

THE SILK ROAD JOURNEY

WITH **XUANZANG**



SALLY HOVEY WRIGGINS

REVISED AND UPDATED

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WITH **XUANZANG**



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*To Fritz Mote, source of
inspiration and unending support.*



The Travels of Xuanzang

----- Travels from China to and in India
 Trip home



Arabian Sea

India

Bay of Bengal

Indian Ocean

China

South China Sea

0 500 miles
 0 500 kilometers

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	XIII
<i>Notes on Spelling and Pronunciation</i>	XVII
I THE PILGRIM AND THE EMPEROR	I
Studying in Monasteries, 6	
Preparing Himself in Chang'an, 8	
Beginning His Journey, 11	
Being Lost in the Desert, 13	
2 THE OASES OF THE NORTHERN SILK ROAD	19
Staying at the Hami Oasis, 20	
Opposing the King of Turfan, 21	
Visiting the Monasteries at Kucha, 26	
Crossing the Tian Shan Mountains, 31	
Meeting the Great Khan, 32	
3 THE CROSSROADS OF ASIA	37
Winning Over the King of Samarkand, 38	
Poisoning at Kunduz, 40	
Visiting Stupas in Balkh, 41	
Seeing the Famous Buddhas at Bamiyan, 45	
Finding Hidden Treasures in Kapisa, 49	
4 THE LAND OF INDIA	55
Praying in the Shadow Cave at Jalalabad, 57	
Pursuing King Kanishka Around Peshawar, 60	

	Seeking the Four Great Stupas and the Visvantara Site, 63	
	Collecting Healing Sutras and Trekking in the Swat Valley, 67	
	Exploring Monuments at Taxila, 71	
	Studying the Law in Kashmir, 73	
5	PHILOSOPHERS AND PIRATES IN NORTHERN INDIA	77
	Fleeing from Robbers in the Punjab, 78	
	Reaching Mathura, the Heartland of India, 80	
	Seeing the Sacred Ganges River, 84	
	Paying Reverence at the Heavenly Staircase, 85	
	Visiting King Harsha's Kingdom, 87	
	Pursuing Philosophy and Escaping from Pirates in Ayodhya, 90	
	Finding the Sandalwood Image at Kausambi, 92	
6	THE BUDDHIST HOLY LAND	97
	Beholding the Site of the Great Miracle at Sravasti, 99	
	Seeking the Sacred Traces at Kapilavastu and Lumbini, 101	
	Paying Reverence at Kusinagara, Where the Buddha Died, 104	
	Paying Reverence at the Deer Park, in Sarnath, 106	
	Pursuing Holy Places at Vaisali, 112	
	Worshipping at the Bo Tree, in Bodh Gaya, 113	
7	NALANDA MONASTERY AND ENVIRONS	119
	Meeting the Venerable One, 120	
	Riding an Elephant to Rajagriha (Rajgir), 126	
	Climbing Vulture Peak, 128	
	Attending Lectures at Nalanda, 131	
	Lecturing and Writing at Nalanda, 133	

8	PHILOSOPHERS, CAVES, AND A FORTUNE-TELLER	137
	Traveling Around the East Coast, 139	
	Exploring a Rock-Cut Cave in South Kosala, 141	
	Visiting Andhra and the South, 144	
	Imagining Simhala (Sri Lanka), 145	
	Touring the West Coast, 145	
	Staying at Nalanda Monastery Again, 152	
	Meeting with a Fortune-Teller, 155	
9	THE JOURNEY HOME TO CHINA	159
	Meeting King Harsha, 160	
	Debating in the Grand Tournament, 163	
	Starting His Journey Back to China, 165	
	Losing Scriptures in the Indus River, 166	
	Crossing the Hindu Kush and Pamir Ranges, 167	
	Stopping at the Kashgar Oasis, 171	
	Waiting at the Khotan Oasis, 173	
	Entering the Desert, 179	
10	BACK IN CHINA	181
	Resting at the Dunhuang Oasis, 183	
	Triumphant Return to Chang'an, 186	
	Being Interviewed by the Emperor, 190	
	Writing the Record of the Western Regions, 192	
11	THE LAST YEARS	195
	Licensing of 18,500 Buddhist Monks, 198	
	Death of the Emperor Taizong, 199	
	The Emperor Gaozong and the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, 200	
	Letters to the Emperors, 202	
	Xuanzang and a Bird, 204	
	The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, 206	
	Final Illness and Death, 208	

12	THE LEGACY OF XUANZANG	211
	Archaeological Legacy, 212	
	Among Art Historians, 214	
	Literary Heritage, 217	
	Translation Legacy, 219	
	From Specialist to Mainstream, 222	
	The Silk Road, 223	
	Bamiyan, 225	
	Buddhism, 225	
	World History, 226	
	<i>Glossary</i>	229
	<i>Acknowledgments</i>	245
	<i>Maps</i>	247
	<i>Notes on Illustrations</i>	249
	<i>Notes</i>	265
	<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	303
	<i>Index</i>	317

Preface

A Chinese emperor called him “the jewel of the empire,” this Buddhist monk who journeyed from China to India on the Silk Road in the seventh century. Xuanzang (Hsuan-tsang), one of the Silk Road’s most famous travelers, is as well known in Asia as Marco Polo is in the West. He wanted to go to the holy land of Buddhism in India to obtain the true scriptures instead of having to rely on the sometimes confusing translations then available in China. He also hoped to study with famous religious teachers and to see the sacred places of the Lord Buddha. During his journey, from 629 to 645 C.E., he traveled an astonishing 10,000 miles.

I first encountered Xuanzang when I was researching the sixteenth-century Chinese classic novel *Journey to the West* or *Monkey*. His pilgrimage inspired a cycle of legends in China, which became the epic novel, and he became a character in the novel and a folk religious hero. This is the Xuanzang that most people in Asia know.

Many visits to Asia stimulated my interest in Xuanzang. When I talked to curators from the Kabul Museum in the mid-1970s about this pilgrim and his journey, they produced a map showing me exactly where he had been in Afghanistan. Such a detailed knowledge of the places he visited was unbelievable to me. Wasn’t this pilgrimage only a century after the legendary King Arthur is supposed to have lived in mist-shrouded Wales or northern England? What impressed me even more was that they described Xuanzang in the same way modern detectives talk about a “live witness.”

By going many times to the places in China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India where he had been, I discovered that Xuanzang was an accurate and careful observer of whatever he saw. I couldn’t

believe his physical exploits, crossing the Taklamakan Desert alone, traversing the mountains I was looking up at along the Silk Road, three of the highest ranges in Asia. Later on, I realized that he had criss-crossed the plains and jungles of India five times. While visiting India's most famous monastery, Nalanda, I began to appreciate that he was not just a world-class trekker, but a disciplined scholar. At the holy places of Buddhism, he was a man of feeling, a devout pilgrim.

As I delved into the principal sources on this seventh-century traveler—his report to the Tang emperor after he returned to China and an admiring biography by one of his contemporaries (Huili)—it was clear that they complemented one another. Huili put Xuanzang and his personal experiences in the foreground. In Xuanzang's own narrative, the pilgrim stays in the background and rarely refers directly to himself. His style is unemotional and highly detached. He is, after all, writing for the Tang emperor. By embroidering on his adventures—staging a hunger strike in front of the king of Turfan, betrayed by his desert guide and nearly dying of thirst in the desert, almost killed by a band of pirates—Huili gives them story-book qualities so that Xuanzang is already on his way to becoming a legend. When I began to write, I tried to capture the appeal of Xuanzang as a folk hero; in italicized passages, I distill the best of his two biographers, Huili and Li Yongshi, to make the stories more vivid.

In this edition, I also describe Xuanzang's many years back in China when he translated the Buddhist scriptures he had gathered all over Asia. I have come to an even greater appreciation of his intellectual qualities—as accomplished linguist and disciplined scholar. I became acquainted with Xuanzang as an ardent and successful promoter of Buddhism who was very ingenious in cultivating the goodwill of two Tang emperors. But throughout his life Xuanzang demonstrated an amazing consistency in his devotion to the Buddha of the Future, the Maitreya. This devotion shows itself in the legends of when he was about to be burned at the stake by pirates, and as he lay on his deathbed.

Xuanzang is being discovered now in the West. There are several new English translations of both his record for the emperor and his biography. With the Taliban's destruction of the giant Buddhas at

Bamiyan (which Xuanzang visited and wrote about), Afghanistan has become for people around the world the land of the Buddhas. The Silk Road is the subject of many art exhibitions, TV programs, and books, and has been celebrated all over the world with Yo Yo Ma's Silk Road festivals. A new wave of interest in world history focuses on broad trends such as the transmission of Buddhism from India to China, in which Xuanzang played such a crucial role. Some Buddhist scholars have also been writing about the practice of Buddhism, using Xuanzang as a potent illustration.

By retracing his travels on the Silk Road and including more about his years in China after his journey, I have sought to rediscover Xuanzang as a person of deep religious feeling with a powerful mind, a man of adventure with a strong personality who was at home in both religious and secular worlds. While one of the challenges for me has been to come to know Xuanzang as a person, I have also sought to illustrate his journey through the wonderful Buddhist art that he saw and to see him in the context of the two great cultures of Asia—India and China.

Sometimes the peculiar qualities of the man seem to be overshadowed by the legends that grew up about him. Yet there were moments when he showed human frailties, such as when he, surrounded by Indian monks who dismissed China as inferior, staunchly defended his homeland. He was very Confucian in his reactions to some of the excesses of Hinduism, so that he was driven to comment that "the naked man who covered his body with ashes is like a cat who has slept in the chimney corner." He could also be naive, credulous, believing anything anyone told him (this side of Xuanzang is satirized in the epic novel).

Yet after almost twenty years of seeking the truths of Buddhist philosophy, Xuanzang arranged to study with the pundit Jayasena, asking him for explanations of passages that still caused him doubt. What tenacious truth seeking! Finally his anguish welled up at Bodh Gaya, where the Buddha had attained enlightenment. He reflected on the depth and weight of his own imperfection, and wept. When his great teacher at Nalanda died, he said that he felt "his heart was deeply stabbed and he could not recover from such a wound." When he defended his country, when he had doubts, when he wept at Bodh Gaya, when he mourned the death of the head of

Nalanda, those were the moments when he broke the mold of the ideal Buddhist. Those were the times when I no longer followed at a distance on the pilgrim road. Instead he had become fully human and I felt that he was by my side.

Sally Hovey Wriggins

Notes on Spelling and Pronunciation

One reason so little Central Asian scholarship has been made available to the general public in the United States is the tremendous task of presenting Chinese, Indian, and Central Asian names in a clear and simple way. It has proved impossible to adopt a uniform system of orthography for this book because there are too many differences in sources and scholarly traditions as well as discrepancies between ancient and modern names. I have tried to encourage readability by confining complicated elements to the Glossary.

Chinese Orthography

For Chinese words I have used the pinyin system throughout the book. This system, adopted by the Chinese government in 1958, superseded the Wade-Giles method of romanizing Chinese names. If the spellings differ significantly, I have listed the Wade-Giles spelling in parentheses at the first use of the name in the text. I have also listed the Wade-Giles spelling in parentheses in the Glossary. When unfamiliar names have been spelled in the Wade-Giles system in extracts from works published in English, I have added the pinyin spelling in brackets.

Pronunciation of Chinese names presents perhaps the largest hurdle, but, according to Madge Huntington, of Columbia University's East Asian Institute, pinyin words are pronounced more or less according to the rules of English phonetics, with five significant exceptions:

- C: C followed by a vowel is pronounced “ts” as in *its*; thus Cao Cao becomes “Tsao Tsao.”
- OU: OU is pronounced like the “oe” in *hoe*. Zhou, as in Zhou dynasty, becomes “joe.”
- Z: Z is pronounced like the “j” in *déjà vu* or Jacques.
- Q: Q is pronounced “ch” as in *chin*. Thus Qin and Qing (dynasties) become “chin” and “ching.”
- X: X is spoken like a lisped “s”—also described as an aspirated “s” or “hs.” Xi’an becomes “Hsi-ahn”; Xuanzang becomes “Hsu-wan Tsahng.”

Local Names

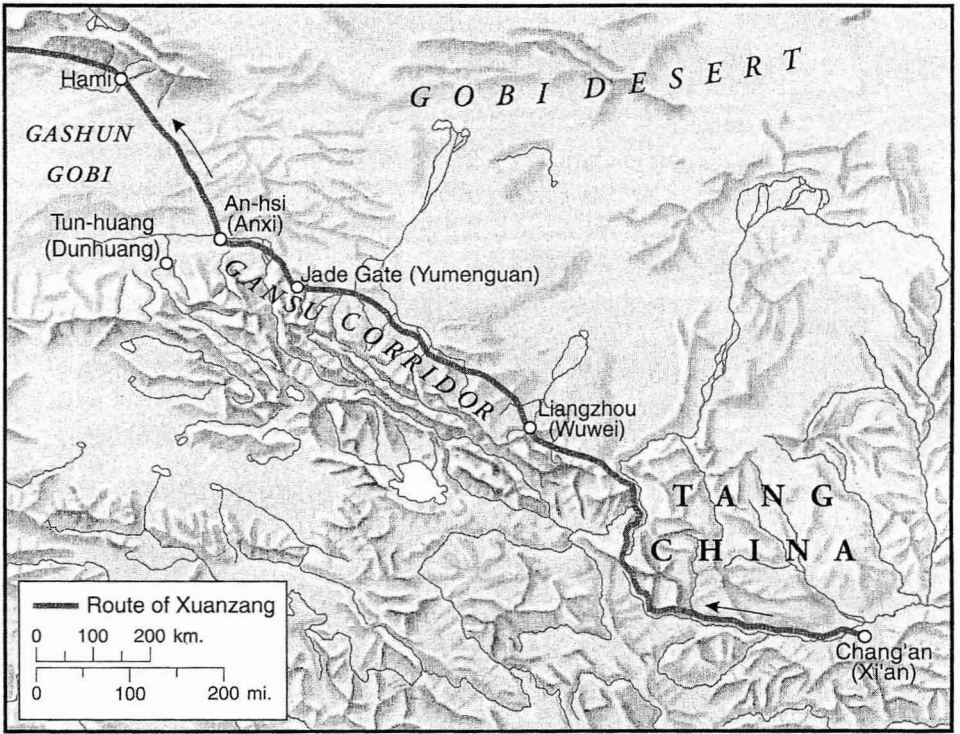
In the case of places, I have usually taken the best-known name: Kashgar instead of Kashi; Khotan instead of Hotan, Hetan, He-tien, Yutian, or Kustana. Some of the alternative names are included in the Glossary.

Indian/Sanskrit

In keeping with modern practice, I have eliminated diacritical marks in Indian and Sanskrit words. Names of important Buddhist texts appear in English in the book; Sanskrit equivalents appear in the Glossary. When pronouncing words, one must sound each letter. Vowels are pronounced as in Italian; consonants as in English. The sound of every letter is invariable:

- C: C is pronounced “ch” as in *church*.
- H: When h appears after p, t, d, g, b, or k, it begins a new syllable. For example, ph as in *uphill*, not as in *philosophy*.
- V: V is pronounced like w.
- A: A is pronounced like the second a in *America*.
- E: E is pronounced like the French é, as in *été*.
- I: I is pronounced “ee” like the i in *liter*.

THE PILGRIM AND THE EMPEROR



MAP I.1

Itinerary of Xuanzang on the Silk Road in China (from Chang'an to Hami).

In 629 C.E., a young monk named Xuanzang left China, departing in secret by night. He made his way safely past five watchtowers in the desert and the Jade Gate, the last outpost of the Tang empire. This solitary pilgrim was not out of danger, however, for he was traveling against the wishes of the Emperor Taizong (T'ai-Tsung) (c.600–649, r. 626–649) (Fig. 1.1).

This young ruler of the Tang dynasty had little sympathy for Buddhism at the time and did not want Xuanzang or any other of his subjects to venture into the dangerous western regions. His power was far from secure, and his diplomacy was still grappling with the hostility and even treachery of several of the peoples of Central Asia. Disobeying the emperor would carry a heavy price, but Xuanzang was determined to go on a pilgrimage to the holy land of Buddhism in India.¹

In April 645, after his 10,000-mile quest for truth to India, the pilgrim returned and approached the Tang capital, Chang'an, modern Xi'an. Hearing of his arrival, people gathered to see him in crowds so dense that he was obliged to spend his first night on the outskirts of the city by a canal. When he finally was able to enter the city, the magistrates, fearing that a large number of people would be crushed in the crowd, ordered everyone to be still and burn incense.

FIGURE 1.1
Portrait of the Emperor Taizong (ruled 626–649 C.E.), who at first forbade the young monk Xuanzang to go to India and after the trip asked him to write an account of his journey, which is one of the principal sources for this book. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



The emperor was away at the time, but an audience was arranged. A huge procession of monks carried the relics, images, and books that the monk had brought back with him from India. The return of a hero.

In the sixteen years between Xuanzang's departure and his triumphant reentry in 645, both the pilgrim and the emperor had succeeded in the eyes of the world. The twenty-seven-year-old fugitive had become China's best-known Buddhist and one of the world's most remarkable travelers.² The thirty-year-old ruler, who was of Turkish/Chinese descent and therefore an expert horseman, had become one of China's greatest emperors, presiding over the expanding empire (Fig. 1.2).

Xuanzang accomplished his religious mission and returned safely with a large collection of Buddhist scriptures. He had seen "traces not seen before, heard sacred words not heard before, witnessed spiritual prodigies exceeding those of nature." He had consulted with the rulers of the oases of the Northern and Southern Silk Roads, the Great Khan of the Western Turks as well as King Harsha, uniter of northern India, and many potentates in between. He would remember a close friendship with the head of India's most illustrious monastery all his life. He had crossed the most dangerous rivers and three of the highest mountain ranges in Asia (Fig. 1.3).

FIGURE 1.2
*Relief from the tomb
of the Emperor
Taizong, showing a
general removing an
arrow from a wounded
horse. University of
Pennsylvania Museum.*





FIGURE I.3

Copy of a traditional fourteenth-century portrait of Xuanzang with a modern-looking frame pack filled with the Buddhist scriptures he brought with him from India. Portrait from a rubbing taken from a stele at Xuanzang's burial place, at the Temple of Flourishing Teaching outside Xi'an.

While Xuanzang was away, Emperor Taizong not only consolidated his power in China but also conquered Central Asia. After having crushed the Eastern Turks in Mongolia in 630, Taizong turned his attention to the conquest of the Western Turks. This western Khanate simultaneously was struggling under the destabilizing influence of internal revolt. The Khan of the Western Turks was assassinated by a rebel tribe, not long after Xuanzang's visit to the region. Within six months the mighty empire had collapsed. The Tang emperor then began to reestablish protectorates over the oases of the Northern and Southern Silk Roads, where the pilgrim had also been. As a result of these conquests, China exercised direct control as far west as the Pamirs. On occasion, the emperor extended his

power through diplomacy, such as when he arranged a marriage alliance with a Tibetan royal family. He had already sent two Chinese envoys to King Harsha in India in 643 after Xuanzang's visit. Religious missions such as Xuanzang's would extend the reach of China even beyond the Pamirs.

What a difference there was in the backgrounds and temperaments of these two men! Brought up with Confucian values, Xuanzang was a bookish boy who read Confucian classics and became a scholarly Buddhist intellectual. But he broadened his intellectual skills and, far from staying in a monastic cell, overcame robbers and pirates and became a mountaineer and survivor in the desert. The emperor, whose early education was horsemanship and archery, was a rough soldier and heroic warrior who had come to the throne after assassinating his elder brother. Yet the emperor in the early years of his reign came to be regarded as a moderate, frugal, and wise Confucian ruler who sought the advice of his ministers and was concerned for the welfare of his people.³ It was Xuanzang's secular knowledge of foreign affairs gained from years of travel abroad that most interested the Tang ruler, although, in a final ironic twist, toward the end of his life, the ailing emperor changed his views on Buddhism, sought out Xuanzang for solace, and accepted him whole-heartedly as his spiritual mentor.⁴

At the first meeting of the emperor and the pilgrim in 645, both men were at the height of their careers. The experiences of the Chinese pilgrim and the political interest of the emperor coincided in a remarkable way. With the expansion of his new empire, Taizong needed first-hand information about the successes and failures of his imperial policies. Xuanzang was the ideal informant. The emperor questioned the forty-three-year-old monk in detail about the rulers, climate, products, and customs of the countries he had been through. Impressed by Xuanzang's knowledge of foreign lands, Taizong asked him to be a minister to advise him on the new Asian relationships and problems of his kingdom. Xuanzang declined. Then the emperor requested that he set down a detailed account, country by country, of the western kingdoms that he had visited. What interested Xuanzang the most, such as information on the monks, their schools of philosophy, and especially the holy places and stories of the Buddha, were matters of indifference to his patron.

No matter. Writing an account of the Western regions was a new kind of request for Xuanzang, who was used to those who sought his advice on religion or philosophy. A man of many parts, adventurer, intellectual, theologian, priest, and ambassador, he had given spiritual advice and inspiration to many political leaders and potentates in Central Asia. A "prince among pilgrims," this Buddhist monk moved easily in both religious and secular worlds. His powerful personality had impressed both the Emperor Taizong and the great Indian King Harsha. A man of unusual flexibility, open to the new and strange wherever he found it, this Chinese Marco Polo was an ideal observer of foreign cultures.

Studying in Monasteries

Who was this Chinese pilgrim and how did he happen to go on his long journey? According to his biographer, Xuanzang was born near Luoyang in the province of Henan in 602 (?).⁵ He was the youngest of four sons, an heir to a long line of literati and mandarins. His grandfather had been an official in the Qi (Ch'i) dynasty (479-501) and held the post of eminent national scholar. His father had been well-versed in Confucianism and was also distinguished for his superior abilities and elegance of manner. However, this Confucian gentleman preferred to busy himself in the study of his books and pleaded ill-health rather than accept offers of government service at the time of the decaying Sui dynasty (581-617).

Xuanzang was brought up in a Confucian household. At the age of eight he amazed his father by his filial piety, a strong virtue in Confucianism. He even began to study the Confucian classic books about this time. But the intellectual vitality of Confucianism was waning, and Xuanzang's older brother became a Buddhist monk.⁶ He took an interest in his younger brother and saw to it that he began to study Buddhist scriptures at his monastery in Luoyang at a young age.

Xuanzang was the kind of serious boy who was old before he was young. When he was only twelve years old, an unexpected royal mandate announced that fourteen monks were to be trained and supported by the state at his brother's monastery in Luoyang, the eastern

capital of the Sui dynasty. Several hundred candidates applied at the Pure Land Monastery for this important ordination. The young adolescent Xuanzang loitered at the monastery gate until the imperial envoy, who was about to supervise the ceremony, engaged him in conversation. "What is your name? Your age?" And when Xuanzang revealed how very much he wanted to be a monk, the official asked him why. "My only thought in taking this step," he replied, "is to spread abroad the light of the Religion of Tathagata [Buddha]."⁷

Such an unexpected and rather formal reply impressed the official, who recognized from his remarkable combination of eagerness, confidence, and modesty, the quality of this unusual boy and selected him as one of the novices to be ordained in spite of his youth. For, as he explained to his fellow officials, "To repeat one's instructions is easy, but true self-possession and nerve are not so common."⁸

For the next five years Xuanzang lived with his brother at the Pure Land Monastery. He plunged into the study of Buddhist scriptures, both the austere doctrine of early Buddhism and the mystical doctrine of the Greater Vehicle or Mahayana. Xuanzang was irresistibly drawn to this later Buddhism, whose two key words were "Emptiness," signifying the object of wisdom, and "Bodhisattva," or Enlightened Beings who postponed their own salvation for the sake of others (Fig. 1.4).⁹

His philosophical studies were interrupted in 618, when the Sui dynasty collapsed. Because of the anarchy that followed its downfall, and the civil war between the Tangs and their rivals, many parts of the empire fell into chaos.¹⁰ Xuanzang and his brother fled first to Chang'an in the northwest, which the Tang rulers had proclaimed their capital. They found the city swarming with soldiers, and so the two brothers, along with a large community of monks who were gathering from various parts of the empire, made their way to Chengdu in Sichuan. Xuanzang and his brother spent two or three years there studying the different schools of Buddhism.

Xuanzang's biographer compares the two young men: "His elder brother . . . was elegant in his manners and sturdy physically just like his father. . . . His eloquence and comprehensiveness in discussion and capacity to edify people were equal to those of his younger brother." He continued, "But in the manner of loftiness of mind, without being affected by worldly attachments; in profound re-



FIGURE I.4

Wall painting and sculpture in one of the earliest Dunhuang caves in China. Central figure is a Bodhisattva or Maitreya (these are beings who postpone their own salvation so that they may help others). The Lo Archive, Princeton University.

searches in metaphysical aspects of the cosmos; in ambition to clarify the universe . . . and in the sense of self-respect even in the presence of the Emperor,” Xuanzang surpassed him.¹¹

In 622, when he was twenty, Xuanzang was fully ordained as a monk. Shortly afterwards he left his brother behind in Chengdu and returned to the capital.

Preparing Himself in Chang’an

Chang’an had much to offer Xuanzang. It was the greatest city in China—perhaps in the entire medieval world. Tang historical sources are so detailed that we know, for example, that it occupied an area of more than some 30 square miles.¹² Rome at its height occupied 5.2 square miles. A city of a million people in the seventh

century, Chang'an became the center of the great culture of the Tang dynasties. In 742, its population had swelled to two million inhabitants, of whom 5,000 were foreigners.¹³

With its rich cultural life, prosperity, and variety of nationalities that came to live there, Chang'an was a radiating center of Asian civilization. New stimuli from Northern India and the kingdoms of Central Asia enriched Chinese Buddhism and made it the most lively and influential system of thought in its day. From Iran and central Asia came other new religions such as Islam, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Nestorian Christianity. Together with these intellectual and spiritual influences came many new developments in the arts, ranging from music and dance to metalworking and fine cuisine, as well as important technical and scientific influences in mathematics and linguistics. A galaxy of poets and artists were also part of this glittering capital. The latest in Buddhist doctrine, the arts, and fashion could be found in Chang'an.

