep localization has led Buddhism to gradually develop a culturally distinctive form within Chinese society, providing an effective adaptation model for its dissemination to neighboring countries in East Asia and Southeast Asia. In stark contrast to India's Buddhist population declining to 0.8%, East Asian and Southeast Asian

countries generally maintain high proportions of Buddhist believers—Japan 36.2%, Korea 22.9%, China 18.2%, Vietnam 16.4%, while in countries like Cambodia (96.9%), Thailand (93.2%), and Myanmar (87.9%), Buddhist influence is even more significant (Lee 2015). It was precisely because China, as a powerful and enduring center of civilization, spread its own version of Buddhism to these regions (Eliot 1998, p. 325) that this peaceful and harmonious transmission process benefited from the cultural influence and cultural confidence demonstrated by both Chinese and Indian ancient civilizations.

The successful evolution of the monks' robes demonstrates the organic integration between religious symbols and indigenous Cultural elements, allowing Buddhist Culture to sustain both continuity and creativity across diverse contexts. This Cultural dynamism—where structure and generation coexist—has laid the foundation for the long-term prosperity of Buddhism in East Asia and for the regional symbiosis of Cultures.

4.2. Multi-Dimensional Power Structure Interactions in Monastic Robe Evolution

From the Northern Zhou period's prohibition of black robes to the Tang dynasty's "*ci zi*" and "*ci fei*" systems, and then to the Ming dynasty's systematized hierarchical color system for monastic robes, this historical evolutionary process concentrated the complex interactive relationship between secular power and religious power in the development of Chinese Buddhism. This interaction formed a dynamically balanced power structure system: imperial power sought control over the monastic community through clothing color systems, while the monastic community utilized these systems to acquire resources and expand influence; on one hand, the monastic community accepted imperial commendation to gain practical benefits, while on the other hand, it maintained religious tradition by adhering to basic precepts. Both sides mutually constrained and relied upon each other, ultimately forming a special power structure through negotiation that both ensured Buddhism's relative independence and provided institutionalized pathways for its integration into secular society. It was precisely within this structure that Chinese Buddhism achieved transformation from a foreign religion to an indigenous religion. This delicate balance both avoided complete secularization of Buddhism and provided necessary tension for its localization.

At a deeper level, this power interaction is not only an institutional arrangement but also a symbolic practice. In dialogue with Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics, we can see how the color and form of monastic garments are continually reshaped within power structures, transcending mere material clothing norms to become vehicles of social and political symbolism. As such, the evolution of the monastic garment system reveals the semiotic logic behind the relationship between religious and secular power. As a cultural sign, the monastic robe reflects the intricate dynamics between Buddhism and secular power across different historical stages. Particularly in the "*ci zi*" and "*ci fei*" systems, its colors and forms were endowed with explicit political connotations—serving both as emblems of imperial favor and as instruments of power control. Through this symbolic re-encoding, the monastic robe transcends its symbolic function as a marker of religious identity and becomes a visual medium for the interaction between secular and religious power.

The complexity of this power interaction continued into modern times. During the late Qing and early Republican periods, as Western culture impacted China, the Buddhist community faced pressure to adjust and innovate. The monastic robe reform advocated by Master Taixu 太虚 (1890–1947)—the "*Taixu* robe" 太虚服 with characteristics of front opening, curved collar, and short sleeves for convenient daily wear—sparked controversy within the monastic community: supporters considered it a necessary measure to adapt to the times, while opponents believed it destroyed the solemnity of monastic robes. This controversy reflected the monastic community's dialectical thinking about tradition and

innovation during the modernization process, demonstrating the continuation of power interactions in the new era.

Under the influence of power structures, the transformation of monastic identity is also clearly manifested in the evolution of titles. When Buddhism was first introduced into China, monks were generally referred to as Śramaṇa or Bhikṣu, terms that emphasized their ascetic nature and transcendence from worldly life. As Buddhism gradually integrated into Chinese society—particularly from the Wei and Jin dynasties to the Tang and Song periods—the role of the monk expanded. Their titles shifted from Śramaṇa and Bhikṣu to *He-shang* (和尚 Venerable), *Fa-shi* (法师 Dharma Master), and *Chan-shi* (禅师 Chan Master), reflecting the multiple functions they came to assume in Cultural transmission and social guidance (Zheng 2025). Entering the modern era, with the rise of the concept of Humanistic Buddhism (人间佛教), monastic identity has become increasingly diversified. Monks are no longer confined to the role of religious leaders but have gradually taken on the functions of social activists, Cultural promoters, and even political participants. In contemporary society, titles such as *Fa-shi* not only denote religious status but also signify the participation of monks in broader social affairs, illustrating the transformation of Buddhism from a traditional religious institution into a multifaceted social force (Goossaert and Palmer 2011).