A time of preparation. Xuanzang continued his Buddhist studies in Chang'an and sought out foreigners who could teach the languages spoken beyond China's borders. He probably went to the Western Market, the area of the city connected with the Silk Road, to learn some Tokharian, which was spoken in many places in Central Asia such as Turfan. His gift in languages would serve him well in the future. He also began to study Sanskrit in 626 so that he would be able to communicate with foreign monks whose native language was unfamiliar to him. Like Latin in the Christian monasteries of medieval Europe, Sanskrit was the language of Buddhist scriptures and monasteries in all of northern Asia.

Indian scriptures had been translated into Chinese since the first centuries of the common era. Missionaries from India and Kashgaria (modern Xinjiang), Parthians from Iran, and Sogdians (from the area of Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union) had founded monasteries in Luoyang and Chang'an where individual monks and teams of monks were busily translating the vast Buddhist literature coming out of India. There were also many Chinese monks who had gone west. At least fifty-four clerics before Xuanzang, the first one in 260, had traveled westward, though not all of them reached the land of their faith. Among those who did, the pious Faxian (Fa-hsien) and Zhiyan (Chih-yen) stirred his imagination.¹⁴

By this time Xuanzang had spent fifteen years in Luoyang, Chengdu, and Chang'an, studying languages and mastering the teachings of the various schools of Buddhism. In so doing he formed serious doubts about some of the Chinese translations. They were conflicting, garbled, or simply inadequate. He came to feel also that each abbot uncritically followed the teachings of his particular school. Like the Indian fable of the blind men, each touching a different part of the elephant and taking it for the whole, these men were blind to the strange discordances and contradictions among them.¹⁵ Some of their theories either vaguely or manifestly contradicted the holy scriptures. Which precepts were authentic? Was it true that all people or only some could attain Buddhahood? Xuanzang was bewildered and unable to decide which theories should be accepted. Thus he made up his mind to go to India to clear up his doubts and to bring back the complete Sanskrit text of what came to be called *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice* by Asanga.

Xuanzang was drawn to the sophisticated writings of Asanga and his brother Vasubandhu, who were the founders of the Yogacara school of Buddhism, only part of whose huge compendium of philosophy had reached China.¹⁶ This school of thought professed a metaphysical Idealism in which the outside world does not exist but is a projection of one's own consciousness.

*As stars, a fault of vision, as a lamp,
A mock show, dew drops, or a bubble,
A dream, a lightning flash, or cloud,
So should one view "the world of birth
and death," or Samsara.*¹⁷

This verse from the *Diamond Sutra* tells us that the material world is an illusion. It is similar to Bishop Berkeley's Idealism that "all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth,—in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world—have not any subsistence without a mind."¹⁸ The Yogacarins, however, based this concept not merely on a number of logical arguments that proved the impossibility of an external object but also on the living experience of insight meditation.

It seems more a philosophy for the theoretically oriented than one who is willing to meet with storms in the Taklamakan Desert, avalanches in the Tian Shan Mountains, or murderous pirates on the Ganges River. Although Xuanzang was attracted to this school, he enjoyed and was skillful in the art of dialectics. Part of him liked mastering the subtleties of numerous doctrines, a capability that would serve him well as he talked with the eminent doctors of philosophy in India and Central Asia.

With a firm sense of truths only dimly perceived, he knew that he must seek the source.¹⁹ Having decided to go, Xuanzang, along with several other monks, sent up to the Emperor Taizong a petition to be allowed to leave China. Xuanzang's petition was not answered, but an imperial decree made it clear that laymen and possibly monks, unless they had official business, had better stay home. For such a passionate young man as Xuanzang, this was hardly a deterrent.

629 C.E. The month is uncertain. Dangers and untold difficulties lie ahead of him. He retires into the seclusion of a sacred tower in Chang'an in order to pray for guidance. He has a dream. In it he sees Mount Sumeru, a sacred mountain at the center of the universe, made of gold, silver, beryl, and crystal surrounded by a Great Sea. Lotus flowers of stone support him as he crosses the waters, but so slippery and steep is the way up this Asian Mount Olympus that each time he tries to climb its sides, he slides to the bottom. Of a sudden, a mighty whirlwind raises him to the summit; the world stretches out as far as the eye can see. The pilgrim beholds an unending horizon, a symbol of the countless lands he hopes to visit. In an ecstasy of joy he awakes; he has been shown a vision of what he must do. He now knows that it is meant for him to go. He will be severely tested but he is ready to depart.²⁰

Beginning His Journey

Xuanzang was twenty-seven years old. A little under six feet tall, he was an exceptionally handsome young man, with broad eyebrows, bright eyes, a clear complexion, and a noble forehead. He liked to

wear ample garments and a broad belt, which gave him the appearance of a scholar. He spoke elegantly and had a clear, sonorous voice. He carried himself gracefully and looked straight ahead as good Buddhist monks do, without a glance to either side.²¹

It happened that owing to untimely frosts, the harvests had failed, and a decree was issued ordering both monks and laymen to disperse to parts of China that were less affected. Xuanzang took advantage of the decree. He traveled with several companions from Chang'an to the high valleys and gorges of Gansu, one of the westernmost Chinese provinces. The long Gansu corridor cuts between the Land of Grasses (Mongolia) and the wild plateau of Qinghai until it reaches the sands of the Taklamakan Desert. Liangzhou, or modern Wuwei, was the last town of importance in Gansu province, as well as the start of the caravan routes leading over the desert both to Mongolia and to the Tarim basin in the Taklamakan Desert.

The pilgrim stayed in Liangzhou a month preparing himself for his journey. While there, he preached to monks as well as to traders and merchants at a large religious gathering. The governor, who had heard that the monk was about to go to the West, called him to his presence and urged him to obey the emperor's edict and return to the Tang capital. After this interview, Xuanzang knew he had to be careful. So, sheltered and guided by two young disciples of Liangzhou's most revered monk, he hid by day and traveled by night. His companions guided him to Guachou, not far from the oasis at Anxi, the last halting place with local supplies before the wide desert. At this frontier outpost he halted for another month, "so sad and silent," his biographer observed. His new friends had left him, his horse had died, and spies from Liangzhou had informed the district governor of his intentions. Happily the official was a man of piety who tore up the edict in Xuanzang's presence, but he urged him to depart in all haste.

Xuanzang bought a new horse. He was praying in a Buddhist hall when a Central Asian named Bandha made himself known and asked if he might take the five vows to become a dedicated layman. Xuanzang told him of his need for help in starting for the West. Bandha readily offered to conduct him past the Jade Gate and the five watchtowers in the desert.

The next day Xuanzang waited and waited for his guide. At last Bandha appeared, followed by another very aged fellow riding a skinny roan horse. The “grandfather” appeared to be there for the purpose of giving advice on dealing with the demons and perils of the desert crossing, for he claimed to have made the crossing more than thirty times. Xuanzang suddenly recalled that a fortune-teller in Chang’an had said, “I see you leaving China on a skinny roan horse. You are riding on a lacquered saddle with an iron stud in front of the saddle hump.”²² As the old man’s horse and saddle fit the prediction exactly, Xuanzang agreed to exchange horses. So the old man made a very good bargain in selling his decrepit horse, and the zealous monk set forth.

The hour is early, possibly before dawn. The pilgrim, his guide and their horses make their way as far as the Hu Lu River. Both men are weary after their first day’s journey and finally spread out their mats within sight of the Jade Gate, the furthest outpost of the empire. Xuanzang’s body slowly relaxes and sleep steals over him as it does to all tired travelers. But suddenly he awakens. He can see his pious companion stealing toward him with a drawn sword! When he is less than ten feet away, he appears to hesitate; then he retraces his steps. Xuanzang begins to recite scriptures and prays to the Compassionate Bodhisattva Guanyin (Kuan Yin) to protect him from assassins. Bandha goes back to his sleeping place and the monk sleeps lightly until dawn. Not long afterward Bandha departs.²³

Being Lost in the Desert

Xuanzang was now alone. He set out with his pathetic-looking horse into a broad depression of sand and gravel with many steep and stony gullies to be crossed. Often he saw the bones of men and beasts, each telling a story of thirst, exhaustion, and collapse. The sun shone down cruelly. Rising waves of heat reflected from the shimmering earth as he slowly made his way. Then a chain of black hills rose up ahead of him, for the desert can change from tan and grey dunes to small mountains looking as if they were made of

coal. Near one of these mountains he thought he saw on the horizon hundreds of armed barbarians clad in felt and fur. His devoted biographer describes the desert scene: "And now the appearance of camels and horses, and the glittering of standards and lances met his view; then suddenly fresh forms and figures changing into a thousand shapes appeared, sometimes at an immense distance and then close at hand, and then they dissolved into nothing."²⁴

Were these shifting forms of men and horses in the midst of the shimmering heat of the desert bands of robbers? They could well have been armies of Turkish nomads from beyond the Tian Shan Mountains to the north in Turkestan. They might have been mirages. Or were they, rather, the demon shapes and strange goblins of other worlds, the configurations of Mara, the wicked, that so many travelers had warned him against?

Ahead of the pilgrim was the first of five signal towers in the desert. "Fearing lest the lookouts should see him, he concealed himself in a hollow of sand until night; then going on west of the tower, he saw water; and going down, he drank and washed his hands. Then as he was filling his water-vessel with water an arrow whistled past him and just grazed his knee, and in a moment another arrow. Knowing then that he was discovered, he cried with a loud voice: 'I am a priest come from the capital, do not shoot me.'²⁵

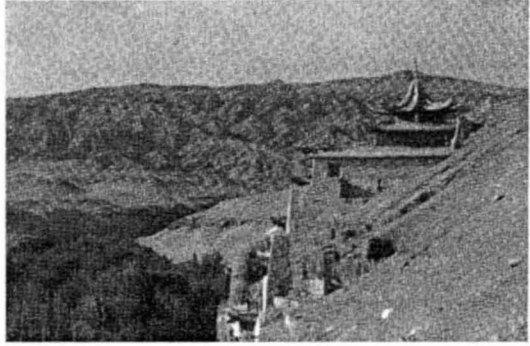
He was brought before the captain, who was a Buddhist, and who urged him not to cross the nearly 300 miles of desert to the Hami oasis, but to spend time with the eminent teachers at Dunhuang, the famous Buddhist center at the convergence of what we now call the Northern and Southern Silk Roads (Fig. 1.5).

Xuanzang complained that he was shocked that instead of urging him to go forward, the captain was exhorting him to turn back and give up. The Dunhuang Caves (in modern Xinjiang Province) housed both a large gallery of paintings and sculpture and a substantial library of Buddhist scriptures and secular writings, but it wasn't India.

Xuanzang negotiated the remaining watchtowers safely by leaving the usual route to Hami, following a parallel track to the northwest, and plunging into the heart of the Gashun Gobi (Mo-ho-yen) or what the Chinese call the River of Sand. By that term they mean a desert where the ground is no longer the hard, gravelly, rock-

FIGURE 1.5

Exterior of the Dunhuang Caves, which were at the juncture of the Northern and Southern Silk Roads in China. Xuanzang stopped there on his return journey from India.



embedded earth, but where shifting dunes move like waves in the ocean. The Gashun Gobi was a place where there were no birds, no animals, no water, no pasturage. When he felt himself to be in danger, he would invoke the name of the Bodhisattva Guanyin with utmost devotion and also recite a special magic saying found in the *Heart Sutra* (Fig. 1.6). He had learned it many years before from a sick man whom he took to his monastery and supplied with food and clothes. Out of gratitude the man taught him this sutra.²⁶

Gusts of hot desert sands obliterated the track and he was obliged to make long detours. After a while, he knew he was lost. He should have come to the Spring of Wild Horses and he hadn't found it. To add to his panic, in a terrible moment, his water bag fell out of his hands! In an instant his whole supply of water drained out into the sands and was gone. Because of one moment of inattention his pilgrimage would come to an end.

Time seems to stop. In despair he begins to retrace his steps back toward China and the fourth watchtower. But then he remembers his oath that he would rather die with his face toward the West than return and live in the East. Again he sets off. For four days and five nights the pilgrim and his horse struggle westward. Not a drop of water anywhere. His mouth, lips, and throat are parched by burning heat. The evening of the fifth day horse and rider fall down exhausted. Xuanzang collapses on the sand. He prays to the Compassionate One, Guanyin. Dew begins to fall on the pilgrim and his horse. A cool wind blows over them. He is



FIGURE 1.6
 Scroll on which the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, in Xuanzang's translation, is written in the form of a stupa, or pagoda. From Dunhuang Caves, China. The British Library.

able to slide into a deep slumber. He dreams of a tall spirit holding a lance and standard who calls out to him, "Why do you sleep instead of going forward with zeal?"

Once more he sets forth with his skinny roan horse. He has gone nearly four miles when suddenly the horse starts off in a different direction. He lets himself be guided by the creature's instincts. Soon Xuanzang catches sight of a green oasis. In it is a shining pool as bright as a mirror. The pilgrim drinks long and

*deep. He refills his waterbag with the water of life. He and his horse rest a day before going on. After two days' journey, Xuanzang reaches his destination, the oasis of Hami on the other side of the Taklamakan Desert.*²⁷



Who knows what role the skinny roan horse played? Horses and camels in the desert can not only scent water and grazing spots from considerable distances but seemingly remember such places from previous journeys. For his pious biographer, Huili, the famous desert crossing from Anxi to Hami was surely the sign of a miracle. The pilgrim was his hero. It was the first of many miracles that Huili describes, especially in the first part of his book. For a modern explorer and archaeologist such as Aurel Stein, it was necessary to retrace the pilgrim's route to find out whether his desert crossing was within the realm of feasibility. After all, Xuanzang's topographical records showed that he fully possessed that "instinct of the compass" that some people have. Stein concluded that the dangers and the quasi-miraculous escape that marked the beginning of Xuanzang's travels were neither exaggerated nor fictionalized.²⁸

Both his memorable desert crossing, and his vision at the beginning of his 10,000 mile-journey in search of truth, embody the universal elements of a hero's quest.²⁹ The Buddhist monk was not simply traveling over thousands of miles of dangerous deserts and mountains as if he were a Chinese Marco Polo; he was on a pilgrimage of the soul. His was both an inward and outward journey, and therefore, it carried an aura of special value.

Since he was a brilliant monk with keen scholarly interests, he began his journey of the soul for intellectual and theological reasons—to seek the truest doctrine. His vision of Mount Sumeru was a spacious vision, a call from his innermost being that would sustain him in his many ordeals ahead. When he passed beyond the Jade Gate, the furthest outpost of the Tang empire, he reached a point from which it was difficult to turn back. Going through such a gate is usually a decisive step, taking one from mere investigation to commitment. For the Chinese, especially, one side of the

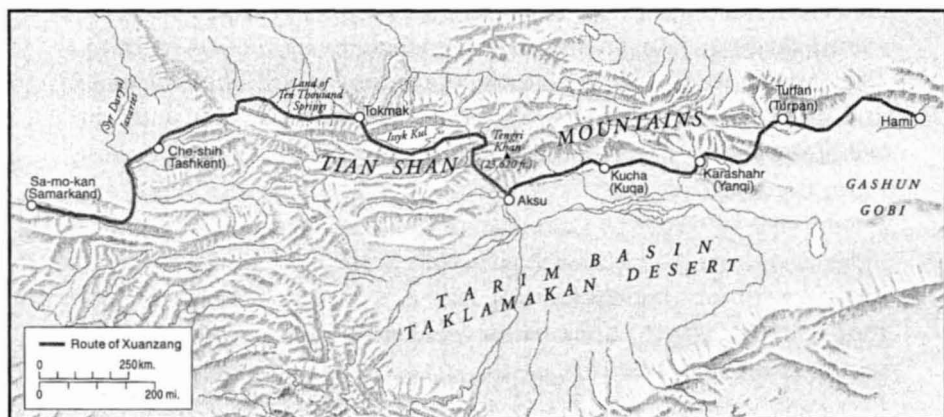
Jade Gate represented their civilized world with all that it stood for in culture, tradition, and a knowable world; the other side represented a place of desolation, the land of the unknown. Having passed this threshold as well as having nearly lost his life at the hand of his assassin-guide, he had faced his ordeals alone. He had circumvented five watchtowers in the desert and then survived a succession of trials, often in a dismal landscape of mirages and dust storms, only to lose his way. He experienced a "dark night of the soul," a time of crisis when he lost his water bag and collapsed in the desert. His guide was one of his Compassionate Ones of his Buddhist faith, the Bodhisattva Guanyin, and with the help of this guide, he emerged victorious.

Because of this heroic quality, which is so marked in the first part of his journey, Xuanzang has all the vividness of a character in an epic. "His kindred, in the world of our imagination," as Arthur Waley wrote, are "not the great travelers, not Marco Polo, or Vambery, nor the great theologians such as Saint Augustine or Saint Thomas, but rather Aeneas, King Arthur, Cuchulain. He is the hero of a sort of spiritual epic, as they of their knightly sagas."³⁰

Thanks to Huili, his biographer, and probably many other monks, Xuanzang became a legend in China even before he died. Whether his desert crossing was a miracle or even a feasible exploit, it was a near disaster; his trip almost ended before it had begun. As so often happens in legend or in real life, however, it was quickly followed by an event that was to change his fortunes dramatically—his meeting with the strong-willed king of Turfan.


TWO

THE OASES OF THE NORTHERN SILK ROAD



MAP 2.1

Itinerary of Xuanzang on the northern Silk Road (from Hami to Samarkand).

 Before Xuanzang met up with the strong-willed king of Turfan, he stopped at the oasis of Hami, the beginning of the string of oases at the foot of the Tian Shan Mountains. When he lifted his eyes to the snow-capped peaks of this range, he was looking at the source of life of the desert oases below. From the icy summits of these mountains, rivers flow beside fir-clad slopes, down brown, barren valleys below, rushing ever downward to desert dunes and further west to the Taklamakan Desert until they disappear eventually in the sand.¹

Desert dwellers long before Xuanzang arrived had developed an ingenious system of underground channels and wells (called *karez*) to preserve this water from the mountains. From the air the series of wells looks like earth mounds, because their keepers are constantly digging and piling up the earth so the water flows smoothly. They are sometimes as much as forty meters long. With fertile land and an increasingly prosperous trade of ancient China with the West, and the West with China, along the Northern Silk Road these oases flourished. It was those kingdoms that the young Xuanzang would visit in 629-630 C.E.; that is where he would replenish his caravan of horses and camels, visit with kings, and preach the Buddhist doctrine to merchants and warriors as well as to his fellow monks on his way to India. He would be the most famous pilgrim to travel on this road, one of the longest and oldest trade routes known to mankind—the Silk Road.

Staying at the Hami Oasis

When Xuanzang was in Hami, he stayed in a monastery where three Chinese monks lived; they were overjoyed to see him. The oldest embraced Xuanzang with tears, saying, "Could I ever have hoped to see a man from my own village?" Xuanzang showed an unexpected warmth and shed tears of sympathy with him. It was from monasteries such as this that the teachings of Buddhism radiated from India as far as China, a country that was enlightened by the new religion in much the same way as northern Europe had received the teachings of Christianity from the monasteries of Ireland.

The oasis kingdom of Hami, famous for its melons, had long been inhabited by a Chinese military colony that had accepted suzerainty of the Turks during the troubled times of the Sui and early Tang dynasties. Several months after the monk's visit, the kingdom of Hami reverted back to China. Like many another oasis, it was caught between nomadic hordes from the north and west and the sedentary civilization of China to the south and east.

The impetuous king of Turfan, having heard of Xuanzang's approach, ordered an escort to meet him. A powerful monarch of Chinese descent, the king had sent rare gifts to the Tang emperor and also presented himself in person at the Chinese court. Some time later, he associated himself with the Turkish nomads, and cut off the caravans between China and the western kingdoms. It is said that he died of fright as he awaited the arrival of the Chinese armies. In 640, Turfan was annexed to China.²

Opposing the King of Turfan

Since the king of Turfan was also a devout Buddhist, Xuanzang could hardly refuse to see him. The pilgrim had another itinerary in mind, but he changed his route in order to go to Turfan. After a six-day march through the desert, a distance of about 200 miles, he reached the borders of Turfan at sunset. The moment the king was informed of Xuanzang's arrival, he left his palace and proceeded by torchlight to meet him. When the two of them arrived at the king's elegant pavilion, the king personally conducted the monk to a seat. The queen and all her serving women came to pay their respects and food was served. Then the king, according to Huili, persisted in talking with him all night.

630 C.E. The hour grows late. Having stayed for ten days, the Master desires to take his leave and continue his journey. But the king wants him to be a spiritual preceptor for his kingdom.

Xuanzang says: "It needs no repeated explanation to understand your deep kindness. But as I am going to the West to seek the Law of the Buddha, it is improper for me to stop half way before I have found it."

The king is adamant.

Xuanzang is firm.

The king becomes sullen, and shouts at the pilgrim, flapping the sleeves of his royal robe. "I have other ways to deal with you." He threatens to detain him by force or else send him back to his country.

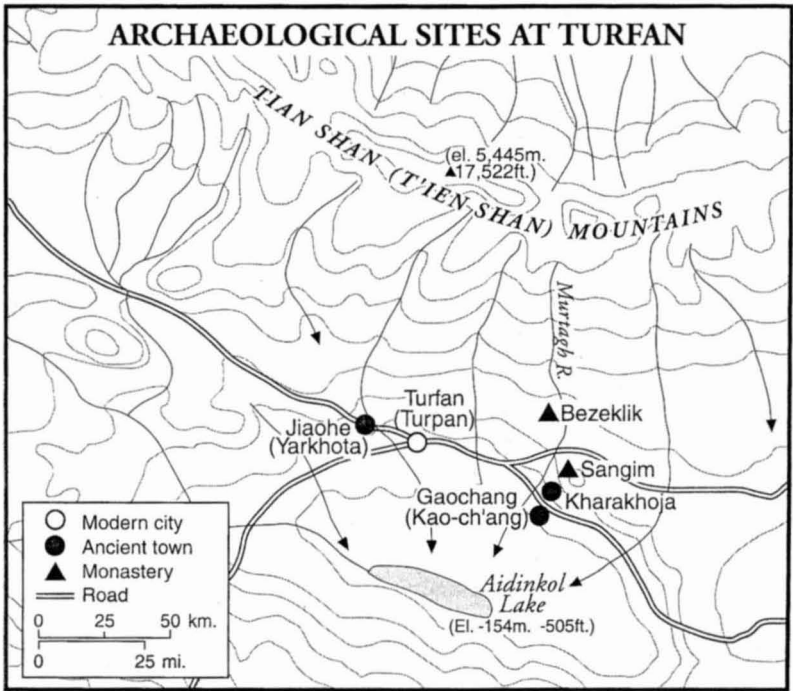
It is Xuanzang's first confrontation with royal authority and power. There will be other times when he will have to resist a monarch's wish, even that of the emperor himself. He stands firm. Still the king does not let him go, increasing his offerings. Xuanzang decides that he must refuse to eat and drink. The king serves him with his own hands. For three days Xuanzang fasts, hoping to change the king's mind. On the fourth day the Master's breath is very feeble. The king is ashamed and gives in.³

In the end, Xuanzang promised to preach to his subjects in Turfan for a month.

He also agreed to stop in Turfan for three years on his return journey to China. This was not to happen, for the king's death released the pilgrim from the promise, and Xuanzang returned fifteen years later, on the Southern Silk Road.

During his stay of a month in this area, Xuanzang stopped at the ancient city of Gaochang, which lies twenty-nine miles southeast of Turfan. This impressive city of 1.5 square miles is divided into three parts: an outer city, an inner city, and a royal palace, more or less like the pattern of Chang'an. Today, after more than a thousand years, part of the ancient city wall still stands, over thirty feet high; the gates, the stupa shrine, the Buddha hall, and the bases of various temples are still recognizable. In such an excessively dry climate with only one-half inch of rainfall a year, some of the buildings are timelessly preserved so that we may easily imagine a prosperous kingdom even now.

Although the king prepared a special pavilion for Xuanzang to talk to an audience of three hundred, he may also have preached in front of the large Buddha hall, a square structure constructed of sun-dried bricks with hollowed-out niches three to four feet high on the exterior of the building. Some of these carved-out spaces still have painted halos in them recalling the Buddha figures or Compassionate Ones they once contained.



MAP 2.2

Archaeological sites at Turfan oasis, with indication of rivers that flow from the Tian Shan Mountains feeding Aidinkol Lake.

Most probably he also visited Jiaohe, six miles west of Turfan town, a natural fortress that stands on a high bluff between two rivers. A stroll across a dusty plain would take him to an unusual stupa with a tall central round pillar surrounded by four towers. Ten years after Xuanzang visited the Turfan oasis, Jiaohe became the main base for administering the western regions of the Chinese empire.

It is likely that Xuanzang climbed in the foothills of the Tian Shan Mountains, passing by the famous Flaming Mountain, so called because of its reddish hue. These red foothills, strangely rent with gouged-out gullies, are the setting of and inform the action of a chapter in the famous Ming novel *Journey to the West*, an epic inspired by the monk's pilgrimage to India. It is but a short walk for such a vigorous, young monk among barren, desolate hills to the

monks' cells of the Sangim ravine, where he may have paused on his way to the truly spectacular caves at Bezeklik (Fig. 2.1).

Almost hidden until one is right upon them, these cells stand in the Murtok gorge on a steep bank of conglomerate rock. Above the temple cells, partly cut out of the cliff, is a smooth tableland, as if the river, hundreds of years before the monks built their monastery, had been at a higher level and over the centuries had cut its way through to form a wild, narrow gorge. The caves face an equally steep, serrated cliff on the other side of the gushing river. Like the Greeks, the Buddhist monks had a genius for place; their monasteries usually stand in dramatic settings.

The sounds of the swift-flowing river at night must have been soothing, but who knows about the wailing howls of wolves baying in the gorge at the full moon? Albert von Le Coq, an early-twentieth-century German explorer, heard them in this desolate gorge thirteen centuries after Xuanzang passed through and told us that the wolves, though they sounded dangerous, were mostly harmless.

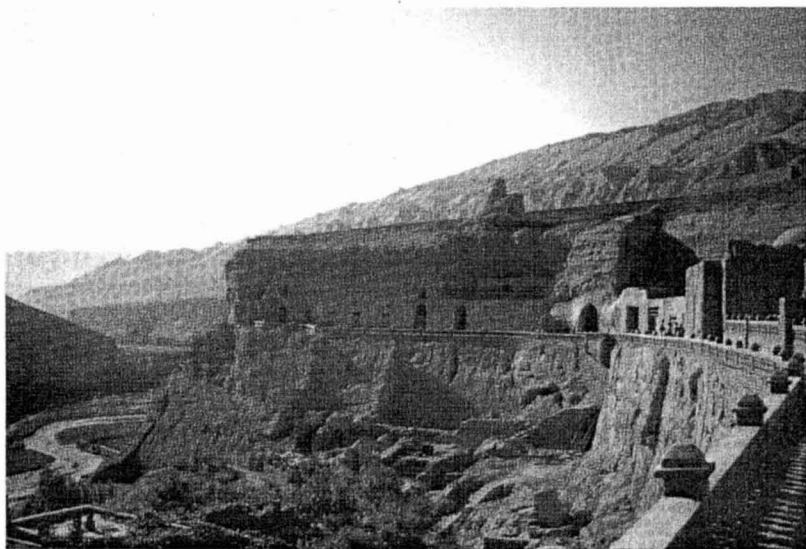


FIGURE 2.1

General view of Bezeklik Monastery, which, like many Buddhist monasteries, overlooks a river. The caves were filled with beautiful wall paintings, which are now largely destroyed.

After Xuanzang's month-long sojourn in this oasis, the king equipped him in truly grand style for his pilgrimage. He had various articles of clothing made that were suitable for such a climate, such as face-coverings, gloves, leather boots, and so on. Moreover, he gave Xuanzang a hundred gold ounces, and three myriads of silver pieces, with five hundred rolls of satin and taffeta, enough for the outward and home journey of the Master during twenty years. He also gave him thirty horses and twenty-four servants.⁴

The gold, silver, satin, and taffeta would be for the kings and Khans whom he would visit on his journey. Most important of all, the king gave Xuanzang twenty-four royal letters to be presented to the twenty-four different kingdoms. The Turfan king requested these rulers to conduct Xuanzang through their territories and to provide relays of horses. And finally, he commissioned one of his officers to conduct Xuanzang to the Great Khan of the Western Turks.

In his letter to the Great Khan, the king of Turfan asked him to be kind to Xuanzang, as he had been to the servant who writes these respectful lines. The relation of the two monarchs was clear. The king of Turfan was a vassal of the Khan, and had a right to claim protection for his new friend—a medieval code that seemed to apply in Asia as it did in Europe.⁵

Xuanzang was overcome by his generosity.

For all these favours, I feel ashamed of myself and do not know how to express my gratitude. Even the overflow of the Chiao [Jiao] River is not comparable with the amount of your kindness, and your favour is weightier than the mountains of the Pamir Range. Now I have no more worry to travel across the suspending bridge over the perilous Icy River, and it is now time to visit the Land of the Heavenly Ladder and the Bodhi tree. If I may achieve my objective, to whom shall I owe my achievement? To nothing but the king's favour.⁶

Xuanzang was more right than he knew, for the empire of the Western Turks extended all the way to Merv in Persia (Iran) and to present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan and included what is now Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. This protection was doubly strong, for the monarch who ruled from Kunduz (in present-

This country was above 1000 *li* from east to west and 600 *li* from north to south; its capital being 17-18 *li* in circuit. . . . This country yielded millet, wheat, rice, grapes, pomegranates, and plenty of pears, plums, peaches and apricots. It produced also gold, copper, iron, lead, and tin: its climate was temperate and the people had honest ways; their writing was taken from that of India, but has been much altered; they had great skill with wind and stringed musical instruments.⁹

A Kuchan orchestra had in fact been introduced at the Chinese court and during the whole of the Tang period took part in imperial fetes. We even know the names of the pieces it played, such as "The Jade Woman Hands the Cup Around," "Meeting on the Seventh Evening," and "The Game of Hide the Buckle."¹⁰

A beautiful fresco from the caves at Kizil of a musician and an Indian goddess (Fig. 2.3) exerts such charm and fascination that we might even come to believe the legend that the enchanting melodies of the Tokharian music were taken from the sounds of a waterfall. Although this fresco is now in a museum in Germany, there are many other frescoes at Kizil, which show flying *apsaras*—like our angels—gods, and musicians playing flutes, oboes, and four-stringed lutes.

Along with its cultural richness, Kucha seems to have been a very important center of Buddhism along the Northern Silk Road. Xuanzang wrote that on either side of the western gate of the city were two Buddhist statues over ninety feet tall. One month before and after the autumnal equinox, large crowds would gather for ten days here for religious celebrations and Buddhist sermons. All the monasteries in the region participated in an elaborate "procession of images" with highly adorned statues of the Buddha mounted on floats, decorated with precious substances or covered with silken stuffs. Xuanzang visited twelve monasteries in Kucha, and this kingdom, he said, had no fewer than five thousand monks.

Among the especially famous monasteries, Xuanzang mentions a few by name, such as the Ascharya Monastery: "Forty *li* north of the depopulated city at the slopes of the hills, and separated by a river, were two monasteries which bore the common name Chao-hu-li [Zhaohuli] distinguished respectively as Eastern and Western. The images of the Buddha in these monasteries were beautiful

FIGURE 2.3
*Wall painting of an
Indian goddess and a
celestial musician
from cave at Kizil.
Staatliche Museen,
Berlin.*



almost beyond human skill: and the Brethren were punctilious in discipline and devoted enthusiasts.”¹¹

Numerous stupas, worship halls, and Thousand Buddha caves crowd one another at Subashi old city, a site covering about two acres, twelve miles north of Kucha. Subashi old city is spread along the east and west banks of the Kucha River and might well have been the Zhaohuli monasteries that so inspired Xuanzang.

Heavy snows in the high passes of the Tian Shan Mountains lying to the north of the oasis that year obliged the pilgrim to remain two additional months at Kucha. Close by was a ring of monasteries that he surely did see. Several of them were far enough away from the thriving cities for the idly curious not to be tempted to come and disturb the monks in their meditations, and yet near enough for the devout to visit and bring them offerings.

A climb ascending a steep Yanshui gorge and down in a westerly direction would take him to the 236 caves at Kizil, thirty-five miles away. Local people call it the High Thousand-Buddha Cave. In the wild ravines of the Muzart River, caves connected by interior galleries and staircases had been hollowed out of the soft sandstone of the mountain. A dramatic photograph taken by the German expedition of Albert von le Coq, a view from a monastic cell, shows much the same landscape that spread out before the eyes of Xuanzang 1,300 years ago.

Little has changed in other ways, too. The openings of the ancient chapels still present the same darkness and light as they did then, much as Xuanzang must have seen them: darkness, for the caves are lighted only by the front entrance of the grotto or by torchlight; and light, for the very brilliance of the blue lapis lazuli, the copper green, and the chalky white of the flesh tones combine to make bright and pleasing patterns.

The Buddhism practiced at Kucha at the time of Xuanzang's visit was Hinayana Buddhism, an early form of Buddhism still practiced in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. However, Kucha is well-known as the birthplace of Kumarajiva (344-415), one of the greatest translators of the scriptures of the Mahayana school, a later form of Buddhism. Kumarajiva was so distinguished that he had been called to Chang'an, where he stayed ten years working with a team of translators, rendering some of the most important scriptures into Chinese, most notably "*The Lotus of the True Law*."

Instead of the illustrious Kumarajiva, an aged local philosopher spent many long hours debating with Xuanzang. But the pilgrim seems to have challenged him on so many points that the older man was glad to see this bright, young Chinese intellectual head for the mountains.

Two days out of Kucha, Xuanzang had another narrow escape when his caravan encountered a band of about two thousand Turkish bandits. (Was this a poetic figure or an actual contingent of roving tribesmen on the loose?) Luckily, the marauders were quarreling about the spoils they had acquired from their previous haul and showed no interest in Xuanzang's party. And so at length he came to the oasis of Aksu, which was in many ways similar to Kucha.

Crossing the Tian Shan Mountains

From Aksu, Xuanzang's party entered the Tian Shan range. They climbed around the giant peak of Tengri-Khan, 23,620 feet high, and crossed the chain of the Tian Shan by the Bedal pass. Its slope was covered with glaciers.

This mountain is steep and dangerous, and reaches to the clouds (*heaven*). From the creation the perpetual snow which has collected here in piles, has been changed into glaciers which melt neither in winter nor summer; the hard-frozen and cold sheets of water rise mingling with the clouds; looking at them the eye is blinded with the glare, so that it cannot long gaze at them. The icy peaks fall down sometimes and lie athwart the road, some of them a hundred feet high, and others several tens of feet wide.¹²

The heavy snows that caused them to delay their forty-mile crossing of the mountains at Kucha should have been a warning; events would show that they left too soon. Xuanzang's description of mountains of ice that rose up into the sky and the ice peaks that fell down sometimes gives us a clue as to the hardships ahead. It took seven days to cross Bedal Pass, one of the major passes used by Western Turks to communicate with their dependencies in the Tarim basin. During that time he lost three or four out of every ten men, and great numbers of oxen and horses. The loss of one-third of his men and many animals might lead one to think there was an avalanche, but he says that his men either starved or froze to death. His 10,000-mile pilgrimage had scarcely begun. Yet not even in the Hindu Kush Mountains in Afghanistan, where his party got lost and was rescued, and not in the Pamirs, where he crossed a 16,000-foot pass, did he experience so great a disaster.

On the northern side of the mountains, the sadly depleted caravan rested at Lake Issyk Kul, the "warm lake," so called because it never froze. The comparative warmth of the water and the sheltered location made it the winter headquarters of the Great Khan of the Western Turks. The khan's summer capital was farther west at Che-shih (Tashkent), but he often spent time in the valley of the upper Yulduz River.

As Xuanzang and his party went along the southern side of this great inland sea 114 miles long and 36 miles wide, the pilgrim noted: "On all sides it is enclosed by mountains, and various streams empty themselves into it and are lost. The colour of the water is a bluish-black, its taste is bitter and salt. The waves of this lake roll along tumultuously as they expend themselves (*on the shores*). Dragons and fish inhabit it together. At certain (*portentous*) occasions scaly monsters rise to the surface, on which travellers passing by put up their prayers for good fortune."¹³ Xuanzang was a man of the seventh century, after all, believing in spirits in the mountains, demons in the desert, and dragons in the lake.

Meeting the Great Khan

In 630, Xuanzang met the Great Khan of the Western Turks at Tokmak, today in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan at the northwest side of Issyk Kul. The Great Khan's relations with the Tang emperor were friendly at that time. Three years earlier he had offered to the court of the Emperor Taizong a belt of gold adorned with jewels, and five thousand horses. By the early years of Taizong's reign, the Western Turks had come to control much of the vast region from the Tang empire to Persia in the west and from Kashmir in the south to the Altai mountains in the north.

At the time of Xuanzang's visit, the Great Khan was at the height of his power. After he returned from a hunting trip, the Khan gave Xuanzang a warm welcome. This nomad king, reminiscent of Jenghiz Khan,

was covered with a robe of green satin, and his hair was loose, only it was bound round with a silken band some ten feet in length, which was twisted round his head and fell down behind. He was surrounded by about 200 officers, who were all clothed in brocade stuff, with their hair braided. On the right and left he was attended by independent troops all clothed in furs and fine spun hair garments; they carried lances and bows and standards, and were mounted on camels and horses. The eye could not estimate their numbers.¹⁴

The pilgrim handed over the letter and gifts of the king of Turfan. Their party was treated to a feast in the khan's yurt, a large pavilion "adorned with golden flower ornaments (*Ta kwan*) which blind the eye with their glitter. All the officers had spread out in front long mats, in two rows, on which they sat; they were clad in shining garments of embroidered silk. The body-guard of the Khan stood behind them. Regarding these circumstances of state, although he was but the ruler of a wandering horde, yet there was a certain dignified arrangement about his surroundings."¹⁵ (Xuanzang sounds a bit patronizing here, as if, as a civilized Chinese, he is surprised that the nomadic tribes are not quite as uncouth as he had expected.)¹⁶

Quarters of mutton and boiled veal were piled high in front of the guests, who included envoys from Tang China and Turfan. Everyone but Xuanzang drank a lot of wine, and all enjoyed the loud, clashing chords of their music. Special rice cakes, cream, mare's milk, crystallized sugar, honey, and raisins were provided for the pilgrim, whose religious beliefs did not allow him to eat meat. At the end of the sumptuous banquet, the khan asked him to "improve the occasion" by expounding on the Buddhist doctrine. A difficult assignment in such a setting and before such company! The pilgrim spoke on the need for love of all living creatures and the religious life that leads to final deliverance. Apparently the khan was impressed.

The Great Khan had always been quite open to Buddhism. Some years earlier, an Indian missionary named Pabhakarmitras had even tried to convert him before going on to China.¹⁷ At Ak Beshim, only a short distance southwest of Tokmak, two Buddhist shrines that can be dated to the seventh or eighth century have been excavated by Soviet archaeologists.¹⁸

Having taken a liking to Xuanzang, the khan sought to dissuade him from going to India by saying that it was a very hot place where people were like savages, without any decorum. There was a gentle exchange with no threats of force like that of the impetuous king of Turfan. Xuanzang replied that notwithstanding all this he was determined to go and gaze at the sacred traces and earnestly search for the law, that is, scriptures. The khan then sought out a young Chinese soldier to accompany Xuanzang part of the way.

The khan also gave him letters of introduction to the petty princes of the Gandharan region—part of present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan—who were his vassals. He presented Xuanzang with fifty pieces of silk, and a set of clothes of crimson satin. Like the kings of Turfan and Kucha before him, the khan and his officers, with true courtesy, accompanied Xuanzang a few miles to start him on his journey.

Xuanzang set out again for the western regions. He crossed the plain on the north of the Alexandrian mountains where the nine rivers that feed the Chu, and the ten rivers that feed its tributary, the Kuragati, have their source. Even today this area eighty miles west of Tokmak is called “The Land of One Thousand Springs” (Bing-yul). The pilgrim tells us that the Great Khan of the Western Turks often camped in this delightful region with its many pools and verdant trees.

In all his travels through Central Asian Turkdom, especially in areas inhabited by Iranian and Turkic peoples, which were later to become great centers of carpet weaving, Xuanzang makes no mention of the production of either woven or knotted carpets. For those seeking to understand the origin and development of such carpets, Xuanzang’s realistic and detailed description of the Great Khan and the nomadic life in Central Asia is crucial evidence that the nomads at that time were producing only felt rugs.¹⁹

The next important place he visited was Che-shih, modern-day Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. He probably crossed the famous Syr Darya (Jaxartes) River at the present village of Chinaz. Finally Xuanzang had to traverse the eastern spur of the Desert of Red Sands in order to reach Samarkand. He found it to be a great sandy waste. “North-west from this we enter on a great sandy desert, where there is neither water nor grass. The road is lost in the waste, which appears boundless, and only by looking in the direction of some great mountain, and following the guidance of the bones which lie scattered about, can we know the way in which we ought to go.”²⁰

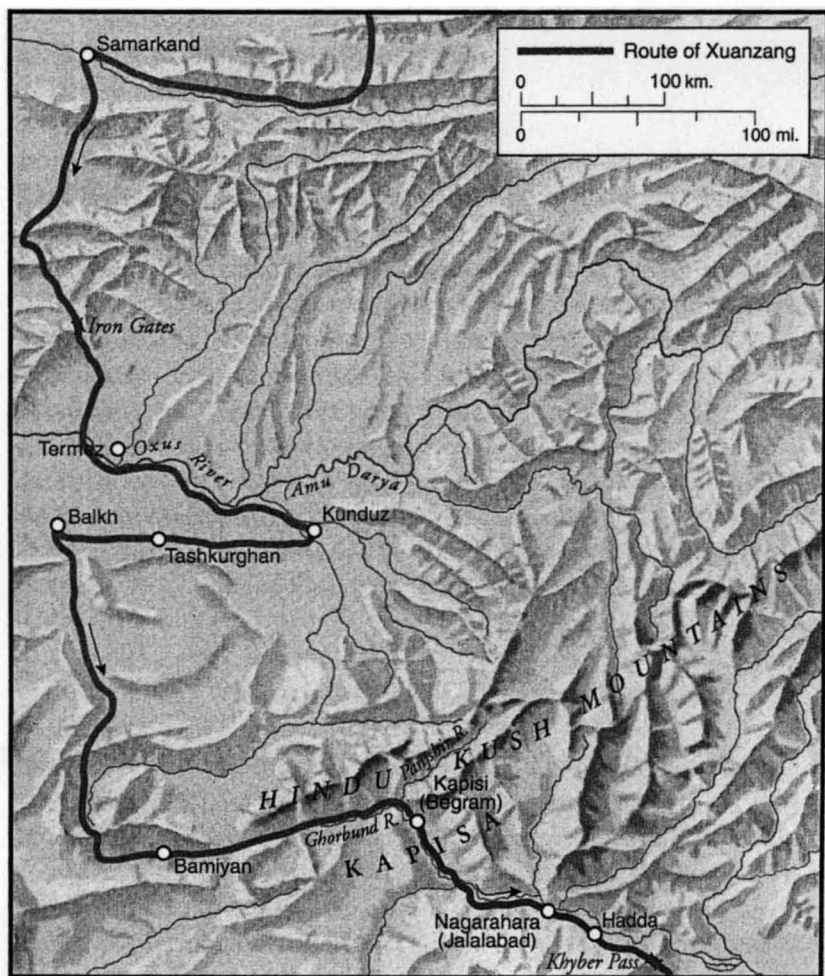
One hundred fifty-six miles of solitude . . . Once again the desert, the land of bleakness, driving winds, and bleached bones. The pilgrim’s goal was the golden oasis of Samarkand, the farthest point west on his journey.

Many Western poets, Milton, Keats, and Edward Fitzgerald among them, have been charmed with the cadence of the word Samarkand, and in the nineteenth century James Flecker romanticized it still more in his book *The Golden Journey to Samarkand*.


*We are the pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further; it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow . . .
Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells
When shadows pass gigantic on the sand,
And softly through the silence beat the bells
Along the golden road to Samarkand.
We travel not for the trafficking alone;
By hotter winds our fiery hearts are fanned
We make the golden journey to Samarkand.²¹*

THREE

THE CROSSROADS OF ASIA



MAP 3.1
Itinerary of Xuanzang in Afghanistan (from Samarkand to Jalalabad).

 The streets of Samarkand.¹ A medley of sounds—trotting horses, camel bells, and wagons creaking along the muddy roads. Smells of incense, cloves, cinnamon, curry spices in round sacks, urine, boiled lamb simmering in huge vats, and always jostling crowds of people. To Xuanzang, who was used to men with small noses, beardless faces, and almond-shaped black eyes, the men filling the roads and the bazaar were clearly foreign traders.² In Chang'an and along the oases of the Silk Route, he had already seen some men with hawk noses whose beards swallowed their faces and whose eyes looked like blue, green, or grey glass.

Now he would go beyond merely foreign faces to discover the characteristic forms of Buddhist culture in the lands south of the Oxus River (Amu Darya), which nowadays divides Tajikistan and Afghanistan. He would learn more about Buddhism's chief form of architecture, the stupa, and about the great Buddhist kings Asoka and Kanishka; he would come to know some of the well-known images of the Buddha, such as the giant Buddha at Bamiyan or the Dipankara Buddha, called the twenty-fourth predecessor of the Historical Buddha.

In the trading city of Samarkand, where "the merchandise of many countries was found and the craftsmanship of artisans appeared superior to that of other countries," Xuanzang observed caravans with gems, spices, and cotton coming north from India converging with caravans bearing silks and ironware from China on their way west to Persia and beyond to Rome. Bearded nomads from the steppes farther north brought their fur, cattle, and hides to trade in this important entrepôt of the Silk Route.

Winning Over the King of Samarkand

Although the king was a vassal of the Great Khan of the Western Turks, the culture was that of Sassanian (22–637 C.E.) Persia. The language of Samarkand, Sogdian, was related to Persian; the religion of the king and the people was akin to Zoroastrianism, the national religion of Sassanid Persia. Two Buddhist monasteries existed, but they had long stood empty until the arrival of Xuanzang and his caravan. Huili reported that when two of his young disciples went there to

worship, they were pursued by the fire-worshipping Zoroastrians with firebrands. When the king heard of the incident, he ordered that the offending hands of his subjects be cut off. Xuanzang could not bear to see them mutilated and interceded on their behalf so that their sentence was reduced to flogging and expulsion from Samarkand.

Xuanzang described the king of Samarkand as courageous, a man who had a strong army and who was obeyed by the neighboring states. His relations with Xuanzang seemed to change during the visit. At first the king was pointedly unfriendly, but after hearing the monk preach on the second day, he was so impressed that he allowed the pilgrim to convene an assembly where Xuanzang ordained a number of monks. This may be an exaggerated account of Xuanzang's influence, or it may show a desire on the king's part to impress the pilgrim so that he himself might turn his kingdom toward China and break away from the Turkish protectorate. Indeed in 631, the king sent an embassy to China asking to be received as a vassal state. Taizong declined to accede to this request, and instead the two countries established diplomatic and commercial relations.

The pilgrim's face turned south now. He passed through Shahr-i-Sabz (Kesh), where one day Tamerlane would build a great palace. Then once more he entered the mountains, this time a spur of the Pamir massif. After two or three days going through very rugged terrain, bearing always toward the southwest, he entered the famous pass called the Iron Gates. Located eight miles west of modern Derbent, it marked the boundary of the empire of the Western Turks. This well-known defile was shut in on both sides by high vertical rock walls. "The road is narrow, which adds to the difficulty and danger. On both sides there is a rocky wall of an iron color. Here there are set up double wooden doors, strengthened with iron and furnished with many bells," Xuanzang tells us.³

He then traveled due south again to the historic Oxus River, now called the Amu Darya, which rises in the Pamirs and, after traversing more than 1,400 miles, ends in the Aral Sea. Staying on the northern side of the river, he stopped at Termez. Here he found Buddhism flourishing once again. He notes that there were more than 1,000 brethren.⁴

Xuanzang's observations are of special interest in view of the abundance of Buddhist monuments found by Soviet archaeologists in the

vicinity of Termez, such as this stone portrayal of a seated Buddha and his disciples (Fig. 3.1), which was discovered during an excavation of a temple located on the banks of the Oxus near Staryi Termez.

Further east on one of the tributaries of the Oxus in Tajikistan is Adzhina-tepe, the most important Buddhist monastery so far discovered in Central Asia. Along with its very large collection of Buddhist relics is a Buddha lying in the final pose of parinirvana. Adzhina-tepe marks the farthest point reached by Buddhism from India toward the west.⁵

Poisoning at Kunduz

During his long journey Xuanzang was able to take advantage of the many kinship ties of the khans and kings along the Silk Road. So it was that he made a special detour after crossing the Oxus to stop at Kunduz in present-day Afghanistan. He carried a letter to the reigning Prince Tardu in Kunduz from his first patron, the king of Turfan. It must have been a warm letter, for the Turfan king was writing to his brother-in-law. Prince Tardu was also the eldest son of



FIGURE 3.1
Limestone relief depicting Buddha seated beneath the Bo tree flanked by two monks. 1st to 2nd century C.E. From Fayez Tepe, southern Uzbekistan. Museum of the People of Uzbekistan, Tashkent.

the Great Khan of the Western Turks, whom the prince had just been visiting at his hunting quarters near Tokmak.

But Xuanzang came at an unfortunate time. The wife of Prince Tardu had died and the king was in mourning. Something like a Greek tragedy was to follow. Suddenly Prince Tardu married the younger daughter of the king of Turfan. This dastardly new queen started an intrigue with a royal prince, son of the first marriage. While Xuanzang was still their guest, she poisoned Prince Tardu and made her new lover the ruler of Kunduz. Seemingly undismayed by this murder, Xuanzang stayed on for the protracted funeral and marriage ceremonies.

These delays gave him a chance to come to know a monk named Dharmasimha who had already been to India. Xuanzang's biographer related that his hero tried to find out about the number of scriptures and treatises Dharmasimha knew. "I can explain any of them you like," the monk at Kunduz is supposed to have said. Xuanzang confined himself to asking about the treatises he thought the monk would know and found that he couldn't explain them easily. Dharmasimha's disciples were filled with dismay, but to his credit, he "ceased not to praise the Master, acknowledging that he was by no means his equal."