4.3. The Multi-Dimensional Construction of Chinese Buddhism Monk Identity Recognition

Monastic robes, as external markers of identity, reflect through their evolutionary process the fundamental transformation of the internal identity recognition of the monk community. This reflects Turner's concept of liminality, the monks' robes, as a form of medium, serve to connect and mediate the transition between the secular and the sacred, delineating the boundaries of monastic identity. This transformation—from "external regulation" to "internal identification"—is not a passive adaptation to the environment but an active process of Identity Reconstruction. This transformation was not merely passive adjustment to adapt to the environment, but rather an active process of identity reconstruction. The most significant change is embodied in monks' re-understanding of their own role positioning. When strictly following Indian traditions in early periods, monks' identity recognition was relatively singular—as renunciant practitioners maintaining clear boundaries with secular society. However, with the localized adaptation of monastic robe systems, monks began to accept a more complex role positioning: simultaneously religious practitioners, culture inheritors, and social participants. This acceptance of multiple roles was not simple compromise, but rather a deepened understanding of Buddhism's concept of "engaging the world to save sentient beings" 入世度生.

A deeper transformation of identity occurred in monks' process of accepting "Chinese identity". Through adopting traditional Chinese clothing elements, manufacturing techniques, and aesthetic standards, the monk community was actually declaring we are no longer Indian Buddhists residing in China, but rather Chinese Buddhists. The psychological foundation of this transformation lies in re-understanding "localization"—not as reluctant concessions made for survival, but as active choices made to better propagate the Dharma. Only by truly integrating with indigenous culture could Buddhist thought be transmitted in ways that local people could understand and accept. The acceptance of color hierarchical systems further reflected the monk community's re-recognition of their degree of social participation. Traditional Buddhism emphasized transcending worldly concerns, but Chinese Buddhism monks, through accepting honors such as "*ci zi*", actually acknowledged that appropriate social participation would not only not damage religiosity but might actually enhance religion's social influence. This shift in understanding

enabled monks to become active participants in social and cultural life while maintaining religious independence.

This evolution of identity recognition ultimately shaped the unique spiritual temperament of Chinese Buddhism monks: possessing both the transcendence of religious practitioners, the erudition of cultural scholars, and the responsibility of social worthies. This composite identity characteristic enabled Chinese Buddhism monks to often play multiple roles in Chinese history that transcended purely religious functions—preservers of culture, interpreters of thought, and guides of morality. From the perspective of historical consequences, the success of this identity recognition model lies in its creation of a sustainable development path. Monks neither lost their religious characteristics through excessive localization nor became disconnected from society through rigid adherence to tradition. This balance enabled Chinese Buddhism to consistently maintain vitality throughout the long historical process, becoming an inseparable and important component of Chinese culture.

5. Conclusions

This study, through a diachronic examination of the evolution of Chinese Buddhism monastic robes, provides theoretical insights at three levels for research on religious cross-cultural transmission. First, the material culture perspective reveals the micro-mechanisms of religious adaptation: compared to abstract transmission at the doctrinal level, the adaptation process of material symbols more intuitively demonstrates how religions achieve cultural integration while maintaining their spiritual core. Second, the dynamic balance model of power relations proves that religious localization is not unidirectional cultural assimilation, but rather a negotiation process among multiple actors, providing historical reference for understanding contemporary inter-religious dialogue. Finally, the multi-dimensional construction mechanism of identity recognition indicates that successful cross-cultural transmission often produces new cultural forms rather than simple cultural replacement. These findings not only deepen the theoretical understanding of religious localization but also provide a valuable perspective for cross-cultural religious transmission, revealing how religion adapts and reinterprets itself through cultural negotiation and symbolic reconstruction in various social and cultural contexts. This mechanism transcends the case of Chinese Buddhism, offering a universal theoretical framework for understanding how other religious traditions adapt and spread in pluralistic cultural settings. In the context of globalization, regarding how religions can adapt to the challenges of modern society while maintaining traditions, the historical experience of Chinese Buddhism monastic robe evolution demonstrates a "creative transformation" path worthy of emulation.

Although this study has achieved the aforementioned theoretical contributions, it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of its research scope. This study is primarily based on historical literature and archaeological materials from the Central Plains region of Han territory, with insufficient attention to frontier regions and grassroots monastic communities. Additionally, limited by the distribution of historical sources, analysis of certain historical periods remains weak. Future research can further expand geographical scope, conduct comparative studies, and combine field investigation methods to deeply explore adaptation strategies of religious clothing in different cultural contexts, in order to construct a more complete theoretical framework for religious cross-cultural transmission.