Visiting Stupas in Balkh

Before he was murdered, Prince Tardu, who was a pious man, had recommended that Xuanzang should make a detour to visit Balkh, because of its many religious monuments. Accompanied by some monks who had come from Balkh to participate in the funeral services of the king of Kunduz as well as the investiture of the new rulers, they went 100 miles through Tashkurgan to the west. They saw how spacious this well-fortified city of Balkh was—20 *li* in circuit.⁶

Xuanzang noticed the apparently barren character of the city and its neighborhood, yet he says, "in truth it was a most excellent land." The plains and valleys were extremely fertile. There were one hundred monasteries and three thousand monks who were Hinayana Buddhists. Above all, the country was rich in relics in spite of a series of foreign invasions.

Balkh was already a city of prodigious antiquity when Alexander the Great chose it as his base from 329 to 327 B.C.E. In the early centuries of the common era, Buddhism flourished around Termez and in what is now Afghanistan, especially during the Kushan empire, from the first to the third centuries.⁷ After that empire's fall, there were a number of petty kingdoms, and the kings in times of prosperity embellished their capitals with temples, monasteries, and stupas. Both the cave monasteries at Bamiyan and the thousands of stupas at Hadda were built during this period, from the third to the fifth centuries. Then came the invasion of the White Huns (455-470?), who conquered Gandhara (eastern Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan) on their way to India. This area had succumbed not only to the Huns' destructiveness but also to floods and a decline in economic prosperity. In addition, in the seventh century when Xuanzang passed through, Buddhism's dominance was giving way to a general revival of Hinduism.⁸

Two rich merchants, Trapusa and Bhallika, had brought Buddhism to Balkh, according to Xuanzang. Northwest of the city were two Buddhist shrines, or stupas, associated with those nomad traders. "At this time two householders meeting [the Buddha] in his majestic glory gave him of their travelling provisions parched grain and honey. Bhagavat [the Buddha] expounded to them what brings happiness to men and devas [gods], and these two householders were the first to hear the Five Commandments and Ten Virtues. When they had received the religious teaching they requested something to worship."⁹ The Buddha gave them his hair and nail parings. The two men, being about to return to their native country, begged to have a rule and pattern for their worship services. Thereupon the Buddha took his three garments, folded them into four, piled them on the ground, beginning with the largest and ending with the smallest. Next he took his begging bowl and inverted it on his garments. Finally he put his beggar's staff on top and said, "This is how to make a stupa."

This legend carries an important message about the early days of Buddhism and the special grace accorded to merchants. Caravanners were an important means of spreading the new faith; the two traders in the legend had traveled well over 1,000 miles from Balkh to India's holy land. The truth of this story is borne out in history, for both Kushan traders and Sogdian caravans from Bukhara and Samarkand were emissaries for the message of Buddhism to the desert oases and

to China. The Sogdian language became the lingua franca of the eastern end of the Silk Route, and both Sogdians and Parthians from Central Asia were among the earliest translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese.¹⁰

This new religion was also not identified with the highest caste or Brahmins, as Hinduism was; it was open to all. The merchants who went back to Balkh and built a stupa also set an example of turning their material wealth into Buddhist works of art. Finally, the story gives a convenient way to represent how a stupa looks with its square bottom, round dome, and tall mast (Fig. 3.2).

Over the centuries the stupa form became more complex; more platforms supported the dome, the dome changed, the square railings at its top were enlarged and elaborated, the mast grew taller, and the symbolic umbrellas on it increased in number.

The Indian ruler King Asoka (c. 273–237 B.C.E.), third emperor of the Mauryan dynasty, is said to have initiated the stupa cult. Like the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine six hundred years later, Asoka's conversion to Buddhism was of great historic importance. According to legend, eight stupas had been used

FIGURE 3.2
A small reliquary, dated first century C.E., in the shape of a stupa, the principal form of Buddhist architecture.
The British Museum.



to enshrine the last possessions and remains of the Buddha, whence Asoka further divided the relics and erected 84,000 stupas throughout the major cities of his realm. He believed the bones of the human body consist of 84,000 atoms, and he desired to build 84,000 stupas, one over each atom of the Buddha's skeleton.¹¹ There is evidence that a major redistribution of relics did take place under Asoka's direction. Ever since then "a monument of this type has been an indispensable element of every monastery or temple in Asia, either in the ancient form of an Indian stupa or its variants, or in the eastern Asian form of a pagoda."¹²

Buried inside these stupas, which Xuanzang would encounter everywhere on his journey, were the relics of the Buddha. The Chinese pilgrims noted that the most valuable ones were usually kept in small receptacles made of crystal or gold; these in turn were enclosed in stone boxes or earthenware containers, which were of decreasing value.

Sometimes a relic was broadly interpreted to include a sacred text or a small statue representing the Buddha. Stupas were also built in praise of disciples or revered holy men, or to commemorate important events in the Buddha's life or his previous lives. Part of stupa worship was an ancient Indian rite in which the pilgrim circumambulated around the stupa following the path of the sun.

Originally stupas were burial mounds or sepulchers. Their form and meanings kept evolving. The symbolism is varied, but it has come to be thought of as a cosmic diagram in which the dome represents heaven sheltering the interior as a world mound. The tall mast symbolizes the World Axis. The stupa also stands for nirvana, the ultimate goal and highest consummation for all Buddhists.

The New Monastery where Xuanzang stayed for a month had been one of the most splendid monasteries of the Buddhist world. "This was the only Buddhist establishment north of the Hindu Kush in which there was a constant succession of Masters who were commentators on the canon. The image of the Buddha in this monastery . . . was studded with noted precious substances, and its halls were adorned with costly rarities, hence it was plundered for gain by the chiefs of the various states. In the monastery was an image of Vaisravana deva which had bona fide miracles and in mysterious ways protected the establishment."¹³

There he found Prajnakara, a genial and learned man, with whom he was able to converse profitably and read certain Hinayana texts that interested him. For the first time since he had left China, Xuanzang found a Buddhist teacher whom he respected, even though he was a follower of Hinayana Buddhism. They enjoyed one another so much that when it came time to leave, Prajnakara accompanied him south through the Hindu Kush Mountains to Bamiyan.

Like the soldiers of Alexander the Great, they had a very difficult time of it. The snowdrifts were twenty to thirty feet high, the worst Xuanzang had encountered. Although he didn't lose as many men and animals as he had crossing the Tian Shan Mountains, he seems to have been in the midst of a perpetual blizzard. But let Xuanzang tell it himself: "These mountains are lofty and their defiles deep, with peaks and precipices fraught with peril. Wind and snow alternate incessantly and at midsummer it is still cold. Piled up snow fills the valleys and the mountain tracks are hard to follow. There are gods of the mountains and impish sprites which in their anger send forth monstrous apparitions, and the mountains are infested by troops of robbers who make murder their occupation."¹⁴

Seeing the Famous Buddhas at Bamiyan

Xuanzang's caravan prevailed against the blizzards, mountain gods, and robbers and finally approached Bamiyan, an oasis town in the center of a long valley separating the chain of the Hindu Kush from that of the Koh-i-baba range. Xuanzang noted that the country produced spring wheat and had flowers and fruit. It was suitable for cattle and afforded good pasture for sheep and horses. He commented that the people of Bamiyan wore fur garments and coarse wool to protect themselves from the cold. Although their "manners were hard and uncultivated," he admired "their simple, sincere religious faith."

The first sight of the valley of the Great Buddha must have made the weary travelers gasp—immense cliffs of a soft pastel color and behind them indigo peaks dusted with snow, rising to a height of 20,000 feet. They saw the reddish cliffs in the cold, clear air; as they came closer, they could make out two gigantic statues of the Buddha standing in niches carved in the mountains (Fig. 3.3).

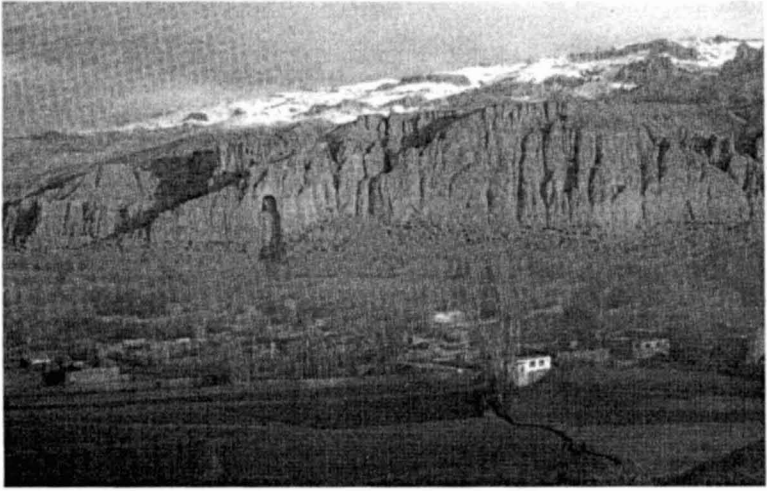


FIGURE 3.3

The valley of Bamiyan, set between the peaks of the Hindu Kush and the Koh-i-baba ranges. One of the two colossal Buddhas described by Xuanzang is visible in this long-distance view.

Closer still, they saw that the two colossal figures were colored and glistening with ornaments; the smaller wore blue, the larger one red, and their faces and hands were gilded.

When Xuanzang's caravan first arrived in Bamiyan, the king met the pilgrim and escorted him to his palace. Later Xuanzang's fellow monks took him on a tour of their valley. Xuanzang reports that there were some tens of Buddhist monasteries and several thousand monks who were adherents of a rare Hinayana school, whose chief tenet was that the Buddhas are above earthly laws, an idea that is perhaps an approach to the conception of the transcendent Buddha of the Mahayana pantheon.¹⁵

Together they visited the chief monastery at Bamiyan with its world-famous Buddhas. Long before Bamiyan was known to the whole world, modern art historians quoted Xuanzang's eyewitness account:

On the declivity of a hill to the north-east of the capital was a standing image of Buddha made of stone, 140 or 150 feet high, of

a brilliant golden color and resplendent with ornamentation of precious substances. To the east of it was a Buddhist monastery built by a former king of the country. East of this was a standing image of Sakyamuni Buddha above 100 feet high, made of *t'u-shih* (bronze), the pieces of which had been cast separately and then welded together into one figure.¹⁶

These two Buddhas, which faced south, an orientation ensuring the full benefit of the sun's warmth, were actually 175 feet and 125 feet, respectively. In between these two statues, the monks' cells and hundreds of chapels for private and communal worship (Fig. 3.4) were covered with paintings.

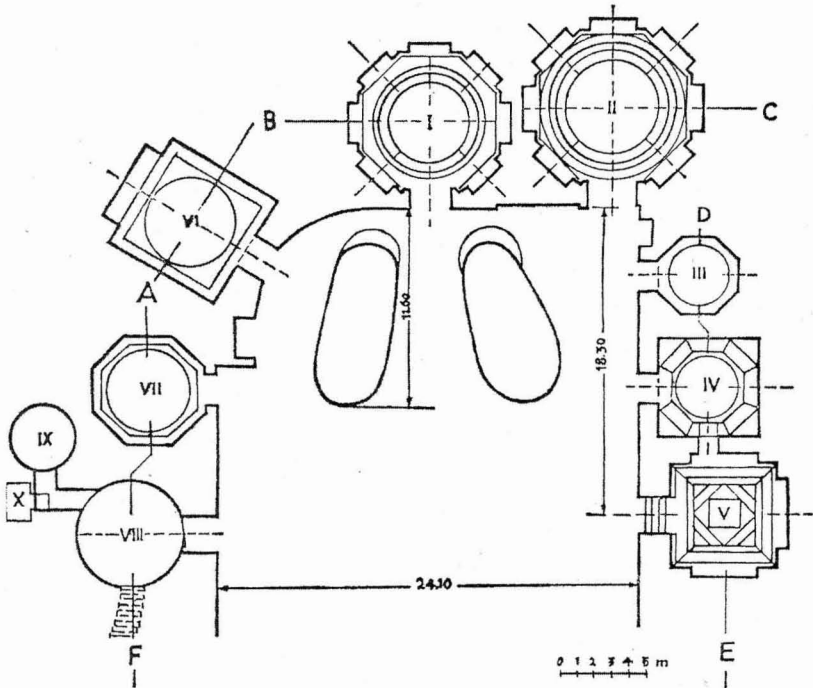


FIGURE 3.4
Ground plan of rock-hewn chapels at Bamiyan, Afghanistan, which form a semicircle around the 175-foot-high figure of the Buddha, which was destroyed by the Taliban in 2001.

The pilgrim does not mention these famous frescoes, which are thought to date from the sixth or seventh centuries, while the Buddhas themselves may have been built as early as the third century or as late as the seventh.¹⁷

Xuanzang called the larger figure a Buddha image and the smaller one a "Sakyamuni" or Historical Buddha. As a Master of the Law, as he was often called, Xuanzang would have been particular about such differences in theory, even though he was inclined in practice to keep his intellectual sophistication in one place and his devotion and commitment in another. The size of the Buddha may have served as a model later on for other gigantic statues of a divinized Buddha in China and Japan.¹⁸

Xuanzang was the first to describe these famous Buddhas. They have since become known all over the world and continue to be the subject of major news stories, editorials, and magazine articles. International attention came first of all when the Taliban armies threatened their destruction; then they shocked the entire world in March of 2001 when they bombed these ancient Bamiyan statues out of existence, leaving empty gaping holes. Such wanton destruction obliterated not only the patrimony of the people of Afghanistan but monuments of international renown that are thought to have been the largest Buddha statues in the world.¹⁹

A present-day Afghan scholar, Dr. Zemulia Tarzi, is searching for a third Buddha described by Xuanzang. It is a huge image of the Parinirvana Buddha supposed to be twelve or thirteen *li*—four or five miles—east of the cliff.²⁰

Xuanzang describes a curious custom that he would encounter again with the great King Harsha in India. The king used to summon an assembly every five years at which he gave away all his possessions to the people, and afterwards his officials redeemed his possessions.

From Bamiyan, Xuanzang and his caravan went east, climbing the pass of Shibar, which, at an elevation of 9,000 feet, gives access to the upper valley of the Ghorband River. He was overtaken by a snowstorm in the Black Mountains (the modern-day Paghman Mountains) and lost his way. Happily some hunters helped him to follow the winding valley of the Ghorband as far as the meeting of that river with the Panjshir River. At this point the mountains opened up, and the beautiful plain of Kapisa revealed itself.

Finding Hidden Treasures in Kapisa

With its magnificent frame of mountains on three sides, Kapisa lies in one of the most scenic and historic valleys in all of what is now Afghanistan. Its capital, Kapisi, is an ancient city located on the archaeological site of the village of Begram. Although it is forty miles north of Kabul, the elevation of the plane is somewhat lower. Today, wheat, maize, and sesame fields flourish in this rich alluvial region, along with walnut and mulberry trees.²¹ In Xuanzang's time it yielded "cereals of all sorts and every kind of fruit tree, timber and saffron." What a remarkable continuity after so many centuries!

As befitting this important political, commercial, and artistic center, there were one hundred monasteries with more than six thousand monks, chiefly Mahayanist, around Kapisa. "Their stupas and sangharamas [monasteries] are of an imposing height, and are built on high level spots, from which they can be seen on every side, shining in their grandeur."²² There were also ten Hindu temples in his kingdom.²³

The Chinese pilgrim describes the people as being of a rude and violent disposition, a little like the inhabitants of Bamiyan. The king, who also went out to meet the pilgrim, was of the merchant class. Xuanzang noted that he was an intelligent, courageous man, a benevolent ruler, whose power extended over ten of the neighboring lands.

Alexander the Great crossed the Kapisa plain in the spring of 329 B.C.E. At Kapisi, the political capital and commercial center of the Kushan empire, French archaeological missions led by Joseph Hackin discovered the magnificent Begram treasure in 1939. The far-flung nature of Kushan trade with the outside world is revealed in the exquisitely carved ivories from India, fine Chinese lacquerware from the Han dynasty, an infinite variety of Roman bronzes, and most astonishing of all, a glass vase (Fig. 3.5) representing one of the seven wonders of the world—the famous lighthouse at Alexandria. All were once in the Kabul Museum until it was destroyed by bombings over a period of time during the civil war from 1991 to 1995. Some of its treasures may have been saved, for along with the destruction, there appears to have been extensive looting.²⁴

This treasure points to Afghanistan as the true crossroads of the Silk Road, for the area stands halfway between Rome on the one

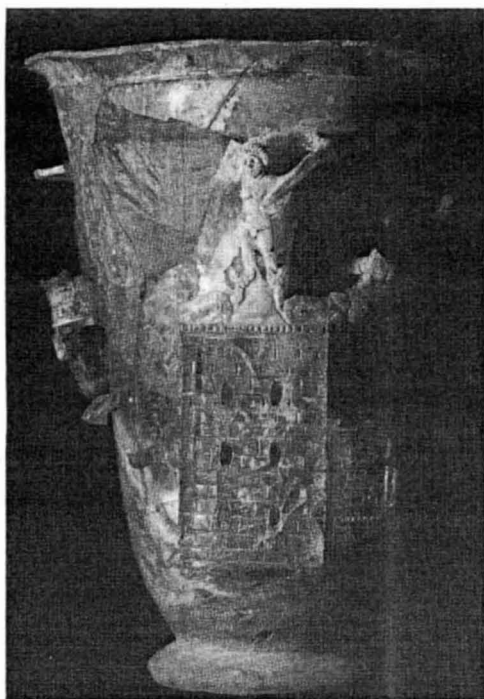


FIGURE 3.5
*Carved glass vase from
Begram, Afghanistan,
showing the Lighthouse of
Alexandria, one of
the seven wonders of the
ancient world.*

hand and Chang'an on the other on the east/west roads. On the north/south axis, caravans from Samarkand (from which Xuanzang had come himself so recently) and India jostled each other in this famous area.

Although Kanishka was a tolerant promoter of religion, he is also known as one of the great supporters of Buddhist art from the first to the third centuries C.E. Like the Tuoba Wei in China, who built the large Buddhist caves at Yungang and Longmen, the Kushans had originally been a nomad people from the north who had no artistic traditions of their own. They imported precious objects such as the Begram treasures, and they borrowed the arts of the contemporary Roman empire, which came to them over the trade routes, not from Rome itself but from the eastern outposts of the empire. The union of this Western art with Eastern religion is one of the foundations of Gandharan art and the source of its unique form. Xuanzang had seen an example of this union at

Bamiyan, where the drapery of the huge Buddha was modeled after the Roman toga, and the Buddha head was adapted from a classical prototype such as the Apollo Belvedere.²⁵

On a ridge rising to the east of the mound where the Begram treasure was found is the Koh-i-Pahlawan, or Hill of Heroes, a Buddhist religious center that flourished from about the third century C.E. onwards. The Shotorak Monastery there had been built centuries before to house a Chinese prince taken hostage by King Kanishka.²⁶ Xuanzang was their first visitor from China.

Xuanzang could see for himself on the walls paintings of the Chinese prince. After the hostage returned home, he sent religious offerings back to what came to be called the Monastery of Hostages. Out of gratitude, the monks held religious services in his honor at the beginning and end of each Rain Retreat season. This had been done for generations. The Chinese hostage was so generous and wealthy that he also left behind a buried treasure that was to be dug up when the monastery fell into disrepair.

The rainy season in the spring of 630 C.E. Who should dig up the treasure? Why, Xuanzang of course. The outer walls of the stupa collapse. The Chinese monk arrives at a crucial moment, a clear sign that it is a propitious time to exhume this treasure. The monks tell him the following story: "An evil king who is covetous and cruel intends to seize the treasure. He orders his men to dig under the feet of the deity (Vaisravana), but the earth quakes and the figure of a parrot on top of the deity flaps its wings and screams in alarm when it sees the men digging. The king and his soldiers fall down unconscious and finally they go away in fear." Xuanzang prays to the guardian deity of the monastery for his blessing. Xuanzang supervises the work crew. The monks dig down seven or eight feet. To their great delight, they find a large copper vessel containing lustrous pearls and "several hundred pounds of gold."²⁷

While he was at the Monastery of Hostages surely he stopped to look at one of the several carvings of the Dipankara Buddha (Fig. 3.6). Maybe he learned the story as he gazed at the Buddha carved in grey schist, with its moving portrayal of religious devotion.



FIGURE 3.6
A fragment of the Dipankara Buddha, called the twenty-fourth predecessor of the Historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, from Shotorak Monastery near Kapisa, Afghanistan, where Xuanzang stayed in 630 C.E. This was the Monastery of Hostages, built for a Chinese hostage taken by King Kanishka.

It was said that a young man went out to meet Dipankara, the last of the Buddhas of the Past, and that the youth threw toward him five lotus flowers, which stayed miraculously suspended in the air. He then prostrated himself, put down a deer skin, and offered his long hair as a carpet for the Dipankara Buddha's feet. When he beheld the majesty of this Buddha, he knew that he wanted to seek supreme knowledge of the truth. Dipankara, recognizing the intensity of the young man's desire, which we can feel even in this sculptural fragment, prophesied that in a future incarnation the youth would become the Historical Buddha, Sakyamuni.

Not long after the treasure diggings, the king of Kapisa, who was also a Mahayana Buddhist, asked Xuanzang to take part in a five-day religious assembly. This was a kind of debate similar to the

scholastic tournaments held in Europe in the Middle Ages. Xuanzang presided and, according to his biographer, demonstrated that he had mastered all the doctrines of the different schools while his opponents understood only their own.

On his journey, Xuanzang met the first Jains and Hindu ascetics—including a Saivite who covered his body with ashes and wore a chaplet of skulls on his head. This was a foretaste of what he would meet in the powerful Indian continent to the south, where Hinduism had grown for four thousand years. This religion had no single founder but was composed of innumerable sects. The Hindus were united by the acceptance of caste and devotion to the ancient religious texts known as the Vedas.²⁸

Xuanzang described the Hindu people as “given to music. Naturally they are untrustworthy and thievish; their disposition is exacting one over the other, and they never give another the preference over themselves. . . . They are little, but they are active and impetuous. Their garments are made of white linen for the most part and what they wear is well appointed.”²⁹

We can see here the difference between these “restless Hindus” and the mountain-dwelling Afghans of the Hindu Kush, with their harsh, uncultivated ways, wearing fur garments, and coarse wool. A modern view marks British India as beginning on the eastern side of the Khyber Pass, but Xuanzang considered that he had entered India when he came to Jalalabad, his next important stop.

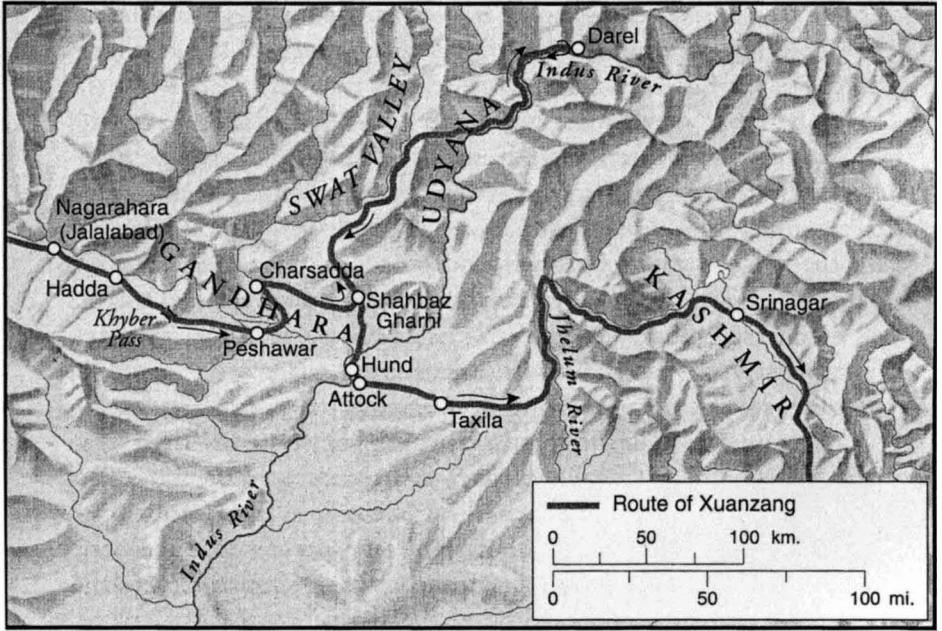


Xuanzang had now been traveling for the better part of a year, from September 629 to the early fall of 630. By almost any criterion, it had been an extraordinary year. His physical vigor and toughness had been tested by extremes of temperature, sheer distances covered, and variety of terrain. He had crossed both the Taklamakan Desert and the Desert of Red Sands, and traversed both the Tian Shan Mountains and the Hindu Kush range. For a man only twenty-seven years old, the variety of his experiences, his personal and organizing skills were astonishing. He had conversed with kings from cultures very different from his own; he had dealt with caravan and pack men of varying nationalities provided by each king; he had coped

with robbers; and he had related to and preached to monks and royalty alike. The spiritual challenges were no less demanding: He prayed for guidance before he departed, he prayed in the desert, and he fasted for his beliefs. And now, now, he was approaching the land of many and profound religions—India.


FOUR

THE LAND OF INDIA



MAP 4.1

Itinerary of Xuanzang in Gandharan Pakistan (from Jalalabad to Kashmir).

 When Xuanzang finally reached the neighborhood of Langham near Jalalabad, he felt, as Alexander the Great had nine centuries earlier, that he had entered a new world. Alexander offered sacrifices to Athena to inaugurate his new enterprise, and after the division of his army, he began his new campaign. At that point also Xuanzang paused in the detailed narrative of his journey to take an overview of Indian civilization. Evidently Xuanzang, like Alexander, must have been aware of having reached the gate of a kind of promised land.¹

Xuanzang began by naming the country Indu, but did not indicate what kingdoms and states he was including. He overestimated the country's size, although it would be important to know what he is designating as India. The whole territory

was above 90,000 *li* in circuit, with the Snowy Mountains [the Hindu Kush] on the north and the sea on its three other sides. It was politically divided into above seventy kingdoms; the heat of the summer was very great and the land to a large extent marshy. The northern region was hilly with a brackish soil; the east was a rich fertile plain; the southern division had a luxuriant vegetation; and the west had a soil coarse and gravelly.²

His overview was virtually an ethnographic survey, for in it he included measures of time and space and commented on the general characteristics of the people and on both the written and spoken languages. The Indian polysyllabic language, with its alphabet script so different from the ideograms of the Chinese, seemed to appeal to him. He provided information on the condition of cities and villages, public buildings, convents, and private houses. He noted that Buddhist monasteries had "a most remarkable architecture. They have a tower at each of the four corners of the quadrangle and three high halls in a tier. The rafters and roof beams are covered with strange figures, and the doors, windows and walls are covered with strange colors."³

He attached great importance to the clothing of different classes. "The inward clothing and outward attire of the people have no tailoring," he said, his Chinese way of describing the saris of Indian

women and the dhotis of Indian men. He mentioned the extreme cleanliness of the people, which many have noted.

These material details are followed by a description of the morals of the people, the education of children, and the literature of India. Although he regarded Brahmins as heretics, he did justice to their intelligence, love of learning, and intellectual labors. He was less sparing in his discussion of Buddhists, mentioning the eighteen sects into which they were divided and their often acrimonious discussions. He was amazed that for people whose spiritual attainments were high, the distinctions conferred on them were extraordinary; Buddhist paragons of virtue rode richly caparisoned elephants just as he himself would do at Nalanda, and later, on King Harsha's elephant. Finally, he outlined the differences in the major hereditary castes—the *Brahmins*, the highest caste; the *Kshatriyas* or the race of Kings (and warriors); the *Vaisyas*, or the class of traders; and the fourth class, the *Sudras* or agriculturalists. He also mentioned the particularly Indian phenomenon of the holy men or wanderers who care not for the material things of life.

As if this were not enough, he discussed the law, the army, administration of justice, royal families, and the nine kinds of salutation in India that have special significance because of caste differences and funeral practices. He devoted the last three chapters to general but somewhat disconnected considerations of public administration, agriculture, and mineral resources. It is in many ways a tour de force. Everything is noted, and well-organized.⁴ Then he continued an account of his travels. The next important place he visited is Jalalabad, ancient Nagarahara.

Praying in the Shadow Cave at Jalalabad

Jalalabad was the setting of the one of the famous legends of the Sakyamuni Buddha. In a former existence, this Buddha had met the Dipankara Buddha and received the prediction of his own Buddhahood. King Asoka had built a stupa 300 feet tall to mark the place where the Buddha-to-be had met his distant predecessor, Dipankara. Xuanzang paid his respects by circumambulating this giant stupa.

But the greatest marvel of all was a cave that the Lord Buddha himself was supposed to have visited, where he had left his shadow after his combat with the dragon Gopala. This grotto was near the present village of Charar Bagh.⁵ Xuanzang had to see it.

630 C.E. A few weeks after Kapisa, the Shadow Cave. The approach is said to be hazardous. An old man agrees to be Xuanzang's guide. Hardly do they come near the cave when five robbers appear with drawn swords. The pilgrim explains the purpose of his journey. He knows, he says in answer to their questions, that he might find robbers. "Since I am going to worship the Buddha, I should not be afraid even if I met wild animals on the way, let alone men like yourselves!" The robbers are so surprised by this display of fearlessness that they sheath their swords and ask if they might join him.

Xuanzang goes inside the gloomy, dark grotto. At first he sees nothing at all. He weeps with regret over his shortcomings, and prostrates himself one hundred times; he recites sutras, chants and prays with ardor and true selflessness. At last he sees a spot of light on the wall. After two hundred more prostrations, he vows not to leave until he sees the shadow. Finally the whole cave becomes full of light and he sees the Buddha's shadow gleaming on the wall. The Buddha's body and his robe are of a yellowish red color. The distinguishing marks of his person are exceedingly glorious. Below, the lotus throne on which he sits is slightly obscured.⁶

How could Xuanzang commemorate his vision? He had a replica carved of the Buddha of the Shadow Cave. The image was made of sandalwood and was only fifteen inches tall, so it could fit in his saddlebags. Perhaps he wanted to take this sacred image as a portable "icon" to venerate on his long journey to the holy land. Having been vouchsafed such a vision he didn't need to know that this Cave Shadow Buddha was regarded as a unique manifestation of the Buddha's form. Accurate likenesses exist in only three replicas that the Buddha was said to have granted in his lifetime—the sandalwood image made for King Udayana, the golden image made for King Prasenajit, and the shadow.⁷ This was the first in Xuanzang's collection of seven famous images of the Buddha.

With such famous places of pilgrimage as the Dipankara Stupa and the Shadow Cave, it is no wonder that the area of Jalalabad and nearby Hadda have yielded rich archaeological treasures. In the 1840s, Charles Masson, a pioneer in Indian archeology, had discovered a round box of pure gold repoussé, inlaid with rubies, which had been a container for Buddhist relics (Fig. 4.1).

It was enclosed in turn in a stone box in the ruin of a stupa at Bimaran near Jalalabad. Now in the British Museum, this beautiful reliquary depicts a standing Buddha flanked by two attendants, Brahma and Indra, Indian gods who were incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon. It is one of the early representations of the Lord Buddha.⁸

Ordinary commercialism existed at Jalalabad even in the seventh century. Xuanzang mentioned that the priests were few. He complained about how much he had to spend to venerate the numberless relics of the region—fifty gold coins, one thousand smaller silver coins, four silk banners, two lengths of brocade, and two cassocks were asked of him as he visited various holy sites. Xuanzang depicted the local inhabitants as being full of respect for the Buddha.

FIGURE 4.1

The Bimaran reliquary, a work of Gandharan art that shows Western influence and Indian iconography. The standing Buddha is flanked by Brahma and Indra. The British Museum.



But there was something puzzling about this rich area of pilgrimage. "The Sangharamas [monasteries] are many, but yet the priests are few, the stupas are desolate and ruined."⁹

Pursuing King Kanishka Around Peshawar

Sheer cliffs of shale and limestone on both sides of a rugged narrow defile mark the Khyber Pass, which leads from Jalalabad to Peshawar. Protruding dun-colored rocks made it an ideal place for robbers to lie in wait for weary merchants and pilgrims. Xuanzang and his caravan had met robbers before on the other side of Turfan near the Qoltag Mountains, and two days out of Kucha he had a narrow escape. Xuanzang's caravan would be ambushed in a forest later on. Worse still, he would be tied to a stake by a band of robbers on the banks of the Ganges.

This time Xuanzang and his party emerged unscathed into the valley of Peshawar (Pakistan). At the time of Xuanzang's arrival Peshawar was no longer an independent state, for it had been annexed to Kapisa. No king or principal officers of the realm would come to welcome him. The valley of Peshawar had once been a place of great importance, with Purushapura (Peshawar) the capital of Gandhara.¹⁰ Then came the ravaging White Huns (450-470), leaving their trail of destruction and plunder. Buddhism was in a marked state of decline. Xuanzang's lavish welcome in Kashmir by the king and 1,000 monks several months later, in May 631, would be all the more heartwarming in contrast to his experience in the valley of Peshawar.

Xuanzang estimated that only one thousand families lived in a corner of the ancient city. The country was still rich in cereals and sugarcane, watered by rivers flowing from the mountains. As the pilgrim looked about, he saw a familiar sight—the dilapidated dwellings of monks where once there had been perhaps a thousand monasteries. Many of the stupas were also in ruins. There were a hundred Hindu temples and "the various sects lived pell-mell."

From roughly the first to the fifth century, the prestige of the valley of Peshawar, like that of Jalalabad and Hadda, had rested upon the building of monasteries and stupas and their connection with a number of episodes in the Buddha's legendary life and pre-

vious existences. All through the valley, as well as in Swat in the mountains, Xuanzang heard the many legends missionaries and monks had invented or brought from the Indian lowlands. He recorded them all.

One of these legends, that of King Kanishka, is a tangled skein of legend and fact. Xuanzang noted that

about eight or nine *li* to the southeast of the capital was a large and very ancient Pippal [Pipal] Tree above 100 feet high with wide-spreading foliage affording a dense shade. When Sakya Julai [the Buddha] was sitting under this tree with his face to the south he said to Ananda, "Four hundred years after my decease a sovereign will reign, by name Kanishka, who a little south of this will raise a tope [stupa] in which he will collect many of my flesh and bone relics."¹¹

This was part of the Kanishka legend. Xuanzang went on to relate that when King Kanishka was out hunting in the forest, a white hare approached him. The hare led the "heathen king" to a herder boy who was making a small stupa out of clay or dung. Kanishka was impressed by the little boy, who proceeded to tell him of the Buddha's prophecy. This so moved the king that he was converted to Buddhism on the spot and set about building a stupa "round the site of the small boy's clay mound."

A multi-storied tower-stupa was actually built and for a long time was regarded as one of the wonders of the world. A small stucco model from Jaulian Monastery at Taxila may reflect the appearance of this great shrine with its impressive mast of umbrellas, an architectural feature that played a vital part in the development of the Indian stupa into the Far Eastern pagoda.¹²

Although Xuanzang found the Kanishka stupa in ruins, he was able to gather information about it from many sources. He says that it was 400 feet high, with a superstructure of gilt-copper disks, the base being in five stages and 150 feet high.¹³ Its foundations were huge, 185 feet from side to side. Xuanzang's description played a role in D. P. Spooner's locating the giant Kanishka stupa and the relic box (Fig. 4.2) of this great Kushan monarch in 1908.¹⁴



FIGURE 4.2
Reliquary of King Kanishka, one of the great patrons of Buddhism. The lid has Buddha seated on a lotus pedestal, being worshipped by Brahma and Indra. The British Museum.

On the reliquary is a portrait of this Indian Clovis exactly as he appears on what is known as the BODDO coin (Fig. 4.3), which on its reverse side also contains one of the early portrayals of the Buddha in human form. The design of this coin testifies to King Kanishka's involvement with Buddhism.

After Xuanzang left the ruins of the Kanishka stupa, he visited the old house nearby where Vasubandhu had composed the *Treasury of Buddhist Philosophy*. Although this was an early work closer to the Realist school, Vasubandhu later became one of the authors of Idealism, and Xuanzang had already spent many years in China studying him. Vasubandhu had been an inspiration to Xuanzang as one who was devoted to seeking to "solve that which was beyond language." Xuanzang noted that a tablet had been set in the old house in commemoration of this great Buddhist philosopher.

FIGURE 4.3
Gold coin with a standing Buddha clearly identified by the legend BODDO in Greek letters, and King Kanishka on the other side. The British Museum.



Seeking the Four Great Stupas and the Visvantara Site

To the north and east of Peshawar, Xuanzang sought the famous stupas that commemorated Jataka tales of the Buddha's good deeds in his past lives. Many of the stories characteristic of early Buddhism were adapted from the popular culture to point up certain moral truths. They told of unbelievable sacrifice and often depicted absolute pity for all creatures. Near Charsadda was the stupa marking the vivid story of how the Buddha gave his eyes for charity. In the hills separating Peshawar and Buner was a stupa connected with the story of how the Buddha gave his flesh that a dove could live. From Manikyala, a stupa in Swat, came yet another legend reflecting the Buddha's close connection with animals, for with Buddhist concepts of reincarnation, humans must revere all various forms that life takes. This time the legend described how the Buddha sacrificed his body so that a tiger could feed her cubs (Fig. 4.4).

The fourth great stupa, which was in the neighborhood of Taxila, related to the gift of the Buddha's head. Although Xuanzang

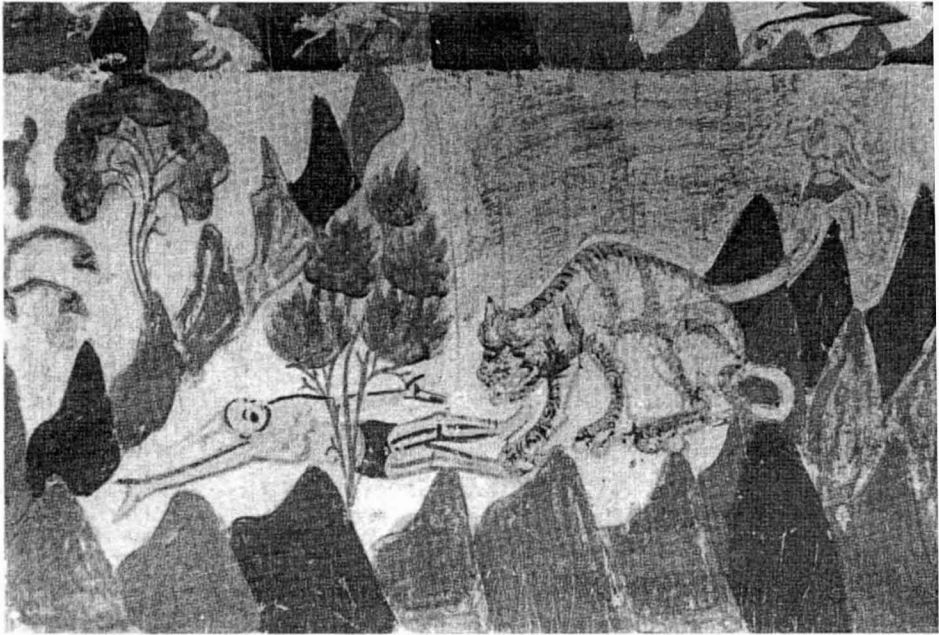


FIGURE 4.4

Part of a frieze from the Dunhuang Caves in China, portraying the Tiger Jataka, from a tale in which the Buddha sacrificed his body so that a tiger might feed her cubs. The Lo Archive, Princeton University.

was happy to pinpoint these tales of the former Buddhas and attach them to specific sites, he would see the same stories repeated over and over again engraved in stone, or painted on monastery walls in greater India and China as far away as the Dunhuang Caves.¹⁵

Xuanzang located the site of the most famous legend of boundless sacrifice—that of the Prince Visvantara Jataka—at Shahbaz Garhi. There was once a generous prince, he wrote, who owned a miraculous elephant that had the magic power of making rain. When a neighboring kingdom had a severe drought, the prince gave the elephant away. He and his family were banished by his father.

To the northeast of Po-lu-sha city we come to Mount Dantaloka. Above a ridge of that mountain is a stupa built by Asoka raja; it was here the Prince Sudana [Visvantara] dwelt in solitude. It was here the prince gave his son and daughter to a Brahman, who, on his part, beat them until the blood flowed out on the ground. At

the present time the shrubs and trees are all of a deep red colour. Between the [mountain] crags there is a stone chamber where the prince and his wife practiced meditation.¹⁶

In time the prince was persuaded to give away even his wife. Eventually the children were recognized by the prince's father and purchased by him, and, in a happy ending, the king of the gods also reunited him with his wife. The prince and his family returned to his kingdom, welcomed by everyone.

Across the valley from the ruins of the stupa are Asoka inscriptions on a large rock, tangible evidence for the most particular historian. These edicts were also inscribed on stone pillars erected in important cities. They made known Asoka's understanding of the nature of the insights and principles of the Buddhist religion as well as their application by the state, the religious community, and the individual. These Asoka inscriptions, believed to be the oldest written records of Buddhism, were on the chief roads throughout India. This particular location, midway on the ancient route from Char-sadda to Taxila, was a logical place for the Rock Edicts, especially since it was also the site where Prince Visvantara achieved knowledge of "perfect charity."¹⁷

Xuanzang also mentions the story of the Monk of the Single Horn. A stupa is believed to mark the spot where this monk lived. As it happened, the holy monk was led astray by a courtesan and then, disguised as a nun, she rode on his shoulders to the city. It is similar to early versions of the story of Phyllis and Aristotle.

To see how closely Gandharan art and Buddhist worship are intertwined, one can look at the reconstructed Sikri stupa (Fig. 4.5) from the same area, now in the Lahore Museum in Pakistan.

Most of these friezes are at eye level—Jataka tales, the miracles and stories of the life of the Buddha, such as the grass cutter offering his grass for the Buddha to sit on prior to his Enlightenment. We can easily imagine Xuanzang going slowly around such a stupa, just as he did at the Dipankara stupa, stopping before each scene of the Buddha's life to contemplate its meaning, much as Christians pray before each Station of the Cross at Eastertime.

It didn't seem to matter that the Historical Buddha had never been to Gandhara. So famous were these stories that many Chinese



FIGURE 4.5

A reconstructed Sikri stupa (about twenty feet high) with thirteen scenes from the life of the Buddha. Lahore Museum, Pakistan. The Lahore Museum.

pilgrims were content to visit these great stupas in this second holy land without going to the true holy land of India itself. William Blake has captured some of this feeling in relation to England:

*And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountain green
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen*¹⁸

Collecting Healing Sutras and Trekking in the Swat Valley

Xuanzang left the main road from Peshawar to India to go north and east to Udyana in the Swat valley, fine mountainous country where he found the destruction was even greater than at Gandhara—1,400 monasteries had once housed 18,000 monks. He found the region in a derelict state with only a few monks remaining. They were Mahayana Buddhists “who occupied themselves with silent meditation; they were clever at reciting their books without penetrating the deep meaning; they lived strictly according to their rules and were specially expert in magical exorcisms. Of the Deva-Temples, there were above ten and various sectarians lived pell-mell.”¹⁹

It doesn't appear as if Xuanzang is necessarily condemning these practices, for the Chinese monk brought back the *Sutra of the Eleven-Faced Avalokitesvara* and other sutras containing spells for charming holy water, incense, firewood, medicinal herbs, and so on.²⁰ Actually Xuanzang was among the first to introduce esoteric texts to China. He seems far more open to a wide range of Buddhist belief and practice than might be expected.

Xuanzang continued north and east to the upper Swat and Buner valleys. Alfred Foucher, who traced Xuanzang's steps for thousands of miles in these valleys and mountains south of the Oxus River, had grown accustomed to “his tastes and habits of travel, his craving for edification, his foible for monkish stories, his complete disdain of ruins, his obvious preference for beaten tracks and stages of reasonable length.”

Thanks to "the precision and honesty of [Xuanzang's] journal," Foucher was able to follow the monk's steps through Gandhara, availing himself of "the information which he has recorded and the legends which he has collected in order to determine the principal trade routes and identify the most celebrated Buddhist monuments of the country."²¹

But the upper Swat and Buner valleys were open only to diplomats and those on special missions; Alfred Foucher could not go there, so his description fits very well until the pilgrim's next explorations. Xuanzang went to the source of the Swat River, where the dragon Apalala is supposed to have lived; the pilgrim crossed a mountain range and followed the mighty Indus River, where there were no roads, no beaten tracks, only hazardous paths through gloomy gorges. On his trek he crossed "bridges of rope or iron chain; . . . bridges spanning precipices by means of pegs for steps." Modern travelers have described similar paths which are tacked to a cliff by branches and sticks pressed into cracks in the rock wall and covered by brush and rocks piled on top: These trekkers looked down *through* the path and saw the river hundreds of feet below.

Chinese travelers—just as Xuanzang and the pious old Faxian in the fourth century did—made their way along the steep escarpments of the Indus River, crawling along precipices where one false step meant a slip into eternity, or for a pilgrim like Xuanzang who believed in reincarnation, into another round of existence.²²

Their destination?²³ In the upper reaches of the Indus River northeast of the capital of Swat was "a great Monastery by the side of which is a carved wooden image . . . of Maitreya Bodhisattva of a brilliant golden hue and of miraculous powers; it is above 100 feet high; it was the work of the arhat Madhyantika who by his supernatural power thrice bore the artist to Tushita Heaven to study the beautiful Maitreyas' characteristics; the spread of Buddhism eastwards dates from the existence of this image."²⁴ This was the famous statue at Darel, which may have served as a model for the colossal Buddhas of Yungang in faraway China.²⁵

In times of distress, Xuanzang had often prayed to the Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future. So he didn't need to know, though he might have been interested, that it was in the land of Gandhara as well as the area around Mathura further south in India that the first

Bodhisattvas and the first human representations of the Buddha had been created.

What is so remarkable is that Buddha images, whether in Sri Lanka, Japan, or Indonesia, have all sprung from these first images. Before the second or third century, the Buddha had been represented for the most part by abstract symbols such as an empty throne, a stupa, a tree standing for the place where he received his Enlightenment, or a wheel signifying the Wheel of Buddhist Law, just as in early Christianity Christ was represented by a fish or a plain cross.²⁶ Interestingly enough, at the same time that these first human images of the Buddha were created, the first quasi-historical accounts of the Buddha's life were being written.²⁷ It was almost as if people were asking: "What is this Buddha? What sort of a person is he?"²⁸

Similarly, in the early stages of Christianity, Christians wrestled with the problem of the true appearance of Jesus Christ. A relic in St. Peter's Church in Rome is said to be the Veronica Veil, from the legend that a woman named Veronica gave Christ a cloth that he put to his face to contain his perspiration as he carried the cross. The imprint from his perspiration, a true picture of his face, helped to satisfy the human desire to envisage the sacred. If a deity walked on earth, people want to know what he looked like—Christians as well as Buddhists.

Xuanzang would have known many of these Gandharan images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from worshipping at stupas or monasteries where the type and form of these figures had already been established. Had he not seen that the Buddha's hair is arranged in waves with a mound of wisdom on top of his head? In order to distinguish the Buddha from other holy men, he is permitted to have wavy hair and his head is not shaved as befits ordinary monks. The eyes in these early Buddhas are open, though some of them seem to look at an indefinite space in front of them, and there is a little circle between the brows. The earlobes are distended, for he was once a prince who wore heavy earrings. Sometimes he has a mustache. A heavy monk's robe hangs in deep folds to just above his feet, or in a cross-legged Buddha, his feet may be covered completely. The hands are shown in the gestures of reassurance, meditation, preaching, or touching the earth with the right hand to call the earth to witness. Thirty-two superior and eighty inferior superhuman features are borrowed from

the ancient Indian concept of the World King. There is an unusual early dated example of a Gandhara Buddha (Fig. 4.6) in a private collection in Belgium.

It remained for later generations to suggest that irresistible combination of detachment and pent-up dynamic force which would give the Gupta Buddhas their deep religious quality.

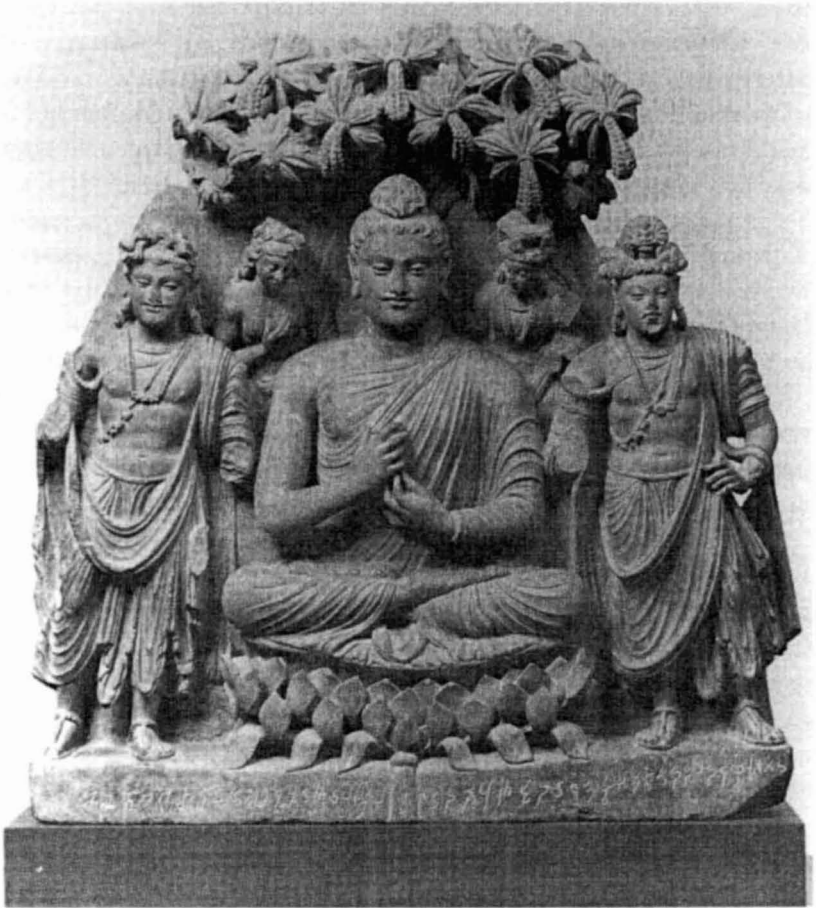


FIGURE 4.6

An early representation (dated 182 C.E.) of the Buddha flanked by a Bodhisattva and Avalokitesvara, with Brahma and Indra in the background. Figures like the seated Buddha in this relief were sources for images elsewhere in Asia.

Exploring Monuments at Taxila

How long the pilgrim spent in Swat isn't clear. Xuanzang returned on "this route of hanging chains" to the lowlands to a place where the Indus River is over one-half mile wide and the current flows very swiftly. He picked up the ancient caravan route to cross the river at Hund. The crossing could still be dangerous. "Its stream is extremely clear and rapid. Poisonous dragons and evil sprites dwell beneath this river in great numbers. Those who cross this river [in a boat] carrying with them rare gems of India, or celebrated flowers . . . or *Sariras* [the Buddha's relic bones], [may be] suddenly overwhelmed by the waves."²⁹

A modern account describing the Indus at Attock, twelve miles south-southwest of Hund, mentions how in winter the swift torrent makes a rushing, swishing noise like a big bird swooping close, but in summer with "the glacier sluice-gates open in the high mountains, the river washes fifty feet further up the cliffs and roars through like a galloping horse."³⁰

Dragons, big birds, galloping horses? The Indus River, then as now, seemed alive! On his way home to China in 645 C.E., Xuanzang's boat with many valuable manuscripts did capsize when a sudden storm sprang up. He lost many of them.