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Notes

[1] The "*Ziyuan*" (字苑) was an important lexicographic work compiled by Ge Hong葛洪 (approximately 283–343 or 363 CE), a famous Daoist scholar, alchemist, and medical practitioner of the Western Jin period in China. Ge Hong's primary purpose in writing this work was believed to be correcting and supplementing the deficiencies and errors in Xu Shen's 许慎 "*Shuo Wen Jie Zi*" 说文解字 from the Eastern Han period. Unlike the "*Shuo Wen Jie Zi*" which focused on small seal script and ancient characters, the "*Ziyuan*" was thought to include more characters actually used during the late Han and Wei-Jin periods, possibly including new characters, vulgar characters, variant characters, and even dialectal characters of that time, with explanations of their form, pronunciation, and meaning.

[2] The Śāriputraparipṛcchā Sūtra (*She Li Fu Wen Jin* 舍利弗问经) is an important early Buddhist scripture belonging to the Vinaya Piṭaka literature. This sutra adopts a question-and-answer format and is an important document for studying Mahāsāṅghika vinaya thought, the history of early Buddhist precept establishment, and monastic community organizational structure. It records Buddha's foremost disciple in wisdom, Śāriputra, asking Buddha about the origins of bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī precepts (Vinaya), the circumstances of their establishment, specific regulations, and Saṅgha operations, with Buddha providing answers to each question. It details the historical process and reasons for how various precept regulations were gradually established in response to various events and monastic behaviors during the early development of the Buddhist monastic community. The extant Chinese translation is usually attributed to the Eastern Jin period (317–420 CE) and is catalogued as T1465 in the "Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō" (大正新脩大藏经 Taisho Tripitaka), included in volume 24 (Vinaya section).

[3] *Seng Jia Gui Fan* (僧伽规范 Monastic rules) refer to a comprehensive system of regulations, principles, and institutions that govern and guide the behavior, lifestyle, spiritual practice, and internal operations of Buddhist monastic communities, constituting the behavioral standards and communal order that monastics must observe. The core content primarily derives from the Buddhist Vinaya Piṭaka, which provides detailed regulations for individual monastics to uphold the Prātimokṣa as well as collective monastic life and operational procedures, such as ordination ceremonies, rains retreat, confession rituals, and other daily requirements, along with karma procedures for handling monastic affairs. The purpose of establishing *Seng Jia Gui Fan* is to help monastics restrain their body and mind to facilitate spiritual practice and liberation, maintain the harmony and purity of the monastic community, ensure the long-term preservation of the Dharma, and earn the respect and support of lay devotees. Due to differences in the specific Vinaya texts and interpretations upon which various Buddhist traditions rely, the specific practical details of *Seng Jia Gui Fan* exhibit certain diversity across different traditions. However, as the cornerstone that maintains both individual monastic practice and collective monastic life, *Seng Jia Gui Fan* hold fundamental importance within the entire Buddhist system.

[4] Sarvāstivāda (*Sa Po Duo* 萨婆多), the transliteration of Sanskrit Sarvāstivāda, meaning "School That Says Everything Exists" or simply "Existence School", was an extremely important and influential school during early Buddhism (sectarian Buddhist period). Its core doctrine advocates "the real existence of the three times, with dharma essence eternally present", believing that the fundamental elements "dharma" constituting the world possess real, eternally unchanging self-nature (svabhāva) across past, present, and future. This school emerged from the Theravāda around the 3rd century BCE, later flourishing especially in northern India, particularly in Kashmir and Gandhāra regions, renowned for its highly developed and systematized Abhidharma philosophical system, with representative treatises including the "Jñānaprasthāna" and its authoritative commentary "Mahāvibhāṣā", hence also called "Vaibhāṣika".

[5] "*Shan cai tongzi wu shi san can*" (善财童子五十三参 Sudhana's Fifty-Three Pilgrimages) is an important story from the Buddhist scripture "Avatamsaka Sutra", telling of the young monk Sudhana's experiences visiting fifty-three spiritual teachers during his cultivation journey. These teachers came from different backgrounds, representing diverse wisdom and cultivation methods.

[6] The "*ci zi*" 赐紫 was an important honorary system in ancient China, specifically referring to the qualification granted by the emperor or court to specific officials, monks, or Daoists to wear purple court robes or Dharma robes. "Purple" was regarded as a noble color in ancient China (especially from the Tang dynasty onward), associated with imperial power and high-ranking status.

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