After his crossing of the Indus River, the pilgrim made his way to Taxila, which Alexander the Great had conquered in 326 B.C.E. and which Asoka had made a center of his provinces in the northwest. The valley, ten miles square, is enclosed on three sides by mountains. Perhaps, as Xuanzang made his way to the city, the roads were filled with horse-drawn carts, occasional camels, and donkeys bearing farmers kicking their flanks. Perhaps he stopped first in the bazaar in the town of Sirsukh to talk with the caravan traders about the price of food, where people had come from, where they were going, who was running things, and the local legends of the place. Or maybe he looked up to see a few monks quietly descending the rock-scarred foothills of the town to beg for food, or turned in the direction of the Jaulian Monastery to admire its golden domes and spires. That remains the best-preserved monastery in Taxila, with its many Buddhas still in place, a rewarding place to visit even now. Fragmentary birch-bark scrolls

had been found in a set of inscribed pots at Jaulian by Sir John Marshall.³¹

Did Xuanzang pick up the story of the local dragon in the bazaar or the monastery? What were his sources? How did he know how large the kingdom was? How did he come to know what there was to know about Taxila so that he could write:

This was above 2,000 *li* in circuit, the capital being above ten *li* in circuit. The chiefs were in a state of open feud, the royal family being extinguished; the country had formerly been subject to Kapisa but now it was a dependency of Kashmir; it had a fertile soil and bore good crops, with flowing streams and luxuriant vegetation; the climate was genial; and the people, who were plucky, were adherents of Buddhism. Although the Monasteries were numerous, many of them were desolate, and the Brethren, who were very few, were all Mahayanists.³²

Xuanzang stayed in Sirsukh, the last of the ancient cities of Taxila. According to the *Baedeker* of South Asia valid from the British period until 1915, the distances and directions mentioned by Xuanzang around Sirsukh could be used to guide the modern traveler. There are few examples in history of an ancient source so reliable that it was still being used after almost 1,300 years.³³

Xuanzang described several famous Buddhist monuments in the neighborhood of the city. One of these was the tank or artificial lake at Elapattra, named after a dragon king; another, across the Taxila valley, was the stupa of "the sacrificial head" said to have been built by Asoka. This is the present-day Bhallar stupa, which still stands like a mighty drum perched high on a hill.

A third monument, the Kunala stupa, presumably had been built by Asoka, too, to commemorate the spot where his son's eyes were put out. The story of Kunala was told by Xuanzang; Kunala's step-mother fell in love with him and when he rejected her advances, she induced Asoka to send him to Taxila; this wicked lady forged a letter in her husband's name and sealed it up with his teeth while he slept. The letter contained an order that Prince Kunala's eyes be put out. The king's ministers shrank from executing the order until the prince himself insisted on obedience to his father. After he was blinded, he

wandered forth with his wife and begged his way to the far-off capital of his father. When he sang and played the lute at his father's palace, his father recognized his voice and the string of his lute. The king then had the cruel and vindictive queen put to death. According to one of the many versions of the Kunala story, the prince's eyesight was restored at Bodh Gaya through the help of a Buddhist holy man.

This drama reminiscent of Hippolytus and Phaedra is said to have taken place on a rock-scarred foothill above the south end of the village of Sirkap. Steps of rock lead to the rectangular base dating from the third or fourth century C.E. Buried in the northwest corner are the remains of a tiny first-century stupa, which, in Sir John Marshall's day, stood about ten feet high. Not far away are the remains of the spacious Gaia Monastery. Xuanzang wrote that blind people used to go to this stupa to pray for the restoration of their eyesight, and many had their prayers answered. Though the Kunala stupa has crumbled, the tradition lingers; the best medical facility for curing eye patients, the Mission Hospital, is in Taxila today.³⁴

Before Xuanzang reached Kashmir, he found yet another Asoka stupa and more than ten tanks large and small. He was enchanted by what he calls "a scene of sunshine." "The banks of these tanks were of carved stone representing various forms and strange kinds of creatures. The struggling water (that is the rivers which supplied the tanks) was a clear brawling current; dragons, fish and other watery tribes moved about in its cavernous depths; lotuses of the four colours covered the surface of the clear ponds; all kinds of fruit trees grew thick making one splendour of various hues and, the brightness of the wood mixing with that of the tanks, the place was truly a pleasure-ground."³⁵

Among his many sensibilities, Xuanzang here shows, like many Chinese, a nice appreciation of nature.

Studying the Law in Kashmir

Ahead of him was Kashmir, roughly 200 miles to the northeast in the mountains. After climbing precipitous passes and traversing more chain bridges, Xuanzang seems to have gone through the Barula Gorge made by the Jhelum River flowing with "extraordinary fury

on account as the natives affirm, of its angry feeling at being obliged to quit the peaceful plains of Kashmir.”³⁶

Xuanzang was met at the inside edge of the pass by a maternal uncle of the king who had been sent to escort him to Srinagar. He spent the night at Hushkara Monastery, where, the night before his arrival, the monks had been told in a dream that a strange monk from China had come to their land to study the sacred books and adore the holy sites. When the party approached the capital, the king provided Xuanzang with an elephant upon which to make his entrance to the city. The king himself came to meet him, along with his ministers, and 1,000 Buddhist monks bearing colorful standards and parasols. The heavy fragrance of incense filled the air, and the road was strewn with flowers for his arrival. The king provided hospitality at his palace and invited Xuanzang to read and expound scriptures, giving him twenty clerks to copy out manuscripts.

Xuanzang included a short general description of Kashmir in his usual manner. The country was surrounded by high, steep mountains over which there were narrow difficult passes. The district had good agriculture and produced abundant fruit and flowers; it also yielded horses of the dragon stock, saffron, and medicinal plants. Fields of bluish purple saffron flowers with red stamens still grow in Kashmir today. The people were volatile and timid, good-looking but deceitful. “Being protected by a dragon,” the pilgrim added, “they crow over their neighbors.”³⁷

From remote times Kashmir was distinguished for its learning. Xuanzang mentions four Asoka stupas housing Buddhist relics, but he seems much less interested in visiting sacred places than previously, and is clearly challenged by the intellectual atmosphere of Kashmir. He tells us that there were five thousand Buddhist monks and one hundred monasteries. Best of all, he finds a venerable Mahayanist sage.

In the morning the sage lectured on that great treatise, the *Treasury of Buddhist Philosophy* by Vasubandhu, and, in the afternoon, on another text, which confuted this treatise. The evening was devoted to secular studies such as grammar and logic. Here was the kind of intellectual and spiritual challenge Xuanzang had been waiting for.

The Kashmiri sage spoke to the pilgrim in words that were quoted by Xuanzang’s biographer: “This priest of China possesses

wonderful (vast and immeasurable) strength of wisdom. In all this congregation there is none to surpass him. By his wisdom and his virtue he is competent to join in succession to the fame of his brother Vasubandhu. What a subject for regret, indeed! that belonging to a distant land he cannot at once form a part in the bequeathed fragrance of the saints and sages!"³⁸

Xuanzang was equally enthusiastic about the aged sage. Such a meeting of minds gives us a clue as to why Xuanzang spent two years in Kashmir, from May 631 to 633. Along with the Idealist doctrine to which he subscribed, there was also in Kashmir a thriving Realist school of Buddhism. Xuanzang was glad to study these two important and contrasting schools and to collect treatises from both to take home to China.

Not far from the Kashmir district of Jalandar, King Kanishka, with a collaboration of two celebrated patriarchs, is said to have summoned a council of 500 scholars. Xuanzang filled us in on how this might have come about.

In his leisure hours he [Kanishka] studied the Buddhist scriptures, having a monk every day in the palace to give him instruction. But as the Brethren taught him different and contradictory interpretations, owing to conflicting tenets of sectarians, the king fell into a state of hopeless uncertainty. Then the Venerable Parsva explained to His Majesty that in the long lapse of time since Buddha left the world disciples of schools and masters with various theories had arisen, all holding personal views and all in conflict. On hearing this the king was greatly moved, and expressed to Parsva his desire to restore Buddhism to eminence, and to have the Tripitaka explained according to the tenets of the various schools.³⁹

Xuanzang could appreciate the nature of Kanishka's desires, from his own anguish in trying to sort out conflicting interpretations of Buddhist texts in China.

It is said that King Kanishka had the finished treatises written out on copper plates, and enclosed them in a strong box which he deposited in a stupa made for this purpose. These have not been found and almost all information on this Fourth Buddhist Council comes from Xuanzang.⁴⁰

Tradition has it that the Buddhist Canon, the equivalent of the Scriptures for Christians, was written down in Sanskrit under Kanishka's auspices. Buddhists call this the Three Baskets or *Tripitaka*—the Sayings of the Buddha or *Sutras*, the Rules of Discipline or *Vinaya*, and the Systematic Philosophy or *Abhidharma*.

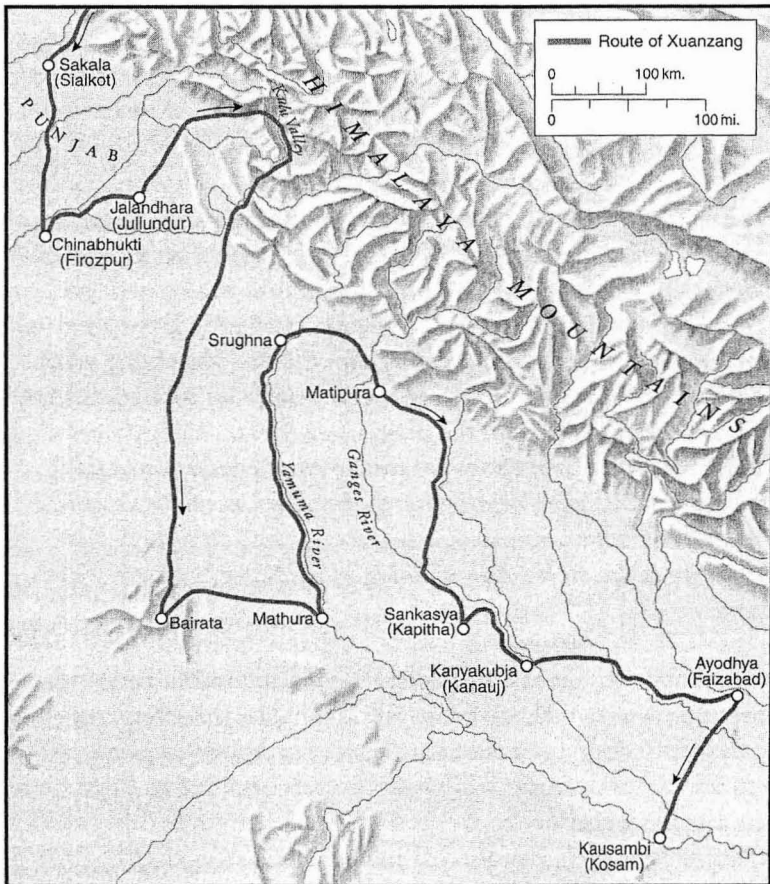
Xuanzang was also fascinated by Indian logic and studied systematic treatises dealing with logic which were almost unknown in China. India produced many systems of logic and many forms of syllogistic reasoning. The Old Logic of Vasubandhu and Asanga laid down detailed rules for conducting a debate. The New Logic, said to have been founded by Dignaga in the late fifth century C.E., simplified the set form in which an argument was to be stated. It also enumerated and defined valid and invalid inferences, means of proof etc.—the famous Thirty-Three Fallacies. A few Indian texts had been translated into Chinese, but the New Logic was Xuanzang's special gift to China.⁴¹

Xuanzang had already participated in a religious debate before the king of Kapisa, and he would do so most successfully in India before the powerful King Harsha. The rules of logic, common laws of thought, were necessary for these grand scholastic tournaments between men of differing faiths—Hindus, Buddhists, Jains who would put their case before powerful rulers who might become their patrons. This idea is partly connected with the fact that so many of the rulers of northern India had for centuries past been foreigners who had to make up their minds which sect it would be politically advantageous to support. Many Hindu and Buddhist biographies of great teachers mention such disputations in the presence of reigning monarchs.⁴²

The vale of Kashmir, with its snow-covered peaks and misty lakes, was not only a beautiful place to stay, but Xuanzang's two years there would prepare him for future studies with Buddhist philosophers, and for religious debates. He had already showed his wide-ranging intellectual interests in esoteric Buddhist texts and practices and in the New Logic. His experience in Kashmir was also a foretaste of what he would find in seventh-century India: an increasing emphasis in Buddhism on intellectualism and metaphysical inquiry.


FIVE

PHILOSOPHERS AND PIRATES IN NORTHERN INDIA



MAP 5.1

Itinerary of Xuanzang through northern India (from Kashmir to Kausambi).

 Near-calamities and unexpected dangers lay ahead of Xuanzang in northern India—hazardous paths up mountain ravines to reach the pointed conifers of the Kulu valley, and forests infested with elephants and wild beasts, on his way to Kausambi. At one moment the pilgrim would be exerting every ounce of strength to escape from a band of robbers, and the next moment he would linger with a group of monks to discuss the implications of the Buddhist doctrine of Not-Self. What was reborn if the existence of Self or soul was denied?

Fleeing from Robbers in the Punjab

633 C.E. No warning. It had been a spring day like any other. Xuanzang and his caravan descend from the vale of Kashmir to find their way down to the great Gangetic plain of north India. The setting is a forest near Sakala, present-day Sialkot; fifty robbers are lying in wait for just such a caravan. They ambush the pilgrim and his party, strip them of their clothes, steal their goods, and chase them into a dried-up marsh. The former lake enclosed by a wall of matted vines and thorns makes an ideal pen for slaughter. The brigands are already beginning to tie up some caravan members when a young monk helps Xuanzang escape. The two of them get away and seek help from a village a mile away. The rescuers from the village free those who had been tied up. Everyone is shaken by the loss of their possessions and their narrow escape from death; Xuanzang alone seems untouched by what had happened.

“Life is the most precious thing in existence,” declares Xuanzang.¹

This high degree of detachment seems unattainable or alien to most modern people, and yet Xuanzang, as his trip continued, showed this same equanimity, this extraordinary imperturbability. Even when he was captured by pirates who wanted to burn him on their altar as a sacrifice to the god Durga, he seemed above it all. As Huili put it so well, “as the turbulent waves of a river do not disturb its pure water beneath, so was he.”²

At Chinabhukti, said to correspond to modern Firozpur, just to the south of the Sutlej River, Xuanzang was pleased to study with Vinitaprabha, a north Indian prince. For more than a year (633-634), Xuanzang was able to continue his study of logic, for the prince, who was also a monk, was an authority on one of the two surviving texts of the New Logic.³ He had also written commentaries on Mahayana Buddhism, including one on the Thirty Verses. That treatise was by Vasubandhu, whose house Xuanzang had visited in Gandhara a short time before, and who was one of the founders, along with Asanga, of the school of Yogacara Idealism. An immense body of literature has grown up around these thirty verses, summing up the doctrine of the Idealists, the philosophy that was closest to Xuanzang's own personal sympathies.

Part of the background of this elusive philosophy, which applies to Buddhism generally, has to do with the doctrine of "Not-Self." In the *Questions of Milinda*, a wise monk asks a Greek Bactrian (whose views would be more materialistic and literal) to explain what a chariot is.

"Is the pole the chariot?"

"No, reverend Sir!"

"Is then the axle the chariot?"

"No, reverend Sir!"

"Is it then the wheels, or the framework, or the flag-staff or the yoke, or the reins, or the goad-stick?"

"No, reverend Sir!"

"Then is it the combination of pole, axle, wheels, framework, flagstaff, reins and goad which is the chariot?"

"No, reverend Sir!"⁴

Therefore, "chariot" is a designation, or a mere name, that has no ultimate reality. Not only is the human personality much less solid than once thought; it may indeed be a simple stream of phenomena. Another Buddhist image is that of the flame of a candle. Is the flame of the candle at the beginning of the night the same as the flame in the middle of the night and the flame in the morning?⁵

In 634, Xuanzang spent the next Rain Retreat at Jalandhara (Jullundur), the last large town in the eastern Punjab. Afterwards he

left the hot plains of northern India, crossing mountains and ravines by hazardous paths to climb up to the beautiful fir-clad Kulu valley. There he found twenty Buddhist monasteries and more than a thousand monks, mostly Hinayanists. He observed that the country produced medicinal roots of value; that gold, silver, and copper were found there; that the people were much afflicted with goiter and tumors, which is still true today in Kulu and perhaps more in the neighboring valleys. North of Kulu was the Rothund pass at 14,000 feet, and beyond were exotic lands such as Lahul and Leh in Ladakh. But the holy land of India drew him inexorably; he changed direction again to head for the torrid plains of the Punjab, and the very heartland of India, the valleys of the Yamuna (Jumna) and Ganges Rivers. These valleys, reminiscent of Mesopotamia and the rich lands between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, were very productive. And so he journeyed 2,000 *li* due south to Mathura, on the Yamuna River.

Reaching Mathura, the Heartland of India

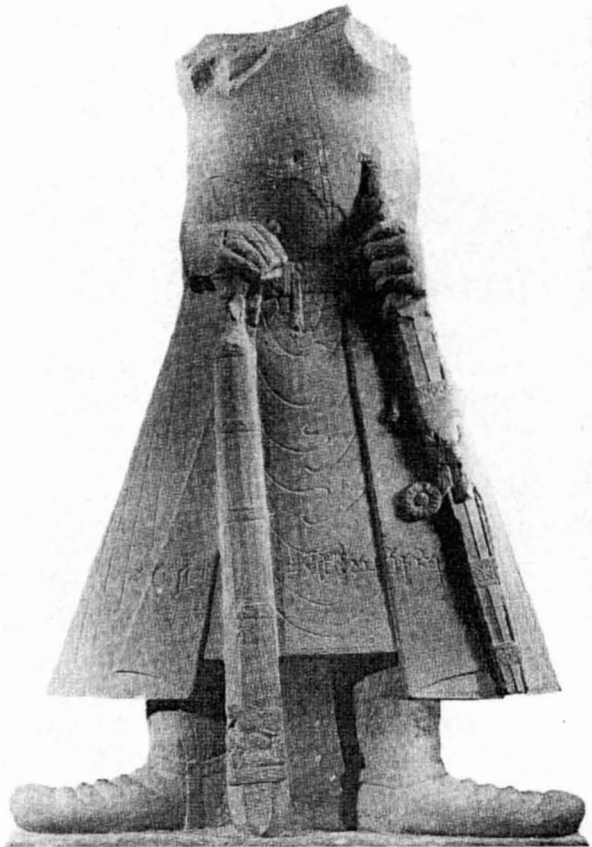
Mathura was a thriving cultural center and had also been the southern capital of King Kanishka. At Mathura Xuanzang commented: "The soil was very fertile and agriculture was the chief business." He found two kinds of mangoes. "The country produced also a fine striped cotton cloth and gold; its climate was hot; the manners and customs of the people were good; the people believe in the working of karma and paid respect to moral and intellectual eminence."⁶ Culturally, Mathura was a Hindu center, even though Xuanzang said that there were two thousand monks of both Buddhist branches along with the Hindus.

The land was very flat. Buddhist monasteries could no longer be on a cliff, ridge, or mountain by a river overlooking the city as they usually were. Most of them seem to have been in a large semi-circle on the west side of the Yamuna River. The old town, according to this interpretation, was probably located ten miles from the present city. Among the finds in the Mathura museum are huge symbolic begging bowls, which may have stood in front of these monasteries, containers that replaced individual begging bowls of the monks and

that were not so much for food as perhaps for collecting alms for the monks.⁷

Xuanzang had been following the career of King Kanishka in what is now Afghanistan and Pakistan. When he stayed at the Monastery of the Hostages, he learned of the king's kindness in caring for his Chinese forerunners. In what is present-day Pakistan Xuanzang first heard the story of King Kanishka's conversion to Buddhism and saw the ruins of the stupa built by the king, said to have been the tallest Buddhist structure in Asia. An impressive statue of King Kanishka himself (Fig. 5.1), with an inscription incised in the king's mantle identifying him as "The Great King, King of Kings, His Majesty Kanishka," is in the Mathura museum.

FIGURE 5.1
Headless statue of King Kanishka, in ceremonial dress, with an inscription visible on his long-skirted coat. The Government Museum, Mathura.



The statue, built on a larger-than-life scale, is now headless. The king's powerful hands rest on his sword and mace. If one looks at coins with portraits of Kanishka that are similar to this statue, one can with half-closed eyes easily add a massive bearded head crowned by a tall cap. The king, with his long-skirted coat and heavy padded boots with spurs, would have been most uncomfortable in the steaming heat of Mathura. His ceremonial dress was imported from the steppes, the original home of this nomadic Kushan dynasty. A seated statue of his father shows the same authority and primitive strength.

The sculptors of Mathura also created the earliest entirely Indian representation of the Buddha (Fig. 5.2). Whether this figure is earlier than or contemporary with the Gandharan image is a question of endless discussion among art historians. In the first centuries of the common era, these early Buddhas were depicted somewhat as



FIGURE 5.2
*Seated Buddha from
Katra Mound, Mathura
(second century C.E.).
This prototype—a
cross-legged figure in
yogic meditation posture—is an excellent
example of an entirely
Indian representation
of the Buddha.
The Government
Museum, Mathura.*

archetypal Indian sages seated with crossed legs in yogic meditation. Xuanzang might have seen them in the twenty Buddhist monasteries he mentions as being in Mathura.⁸

In Mathura, in spite of foreign invaders—Greek, Scythian, Parthian, and Kushan—Indian classical art, the art of the Guptas (c. 320–480 C.E.) was born. Earlier Kushan Buddhas, with their eyes wide open, *look out* at the world, but during the Gupta years the Buddhas, with half-open eyes, begin to *look inward* at the heart, suggesting inward vision and serenity. The Buddhas carved at Mathura in the fourth and fifth centuries were the first to express a higher transcendental wisdom and compassion that would reach its height at Sarnath.

Mathura is a place of sacred remembrance for Hindus and Jains as well as Buddhists. Hindus regard it as the fatherland of their god Krishna, whose worship, during the era of Xuanzang's travels, was gradually replacing Buddhism. An earlier Chinese pilgrim, the pious Faxian, visited Mathura during the reign of Chandragupta II (375–413), at a time when both Brahmanism and Buddhism were lavishly patronized by the Gupta court. In this golden age of Indian culture there was a flowering of art, literature, science, and religion. Alas, few Buddhist structures remain standing today, even sufficiently intact to provide a ground plan, so complete was the destruction by Islamic invaders. Archaeologists as recently as 1976 were still uncovering large Buddha statues from mounds in the area.

As Xuanzang drew closer and closer to the cradle of Buddhism near Benares he stopped again for a winter and the early part of the following spring at Srughna (634–635) on the upper reaches of the Yamuna River. There he paused to acquaint himself with the thinking of yet another Hinayana Buddhist sect. Traditionally, Buddhist monks pursue serious studies during the rainy season, but Xuanzang seized every opportunity to learn.

The Rain Retreat varies from country to country; in India it is usually around the middle of June, although it may be a month later when the countryside becomes flooded and torrents of rain oppress the earth. A very ancient practice, it is still the rule observed by monks in all Asian countries to take up residence around this time. Initially monks were peripatetic and participated in settled community life

only during the three months of the Rain Retreat, when wandering was difficult. Gradually monasteries developed for year-round use on land given to them by pious laymen or Buddhists.⁹

Seeing the Sacred Ganges River

A journey to the southeast of the Yamuna River brought Xuanzang and his party to Matipura, where he stayed the spring and summer of 635 on the Ganges River. The most sacred river in India, the Ganges rises in the foothills of the Himalayas and flows 1,500 miles east to the Bay of Bengal. Xuanzang observed that it is about three or four *li* wide in its upper reaches, wherefrom it flowed to the sea, where it is roughly ten *li* in width. The “waters of the river vary in color and great waves rise in it: there are many marvelous creatures in it but they do not injure any one; its waters have a pleasant sweet taste and a fine sand comes down with the current.”¹⁰

Xuanzang reported that the Ganges was called “The Water of Felicity,” but he dismissed as superstition the belief that the sins of those who bathe in it are erased or that those who drowned themselves in it are reborn in heaven with happiness. His usual tolerance didn’t extend so far.¹¹

Upon learning that the Ganges is the cradle of Indian civilization, he may have remembered the Yellow River of his own country, often called the womb of Chinese civilization. And when he thought of his own country, as the Chinese saying has it, “his heart touched on 10,000 things.”

Thirteen hundred years later, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India, asked that after his death a handful of his ashes be thrown in the river at the sacred confluence of the Yamuna and Ganges Rivers at Allahabad, to be carried to the great ocean that washes India’s shores. In his will dated 21 June 1954, Nehru said that the Ganges especially was “the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats.”¹²

For Nehru the river was ever changing, ever flowing, yet ever the same. It reminded him of the Himalayas and the snow-covered

peaks and deep valleys and the rich plains below where he had lived and worked. He saw the river as smiling and dancing in the morning, and dark and "full of mystery as the evening shadows fall." And he contrasted the Ganges in winter and when the river was in full spate during the monsoon: "broad-bosomed, almost as the sea with something of the sea's power to destroy." For Nehru, the Ganges was "the symbol and memory of the past of India, running into the present and flowing on to the future."¹³

Paying Reverence at the Heavenly Staircase

When Xuanzang thanked the King of Turfan in a gracious letter for his many gifts in 629–630, he said that it was time for him to go to "the Land of the Heavenly Ladder and the Bodhi tree," where the Buddha received enlightenment. As the pilgrim journeyed beside the Ganges River, always bearing toward the southeast, he felt a deep yearning to visit Sankasya (Kapitha), which even now is one of eight traditional places of pilgrimage for all Buddhists. Four great pilgrimage sites were so proclaimed—where the Buddha was born, at Lumbini; where he received Enlightenment, at Bodh Gaya; where he preached his First Sermon, at Sarnath; and where he died, at Kusinagara.¹⁴ Gradually four other sites came to assume importance as well. These were where the Buddha performed the Great Miracle, at Sravasti; where he tamed the wild elephant, at Rajagriha; where the monkey gave him a gift of honey, at Vaisali; and where the Buddha descended from heaven, at Sankasya, the land of the Heavenly Ladder.

"To visit the scenes of the eight great events is to experience in a direct way the life of the Buddha as both a demonstration of his perfection and the perfection of all Buddhas."¹⁵ So says the Mahayanist doctrine. Xuanzang believed in these miracles; he simply saw no reason why the spiritual should be powerless in the material world.

At Sankasya, so the legend repeated by Xuanzang goes, the Buddha descended from heaven after preaching to his mother (Fig. 5.3). "Then Indra, by his divine power, set up the triple stairs of precious substances, the middle one of gold, the left one of crystal, and the right one of silver. The Buddha descended on the middle stair, Brahma

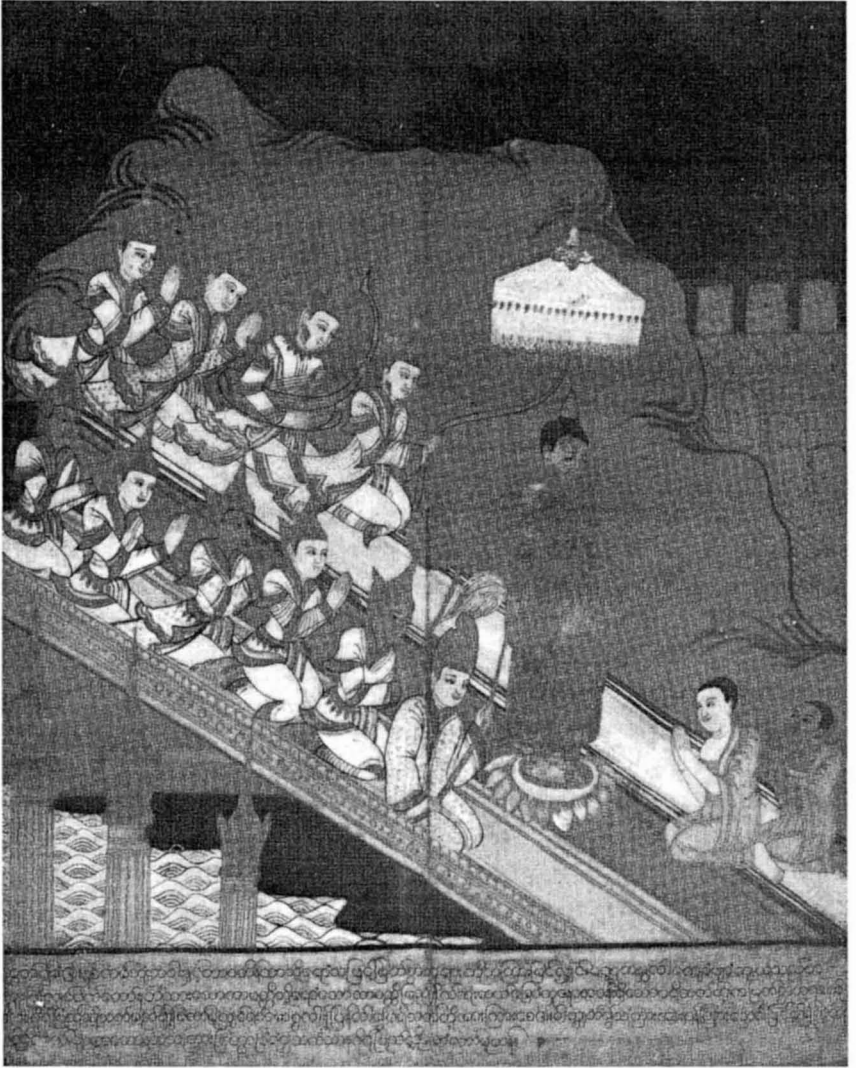


FIGURE 5.3

Illustrated paper book in seventy folds, with Burmese text of the miracle at Sankasya of the Buddha descending from heaven after preaching to his mother. Xuanzang visited the site of this miracle, which is one of the eight places of traditional pilgrimage for all Buddhists, even now. The British Library.

holding a white whisk came down with him on the right stair, and Indra holding up a jeweled sunshade descended on the left stair, while devas in the air scattered flowers and praised the Buddha.”¹⁶ The legend may be interpreted to mean that the Buddha is superior to the Hindu gods because Indra and Brahma are his attendants. The legend also answers to the human need that is expressed in Christianity in the words of the hymn, “Descend to us, we pray.” Perhaps it is also analogous to the Ascension of Christ; both miracles describe the movement from an earthly to a heavenly realm.

Xuanzang wanted to obtain a model of the Buddha descending from Heaven to the temple at Sankasya. He found a large silver one, more than four feet tall. This was the second in his collection of seven famous images of the Buddha, a collection that he would take all the way back to China with him.

By Xuanzang’s time, later kings had reconstructed the precious stairs, in stone and brick ornamented with various gems, to a height of seventy feet. Over the stairs a temple was built; it had in it a stone image of the Buddha and figures of Brahma and Indra. Little remains at the present time except for the ruins of the Stupa of the Triple Stairs and an impressive Asoka pillar with a crouching elephant on top.¹⁷

Visiting King Harsha’s Kingdom

From this famous pilgrimage site of Sankasya, Xuanzang went south to the Region of Kanyakubja (Kanauj) where the capital of King Harsha was located. It was on the Ganges River, about fifty miles south of present-day Cawnpore. The great King Harsha (607–647), uniter of northern India, was away at the time. Xuanzang found evidence of his energy and imagination on every side. His capital had lofty walls and solid trenches and was strongly defended. Yet there was a sensitivity to beauty, too. Attractive gardens, artificial lakes of clear waters as well as impressive towers and pavilions were everywhere. The people were largely traders. The rarest wares from other lands were to be found in Kanyakubja, and families of great wealth lived there. They had a refined appearance and dressed in glossy

silks; many were given to learning and the arts. Only Chang'an or Luoyang in China could compare to it.

Xuanzang found one hundred Buddhist monasteries of both Buddhist faiths housing ten thousand monks (the largest number he had encountered in his travels in a long time), as well as two hundred deva temples. Everything he saw and heard showed that King Harsha was a patron of Buddhism; he had grown as fond of the grand processions of religion and of religious debates as he had been formerly of the magnificent stern array of battle and the glories of military victory.¹⁸

Xuanzang learned of the murder of the king's brother and the details of his coming to power. "The people having lost their ruler, the country became desolate. Then the great minister Po-ni (*Bhandi*) whose power and reputation were high and of much weight, addressing the assembled ministers, said, 'The destiny of the nation is to be fixed to-day. The old king's son is dead; the brother of the prince, however, is humane and affectionate, and his disposition, heaven-conferred, is dutiful and obedient. Because he is strongly attached to his family, the people will trust in him.'"¹⁹

Harsha was reluctant to become king in spite of his public support, and fasted and prayed to a Bodhisattva statue on the banks of the Ganges River before he accepted the throne.

As soon as Siladitya [Harsha] became ruler he got together a great army, and set out to avenge his brother's murder and to reduce the neighboring countries to subjection. Proceeding eastwards he invaded the states which had refused allegiance, and waged incessant warfare until in six years he had *fought* the Five Indias. . . . Then having enlarged his territory he increased his army, bringing the elephant corps up to 60,000 and the cavalry to 100,000, and reigned in peace for thirty years without raising a weapon.²⁰

Xuanzang also learned that the usual practice was to make this huge corps of elephants drunk before they engaged in battle.

King Harsha, having been ruler of a small state in the upper Ganges valley, had forged an empire by 612 C.E. and was regarded as "the lord of the entire north" of India. The kings of Assam and

Gujarat also accepted his sovereignty, and his army advanced as far as the snowy mountains of Tokharistan, in modern-day Afghanistan.

Xuanzang reported that during the years of peace the king devoted one-third of his time to affairs of state and two-thirds to religious work, the latter including the daily feeding of five hundred Brahmins in addition to one thousand Buddhist monks, and establishing travelers' rests throughout his dominions. These were regarded as acts of spiritual merit. He was given credit for being one of the major benefactors of Nalanda Monastery. Like Asoka and Kanishka before him, he took an active part in the life of Buddhist institutions. He assembled the monks of all of India, discussing points of doctrine with them as well as strengthening their faith. Like Asoka, he constructed thousands of stupas and monasteries and attempted to forbid the slaughter of animals. Every five years he held a great alms giving to which he invited the poor of every faith and the clergy of every religion; it was similar to the ceremony Xuanzang had encountered at Bamiyan, only much grander.

The monks were enthusiastic about this generous benefactor. So too, presumably, were men of letters whom he encouraged and rewarded as well. All signs, all evidence pointed to a humane, intellectually curious man of versatile interests, a great king whom Xuanzang would call the Sun of Virtue.²¹

Gradually during the three months he stayed in Kanyakubja in 635, Xuanzang was able to build up a portrait of this patron and great king whom he would meet after he had traveled the length and breadth of India for fourteen years. When they did meet finally in 642, the king was very impressed by Xuanzang and staged a grand debate to honor the pilgrim, which was one of the major triumphs of his journey.

Xuanzang spent his first visit, while the king was absent, reading the commentaries on the standard works of the Hinayana Realist school. It seems strange that Xuanzang, who regarded Hinayana Buddhism as incomplete and elementary, spent so much time studying its texts. Perhaps he realized that in order to make his mark in India, he had to be skillful against all opponents. "Complete understanding of an opponent's arguments," Arthur Waley suggested, "was one of the twenty-seven 'points' by which speeches were

judged.”²² It might also have been that Hinayana sources were easier to come by.

Pursuing Philosophy and Escaping from Pirates in Ayodhya

Xuanzang was eager to go to Ayodhya, ancient Saketa, for this was the home of Mahayana Idealism, the fountainhead of Yogacara Buddhism. Just south of the capital he found the ancient monastery in a mango grove where the brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu had composed their sutras and expounded Yogacara idealism in the fifth century. When the two brothers had come from the land of Gandhara to Ayodhya, Vasubandhu still remained faithful to many Hinayanist ideas. His conversion to the pure idealism of the Mahayana came about at the monastery of the mango trees next to the river, where, in Nehru's words, “the Ganges is full of mystery as the evening shadows fall.”

Asanga arranged a meeting place with his brother at the mango tree monastery.

At nightfall he led him onto a terrace which overlooked the river, and then withdrew. It was a cloudless autumn night, and the moon was shining on the water. A voice rose, an unknown voice reading a Mahayanist treatise. Doubtless it was speaking of the freeing of the spirit for its flight on the wings of idealism. According to this fluid and luminous theory, the world of forms was destined to vanish away, as at this moment the appearance of earth and water were floating in the lunar haze of the Gogra [Ganges]. Above vain material things, beyond all that was concrete, a dream was filling the Indian night; objects were no more than this—the dream of a dream. The ideality of the universe was taking the place of the material cosmos, and under this new aspect all was becoming intelligible, accessible and possible.²³

Vasubandhu understood at last the beauty of the Idealist philosophy of his brother Asanga. According to that philosophy, the ideality of the universe takes the place of the material world. For example: “In a picture painted according to the rules, there is nei-

ther hollow nor raised part, and yet one sees them; thus in our imagination there is never duality and yet one sees it.²⁴

In this *Mind Only* philosophy it would seem that external reality becomes a dream, a mirage, a cloud. Vasubandhu said that “[n]o doubt things are unreal (*niratmanas*) with regard to that reality (*atman*) that exists in nature proper, but they are not without existence in the indescribable manner of being which is of the domain of the Buddhas.”²⁵ The word “yogacara” actually means “the practice of yoga.” And so we move from Idealist philosophy, into the world of mysticism.

Perhaps that is why the Bodhisattva Maitreya, or Buddha of the Future, and the Yogacara Idealists have a special affinity for each other. Followers of the cult of Maitreya, our pilgrim among them, believed that the meritorious would go to the Tushita Heaven to await rebirth in a joyous new age. Xuanzang himself tells the legend of how Asanga went to the Tushita Heaven at night where the Maitreya dictated to him the Sanskrit text, now known as the *Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice*. Scholars surmise that in fact Asanga received the words from a historical person, presumably his teacher, who happened to bear the name of Maitreya.²⁶ Xuanzang’s own translation was made about 647.

Xuanzang was closer to his paradise than he realized; a dramatic incident took place which very nearly put an end to his journey.

636 C.E. Any week. Time is unimportant to the unsuspecting pilgrim. The banks of the Ganges River. The pilgrim is going with eighty people in a boat down the river. Ten boats filled with pirates attack and force them ashore. Then they notice how handsome Xuanzang is, and decide that he is the perfect specimen for their annual sacrifice of human flesh and blood to their god Durga. But Xuanzang appeals to their chief: “If this poor and defiled body is suitable for sacrifice, then I dare not grudge this offering. As my intention in coming such a distance is to pay reverence to the image of the Buddha and to inquire as to the character of the Sacred Books and Buddhist doctrine, if you kill this body of mine, I fear it will bring you misfortune.”

The pirate captain pays no heed and orders his men to tie up the pilgrim. Xuanzang makes one last request, that he be given

time to compose his thoughts. Then the pilgrim, with undivided mind, thinks on the Bodhisattva Maitreya and earnestly prays to be born in the Tushita Heaven that he may hear the most holy words of Buddhism and attain perfect understanding, so that he might take his departure with a joyous spirit. Exalted by joy, he is oblivious of the altar on which he is about to be sacrificed.

Suddenly a black typhoon arises. The pirates are terrified by this miracle. "Who is this man?" they ask.

*When they are told that Xuanzang is a famous monk from China, the pirates ask his forgiveness. Xuanzang pardons them, inviting them to change their ways. Then and there the pirates take vows to become lay members of the Buddhist community.**

David Eckel, in his *To See the Buddha*, suggests that embedded in this story "is a model of meditation that transports Xuanzang 'in his mind' beyond this world into the presence of Maitreya in the palace of Tushita Heaven."²⁷ What is so revealing is that although Xuanzang had a reputation as an accomplished philosopher, when the pirates are about to sacrifice him to their god, he does not concentrate on Emptiness as a concept of Yogacara philosophy. At crucial times of his life such as when he lies dying, he goes back to his devotion to the Maitreya and visualizing the Tushita Heaven where the Maitreya resides. And when one of his disciples at his deathbed asks if he would be reborn in the Tushita Heaven, he replies, "Quite certain."

After this high drama, the pilgrim and his party, their gear having been returned by the pirates, made their way to the confluence of the sacred Yamuna and the sacred Ganges rivers at what is now Allahabad.

Finding the Sandalwood Image at Kausambi

Before Xuanzang reached the true holy land of Buddhism, his last important stop was at Kausambi. He had to pass through forests

*Beal, *Life*, 86; and Li Yongshi, trans., *The Life of Hsuan-tsang*, by Hui-li (Peking: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959), 85.

filled with wild elephants to visit that ancient Gupta capital. There by the Yamuna River he was shown a large Buddhist temple more than sixty feet high in which there was a sandalwood image of the Buddha with a stone canopy suspended over it.

"This image made miraculous manifestations, and no power could move it from its place: so paintings made of it were worshipped, and *all true likenesses of the Buddha have been taken from this image,*" Xuanzang observed.²⁸ It was said to have been made for King Udayana during the three-month period that the Buddha was in heaven preaching to his mother.

According to tradition, the king, thinking of the Buddha with affection, requested that one of the Buddha's disciples by his spiritual power transport an artist to heaven to observe the excellent marks on the Buddha's body and carve a sandalwood statue. The artist did so, and when the Lord of the World descended to earth near Sankasya, the carved sandalwood statue rose and saluted the Buddha. Whereupon the Buddha graciously said, "The work expected of you is to toil in the conquest of heretics and to lead in the way of religion in future ages," that is, the task of spreading his teaching among future generations.

A touching representation of a king presenting just such an image to the Buddha (Fig. 5.4) is housed in the Peshawar Museum.

Xuanzang saw to it that a model of the Udayana sandalwood image, two feet nine inches tall with a shining pedestal, was carefully packed in his baggage. Sandalwood, the yellowish heartwood of an Indo-Malayan tree (*Santalum album*) is much used in oriental carving; the wood itself is fragrant with an unmistakable aroma of spices from Asia. This was the third in his collection of seven famous Buddha images that he would take back to China.

Xuanzang had already collected two replicas of the Buddha. His first sandalwood image was modeled after the Buddha of the Shadow Cave in Jalalabad in present-day Afghanistan; it would forever call to mind his own rapture at seeing the Buddha there. At Sankasya, in northern India, he had obtained a second statue, a large silver one of the Buddha descending the staircase from heaven. And now he had the most famous of all images, the Udayana image, whose iconographic type still exists in Japan. These and other portable images were one of the means by which



FIGURE 5.4
King Udayana presenting to the Buddha the sandalwood Udayana image, carved by an artist sent to heaven while the Buddha was there. The British Museum.

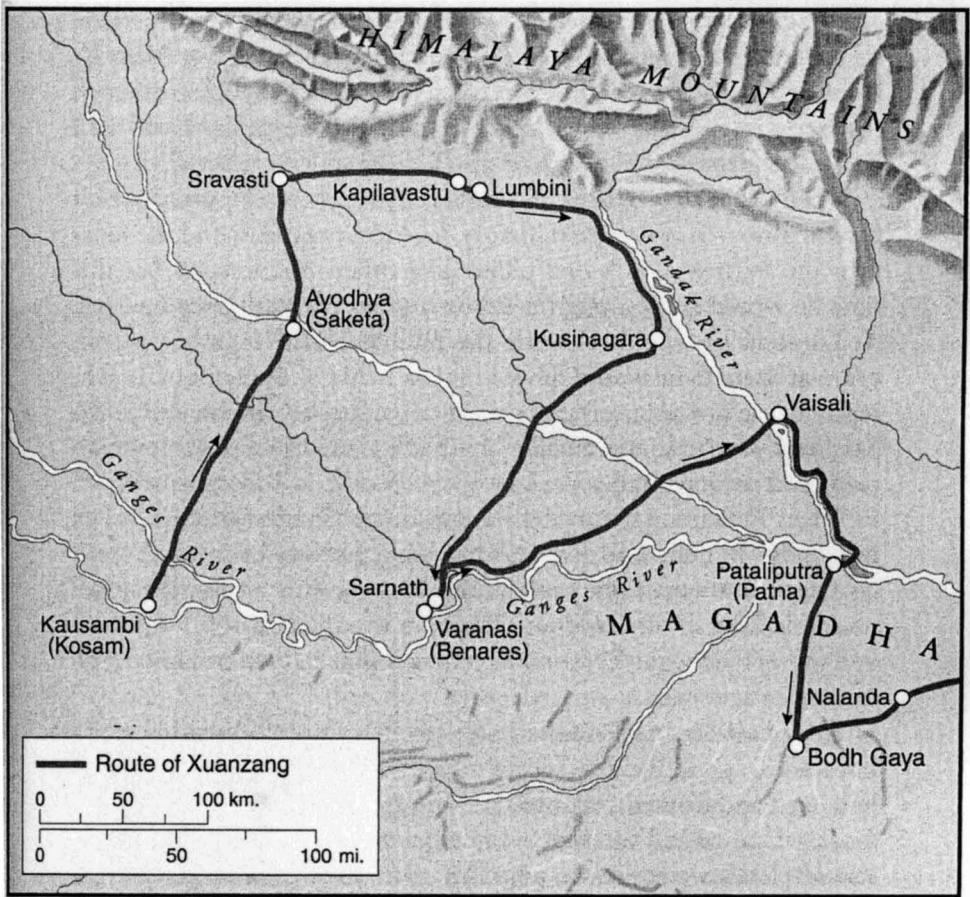
the styles of Indian art were introduced into the Far East.²⁹ It wasn't that Xuanzang was the first to bring them, for the Udayana First Image was well known in the Six Dynasties period (489–581 C.E.) in China. However, the classical Gupta images were very beautiful and Xuanzang's reputation gave them added importance.

Apparently the greatest asset in a Buddha image was an origin in India, "the homeland of faith and magic, and a link of some sort, the closer the better, with the person of the historic *Sakyamuni* [Buddha]."³⁰ Often those that were supposed to work the greatest miracles were found under mysterious circumstances.

Xuanzang's images were not of this sort, but he seems to have had a special feeling for them. After his return to China he had 200 images executed in the dry lacquer technique. Many years later

when he knew that he would die and his disciples asked him to translate yet another Buddhist text, he refused. "Let us go instead to the Orchid and Mushroom valley so that I may say goodbye to my Buddhas."³¹ He set out with his fellow monks and it was with tears in their eyes that they watched him perform his devotions. This quality of piety would be apparent as he traveled in the holy land of Buddhism.

THE BUDDHIST HOLY LAND



MAP 6.1

Itinerary of Xuanzang in the Buddhist holy land (from Kausambi to Bodh Gaya).

When he was a young man, Xuanzang had once been so absorbed in reading the *Sutra of the Glorious Decease* that he forgot to sleep. "There are four places," the Buddha is supposed to have said in this sutra, "which the believing man should visit with feelings of reverence and awe"—where the Buddha was born, where he received enlightenment, where he preached the first sermon, and where he died.¹

The sites associated with the main events of the Buddha's life—Lumbini with his birth, Bodh Gaya with his enlightenment, Sarnath with his first sermon, and Kusinagara with his death—gradually became places of pilgrimage.² Xuanzang had been to the site of the descent from heaven, one of the lesser sites, at Sankasya. Now he would go to each of the four sacred places as well as three other of the lesser sites, where the Buddha performed miracles. He would write about the sacred traces of the Buddha in loving detail.

When Xuanzang visited these sacred sites he went usually as a careful observer of Buddhist history, legends, practices, and the location and existence of Asoka pillars and other monuments. But this time he would go as a pilgrim expressing his own religious feelings. At Lumbini he would celebrate the Buddha's birth as a joyous pilgrim; at Sarnath he would have a replica made of the famous Teaching Buddha; at Kusinagara he would remember a Chinese tree at the Sal grove where the Buddha died; at Bodh Gaya he would weep with profound emotion under the tree of the Buddha's Enlightenment.

When Xuanzang went farther down the Ganges/Jamuna valley where the Buddha had lived for so long, he had been on his pilgrimage for almost eight years; now at last he was approaching the true holy land of the Buddha.³ There he would forget about pirates and metaphysics, the abstruse arguments that had so occupied him in the last few years.

To walk where the Buddha had walked and performed his many miracles; to go to the very places where he had been born, where he had lived and worked and died, and the greatest shrine of all at Bodh Gaya where he had received enlightenment under the Bo tree; these sacred places would be the pilgrim's goal. He would be pursuing a different kind of understanding, the kind that begins with God's word to Moses: "Take off your shoes. You are on holy ground."

He knew the stories of the Buddha's life from his fifteen years of study in Chinese monasteries; he learned more details from reading pious Faxian's account of his western journey. He was reminded of each incident in that life from the cycle of Buddhist legends portrayed on monastery stupas, pillars, and walls in every land he visited. And as he went from one pilgrimage place to another, he was responding to the compass of the heart.

As usual, his account begins with geographical facts about the kingdom he was passing through and data on the number of worshippers and what sect they belonged to. But such mundane matters paled in the face of the great mystical drama of the Buddha's life. Spiritual realities, as so often happens in India, tend to overwhelm the particularity of historical details. And so we have what is called *The Buddha Legend*, wonderfully conceived, whether we accept it literally as religious truth as Xuanzang did, or whether we understand it as myth or symbolic truth.

Beholding the Site of the Great Miracle at Sravasti

After Kausambi, Xuanzang changed direction. He was eager to go north to the place where the Buddha had been born in Lumbini. His first stop on the way was Sravasti, in the present Sahet Mahet District. While the Buddha was alive, it had been the capital of King Prasenajit. Xuanzang viewed the ruins of the king's palace and the foundations of a preaching hall that the king erected for the Buddha. Among the many monasteries he saw in ruins, Xuanzang mentioned only one by name, the Jetavana Monastery. On this site he found a brick shrine that contained an image of the Buddha commissioned by King Prasenajit. It was a five-foot-high copy of the image made for King Udayana of Kausambi.

At the Jetavana Monastery, the Buddha had established a monastic community, and also had given his consent for women to form their own community of nuns. Jetavana Monastery was in a beautiful park not far from Sravasti. Xuanzang related how it was that a wealthy layman named Sudatta acquired the site not far from

Sravasti for the new Buddhist community. The only piece of available land was owned by Prince Jetavana.

When the Elder asked the prince to sell his park the prince said joking—"Yes, for as many gold coins as will cover it." This answer delighted Sudatta, and he at once proceeded to cover the ground with gold coins from his treasury. When all the ground except a small piece was covered the prince asked Sudatta to desist, saying: "The Buddha truly is an excellent field, it is meet I sow good seed": so on the uncovered ground he erected a temple.⁴

Xuanzang reported that near Jetavana park King Prasenajit held a magic contest between the Buddha and six leaders of various sects. The Buddha had overwhelmed them all. This is his only reference to the famous miracles at Sravasti which are so often depicted in Buddhist art. One of these portrayals is of the Buddha with flames issuing from his shoulders and streams of water coming from his feet, symbolizing his victory over fire and water. An even more popular miracle is that of the Buddha multiplying himself thousands of times.⁵

The miracle which is supposed to have taken place at Sravasti, one of the required pilgrimage sites, is similar to the Buddha's descent from heaven at Sankasya, the first of the eight places of pilgrimage visited by Xuanzang. Both have a kind of psychological or inner truth to them; the truth of the understanding that a holy image can be infinite and everywhere at once.

Guided by the footsteps of the Historical Buddha, Xuanzang explored the places where so many of his teachings had taken place. Xuanzang visited the site of the Angulimala stupa named after the wicked man who had massacred people, cutting off a finger from each of his victims in order to make "a finger-garland necklace" for himself. When Angulimala was about to kill the Buddha's mother, the Buddha took his mother's place and not only convinced the murderer to repent but inspired him to become a devout monk. Near the grounds of the Jetavana Monastery Xuanzang also saw the stupa that marked the spot where the Buddha had cured a sick monk and restored the eyesight of the criminals arrested by King Prasenajit, who had been punished by having their eyes put out.

Although both Xuanzang and his predecessor Faxian were intent on learning about Buddhist philosophy or monastic rules, they were often chiefly observant of the stories and miracles of Buddhist lore. Both described at length the seemingly bottomless chasms that were supposed to show where the Buddha had vanquished his enemies and consigned them to these fathomless depths of hell. There had been several of these unfortunate people—the woman who sought to slander the Buddha saying that he was the father of her child, and his cousin Devadatta, the Judas Iscariot of Buddhism, who had put poison under his nails while in the act of paying respect, in order to kill him.

The Buddha stayed at Sravasti for the Rain Retreats during twenty-five years. Unfortunately little stands now but a few low walls, stupas, and mounds of earth. The area has only been partially excavated, although it was here that many of the teachings of the Buddha were offered for the first time.⁶

Seeking the Sacred Traces at Kapilavastu and Lumbini

As Xuanzang approached Kapilavastu and Lumbini, the long-familiar tales and legends of the Buddha's life and death must have been uppermost in his mind and heart. In order to reach his Kapilavastu, Xuanzang had to travel northeast to what is known as the Terai, a semi-tropical area in southern Nepal in the foothills of the Himalayas. He found the countryside very fertile and the monasteries deserted.

With reverence and with awe, he sought the sacred traces of the Buddha. Within the walls of Kapilavastu, the kingdom where the Buddha had been born and had grown up, Xuanzang located a number of hallowed sites.⁷ Among them were the ruins of the palace of the Buddha's father, King Suddhodana, and a dilapidated foundation, which was supposed to have been the sleeping palace of his mother, Queen Maya.

Inside the shrine Xuanzang saw a representation of the white elephant descending from heaven. The conception of the Buddha had been miraculous, like that of Christ. During the night of the full

moon in August, Queen Maya had dreamed that she saw a small white elephant entering her right side (Fig. 6.1). When she related the dream to her husband, he and his ministers knew at once that she would give birth to an extraordinary human being, for a white elephant was part of the patrimony of a universal king.

To the northeast of the palace of “spiritual conception,” Xuanzang found the stupa that marked the place where the astrologer Asiti cast the horoscope of the royal prince. On the day of the Buddha’s birth, King Suddhodana had summoned all his soothsayers, for he had wanted to know what were the lucky and what were the unlucky signs. The answer came that if his son remained in secular life he would be a universal king, and if he left home, he would be a Buddha. It was a prophecy the king would heed well, though he would prove powerless to affect the outcome.

Before Xuanzang reached the place of the Buddha’s actual birth in Lumbini Garden, he stopped on the hallowed ground of the stupa



FIGURE 6.1

Schist bas relief of the Dream of Maya from Takht-ti Babi Monastery in Pakistan. The conception of the Buddha took place when Maya, his mother, saw in a dream an elephant enter her right side. The British Museum.

that marked the foreshadowing of the enlightenment of the Future Buddha, which is told in many Buddhist books. "This is the spot where the prince sat in the shade of a tree to watch the ploughing festival. Here he engaged in profound meditation and reached the condition of 'absence of desire.' The king seeing the prince in the shade of the tree and engrossed in quiet contemplation, and observing that whilst the sun's rays shed their bright light around him, yet the shadow of the tree did not move, his heart, recognizing the spiritual character of the prince, was deeply reverent."⁸

Perhaps by this supernatural demonstration the king had known that he could not contain his son within the palace walls. The young Buddha-to-be, like the young Jesus in the temple, would have a life that would be different from that of other men.

At the southeast gate of Kapilavastu, Xuanzang found a shrine that must have been especially poignant to him. It was the place where the young prince, having left the luxurious life of the royal palace, had seen for the first time an old man, a sick man, a dead man, and a monk. This fateful encounter had led directly to what is known as the Great Departure from his father's kingdom.

Always Xuanzang traveled toward Lumbini, the most sacred place in the region, nine or ten miles east of Kapilavastu.⁹ How his steps must have quickened when he saw the beautiful bathing tank there, and about twenty-four paces from it, the old Asoka tree where the Buddha had been born into the world. Nearby he saw a broken pillar, and then came closer to see the figure of a horse on top. It was a pillar placed there by King Asoka and there was an inscription on it stating that King Asoka had worshipped in the twenty-first year of his reign on the very spot where the Buddha had been born. This pillar had been completely engulfed by the jungle until it was discovered by the archaeologist Alois Fuhrer in 1895, thus verifying the exact location of the park of Lumbini.

According to tradition, Queen Maya went to this pleasure ground in May 563 B.C.E. The birth took place as she stood erect in an attitude popularized by sculpture, under an Asoka tree, grasping a branch in her right hand. The newborn baby came out of her right side and was immediately caught by the gods who had gathered for the event. And the gods said, "The queen may rejoice indeed at having given birth to such a fortunate child." The heavenly

kings proclaimed, "If the gods rejoiced at the event, how much more should men!"

Xuanzang continued: "When Bodhisattva was born, he walked without assistance in the direction of the four quarters, seven paces in each direction, and said 'I am the only lord in heaven and earth; from this time forth my births are finished.' Where his feet had trod there sprang up great lotus flowers. Moreover, two dragons sprang forth, and, fixed in the air, poured down the one a cold and the other a warm water stream from his mouth to wash the prince."¹⁰

Xuanzang mentioned that near the Asoka pillar, there was a small stream flowing to the southeast that the people called the oil river. He explained that it was originally a tank of pure oil liquid created by the gods for the use of Buddha's mother after the birth of her son, and he added that they had changed the tank back to a stream of water which still retained its oily character.¹¹

Paying Reverence at Kusinagara, Where the Buddha Died

After Lumbini, the pilgrim road would take him in early 637 to Kusinagara, where the Buddha had died. Kusinagara has been identified with the present site of Kasia on the right bank of the Gandak River. The journey was not an easy one then, nor is it now. Xuanzang had to pass through a sizable forest filled with wild oxen, elephants, and savage bandits. When he finally arrived safely, he came to several deserted towns and villages and the ruins of a city wall. One of the Buddha's favorite disciples, Ananda, wondered why the Buddha had to die in "this wattle and daub town, a town in the middle of the jungle, a branch township."¹²

Xuanzang describes the scene of the Great Decease, or *Parinirvana*, as being at a Sal Grove. This "tree resembles the Ho tree. It is like the Chinese oak with greenish white bark and very glossy leaves," at once personalizing the place for himself and a Chinese audience. This is one of the very few times that Xuanzang makes a connection between what he saw in India and what he had known in China. There were four trees of extraordinary height, and it was at the feet of these four that the Buddha passed away.¹³

According to tradition, Xuanzang reported, the Buddha had attained nirvana at the age of eighty. Just before his death in 483 B.C.E., he had converted a Brahman named Subhadra. In bidding his monks farewell, the Buddha said that the laws he had taught them and the discipline he had established should be their Master. His last words are presumed to have been: "All that is composed is perishable. Work diligently for your salvation."

Xuanzang saw a great temple built of brick standing nearby. Inside was a figure of the Buddha's nirvana with his head turned toward the north. His appearance, Xuanzang said, was "as if he were asleep." By the side of the temple stood a stupa built by Asoka, 200 feet high, which recorded the circumstances of the nirvana, "but he does not state the year or month." Xuanzang was once again the careful chronicler with each of these telling details.¹⁴

Here and there Xuanzang's eyes picked out more stupas marking the places where Chandra the blacksmith had given the Buddha his last meal, and where Subhadra had been converted. Xuanzang's heartfelt response to many of these sites is shown by what he writes of a simple well from which the Buddha drew water for drinking: "A mysterious sense of awe surrounds the precincts of the place; many miracles are manifested also. Sometimes heavenly music is heard, at other times divine odors are perceived."¹⁵

He paid homage at the place where the Buddha's body, surrounded by flowers and clouds of incense, was wrapped in a shroud before it was put in a coffin. He also stopped beside each of the three towers that commemorated the three times the Buddha appeared from his coffin: first, when he put his arm out and asked Ananda if he had prepared the way; second, when he sat up and preached the law for his mother's sake; and third, when he showed his feet to the great Kasyapa, one of the Buddha's favorite disciples.

Tradition has it that after seven days both mortals and immortals had carried his bier to the river. They filled it with scented oils, and piled wood around it, but it would not burn until the arrival of Kasyapa. After Kasyapa had completed his devotions, the wood caught fire of its own accord. And finally, after the cremation, eight kings came with their armies and begged for their share of the relics. As a crowning touch, Xuanzang repeated the familiar legend: "Then Indra claimed a share for the gods, and the Dragon-kings

also claimed a share. So the brahmin divided the relics into three lots, one for the gods, one for the Dragon-kings, and the third was sub-divided into eight shares for the kings. The gods, dragons and kings were all deeply affected.”¹⁶

Paying Reverence at the Deer Park, in Sarnath

Traveling southwest through densely wooded country, Xuanzang headed for the holy city of Varanasi, modern Benares, on the Ganges River. This City of Light seemed to epitomize the essence of Hinduism in all its luxuriant variety of phenomena. The pilgrim described it as being three miles long and a mile wide: “The city-wards were close together, and the inhabitants very numerous and had boundless wealth, their houses being full of rare valuables. . . . Of Deva-Temples [Hindu] there were about 100, and there were more than 10,000 professed adherents of the sects, the majority being devotees of Siva.”¹⁷

He was ever alert, even as to secular details that might interest a modern audience. Although he was a devout Buddhist, he admired a hundred-foot statue of Siva, as radiating an awe-inspiring majesty.

Xuanzang went on to portray the radical ascetics who went without clothing or who smeared their bodies with ashes. A walk around Benares today still reveals a stream of wild-eyed ascetics, beggars, merchants, naked children, goats, sacred cows, and rickshaws, as well as thousands of pilgrims carrying their dead for burning on the banks of the holy Ganges.

But Xuanzang’s destination was the Deer Park at Sarnath, five miles to the northeast of Benares. A greater contrast cannot be imagined between Benares and Sarnath; from the teeming, roiling, noisy city of pilgrims, animals, and ascetics, he crossed to the quietude of a peaceful green park with Buddhist monasteries and the awesome simplicity of stupas. This was the Deer Park where the Buddha had preached his first sermon (Fig. 6.2).

The Doctrine of the Middle Way, which the Buddha first enunciated at Sarnath, must have been part of Xuanzang’s mind and heart while he stayed at the Deer Park Monastery, where there were 1,500 monks residing (Fig. 6.3). His biographer described the monastery as connected at its four corners by long galleries with

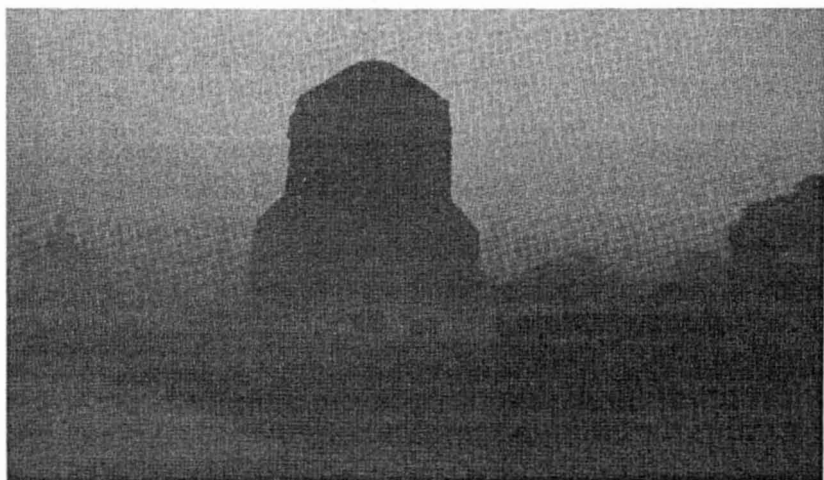


FIGURE 6.2

General view of Sarnath, where the Buddha preached his first sermon, the Doctrine of the Middle Way. It is one of the four most sacred places of Buddhist pilgrimage.

lofty turrets like those Xuanzang would see at Nalanda, where “the upper rooms are above the clouds.” Huili was clearly impressed with the height of the buildings.

Xuanzang found that what is now called the Main Shrine had a large metal image of the Buddha preaching his First Sermon, which the Buddhists refer to as Turning the Wheel of the Law. We know the name of the Main Shrine was the “Original Hall of Fragrance.” The Main Shrine, although largely in ruins, has the massive walls characteristic of ancient architecture.

Some historians believe that it was the very pyramidal temple that Xuanzang described. He said that it was “about two hundred feet high and surmounted by a golden amra, or mango, fruit.”¹⁸

Just west of the main temple was an Asoka column that Xuanzang saw rising out of the ground. It seemed to him “as bright as jade. It is glistening and sparkles like light,” he wrote. The lion capital (Fig. 6.4) still shines agelessly in the Sarnath Museum; it is so splendid and so highly regarded that the lion capital adorns not only the modern Indian flag but also the coins of India. The shaft of the pillar is still in its original place in the ground.

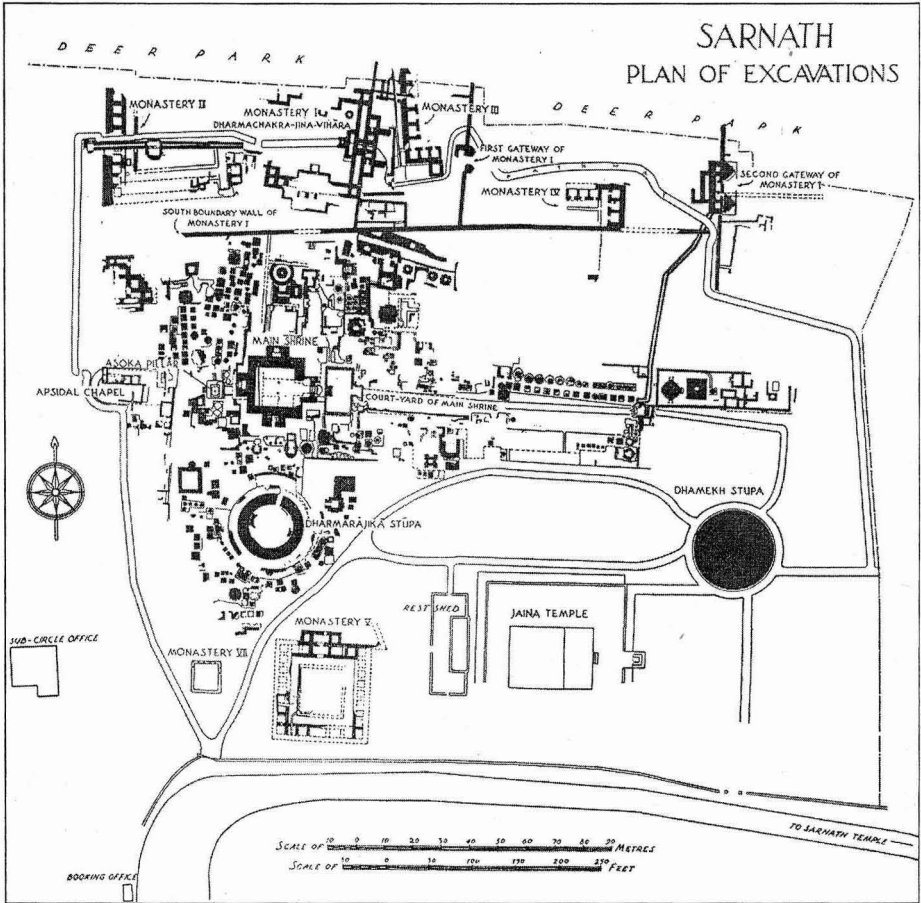


FIGURE 6.3

Site map of Sarnath: plans of excavations showing the location of the Dhamekh stupa, the main shrine, the Asoka column, the Dharmarajika stupa, and the monasteries. The Archeological Survey of India.

Xuanzang mentioned that the ill-fated Dharmarajika Stupa, built by King Asoka, was about 100 feet high. Its ruins now barely rise above the earth. The world-famous image of the Buddha in the attitude of preaching was discovered near the stupa ruins in 1904. Xuanzang saw the latter in its natural setting near the Dharmarajika Stupa; today we can see it only in the Sarnath Museum.¹⁹

FIGURE 6.4

Lion capital of the pillar erected by King Asoka, the first great patron of Buddhism, at Sarnath, c. third century B.C.E. The capital is in the Sarnath Museum. The shaft remains in the ground. The Archaeological Survey of India.



With its strength, beauty, and power, the statue of the Buddha Preaching the First Sermon (Fig. 6.5) is one of the masterpieces of sculpture in the world. The Buddha is seated in a yoga posture, his hands are “Turning the Wheel of the Law.” His eyes are lowered; the gaze of the Buddha is inward. On the large halo behind the Buddha are two celestial beings worshipping him. The proportions of the figure are perfectly balanced; the head and the horizontal legs form an equilateral triangle, giving the whole a quality of perfect spiritual poise and equilibrium. Both the countenance and form contribute to the effect of spiritual calm and extraordinary energy.²⁰ No wonder Xuanzang arranged to have a sandalwood replica of this image to

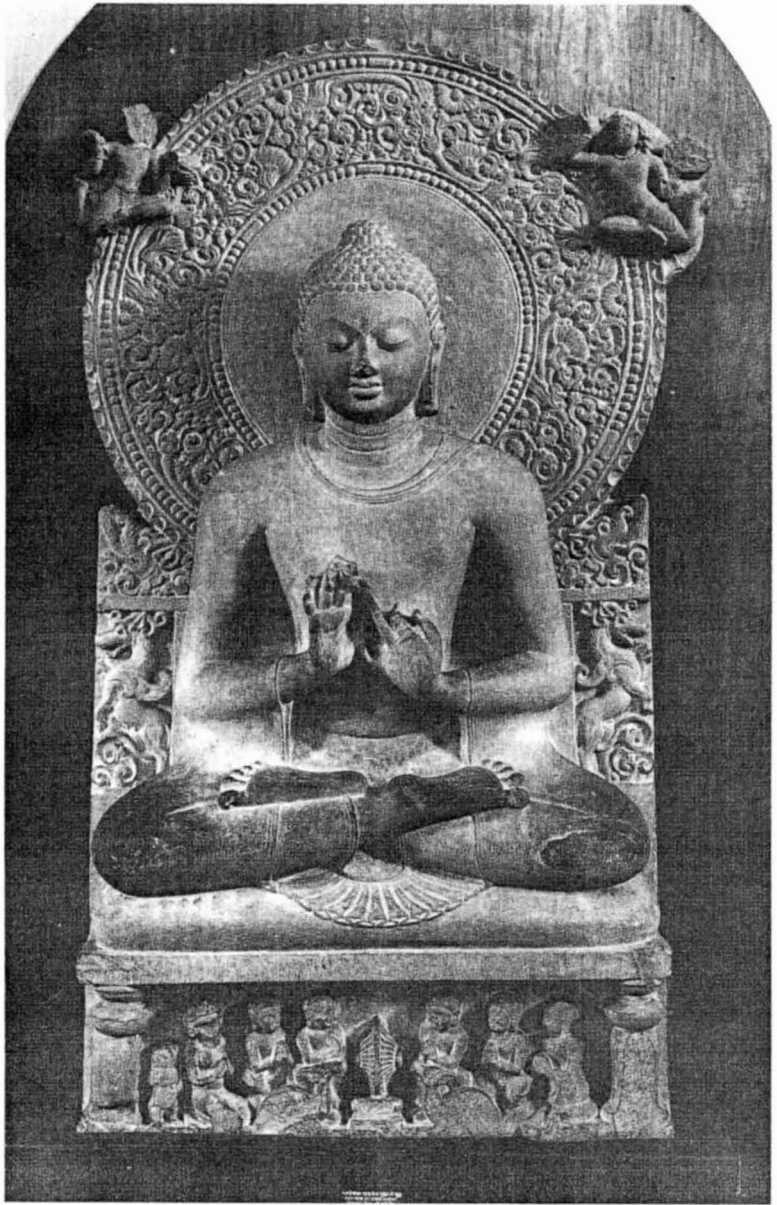


FIGURE 6.5

Considered the most beautiful of all Buddha statues, known as the Buddha Turning the Wheel of the Law or Preaching the First Sermon. The Archaeological Survey of India.

take back with him to China—the fourth of the seven famous images that would be carried in a grand procession in the capital shortly after his return.

The greatness of the sculpture commemorating the first sermon is matched by the freshness and originality of what the Buddha is presumed to have said. According to legend, the Buddha was speaking to the five ascetics with whom he himself had practiced austerities during his six years of forest wandering after he had left the palace. They had been determined to scorn him but instead they found themselves down on their knees. His personal appearance overwhelmed them: “His whole person breathed serenity and spread a divine radiance. His body was like fine gold,” Xuanzang wrote.

What had the Buddha preached?

“Two extremes there are, O monks, which he who strives after Enlightenment must avoid, which two? A life addicted to pleasure, which is vulgar and worthless, and a life given to self-mortification which is painful and equally profitless.” He who has gained knowledge of the Middle Path has found the way that leads to rest, to knowledge, to Enlightenment, and nirvana.²¹

The Buddha then spoke to them about the Noble Eightfold Path of (1) right views, (2) right intention, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood; and the ways of virtue, which he described as being (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, and finally (8) right meditative concentration, which leads to wisdom.

The Four Noble Truths, he said, were suffering; the source of suffering; the destruction of suffering; and the way that leads to the destruction of suffering. Beginning with his own experience of his first view of a dead man, a sick man, and an aged man, he had defined suffering as old age, sickness, death; separation from objects one desires and joining in with what one does not desire; and even birth itself as suffering. And the Buddha defined the source of suffering as desire; the way of its destruction is the Eightfold Path of the Middle Way.

The Buddha’s teaching is generally said to have taken place in the third watch of the night—from two until six in the morning—and to have been accompanied by many miraculous signs as well as the visitation of Indra and Brahma, the four great heavenly kings, and many other beings. The event is known in Buddhist texts as Turning the Wheel of the Law.

Pursuing Holy Places at Vaisali

With his heart full of these great memories of the Buddha's life and teachings, Xuanzang journeyed east to the land of Magadha in southern Bihar, which has more holy places connected with Buddhism than any other region in India.²² He would visit Vaisali, Pataliputra (Patna), and lastly, Bodh Gaya, which would be the climax of his searching for the sacred traces of the Buddha.

Several months earlier, Xuanzang had seen two of the lesser sites of the eight places of pilgrimage, Sravasti and Sankasya. Now he was on his way to the Stupa of the Monkey's Gift at Vaisali, yet another one of the four lesser places of pilgrimage. It was there that monkeys, taking the alms bowl of the Buddha, had climbed a tree and gathered some honey for him. Near an Asoka stupa and column was a tank or lake where Xuanzang says there was a figure of a monkey.²³

Vaisali had an additional interest for him; it was here that Vimalakirti, a lay follower of the Buddha, had lived. Vimalakirti had a special attraction for the Chinese. Perhaps that was because he had been the symbol of the lay householder and yet had been capable of defeating Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, in debate. The Vimalakirti legend inspired many paintings and pieces of sculpture in the Longmen, Yungang, and Dunhuang caves. In the Tang dynasty, the Vimalakirti legend had been the subject of popular stories and ballads. Xuanzang himself had made a translation of the *Vimalakirti-sutra*, which was well-known in China.

Xuanzang, the metaphysician and theologian, was also interested in the stupa where seven hundred sages had made the second compilation of the *Dharma*, the law, and the *Vinaya*, the Rules of Discipline for monks. The Second Buddhist Council held at Vaisali (367 or 383 B.C.E.) had assembled representatives of various districts and centers of Buddhism in India.

A new codification of rules seems to have been especially important. In describing the council, Xuanzang said:

Then Sambhoga, with his right shoulder bared and on his knees in the great Congregation, addressing the assembled Brethren prays to them to be orderly, sedate and attentive. He proceeds—

“Although years have passed since our spiritual sovereign in his wise discretion passed away, his oral instructions still survive—Irreverent bhikkhus [priests] of Vesali city have gone astray in Vinaya [rules] in ten matters violating the teaching of the Buddha—Reverend Brethren, ye understand what accords with and what is opposed to this teaching; As ye have been instructed by the Bhadanta Ajanta show gratitude for Buddha’s kindness, and make a second promulgation of his ordinances.”²⁴

Hinayana Buddhism was divided into several sects at this council, which also saw the beginnings of the Mahayana School. Vaisali had been famous also for all Buddhists as the place where the Buddha had made the announcement of his coming nirvana.

With so many associations it was natural that Xuanzang would want to bring back an image from Vaisali. The one he chose was made of sandalwood and was carved after a model of a similar one representing the Buddha as he went around Vaisali in his work of conversion. This would be the fifth of the seven famous images that Xuanzang would take back to China.

On his way south to Bodh Gaya in the kingdom of Magadha, Xuanzang stopped at Pataliputra, roughly 50 miles away, which had been the seat of King Asoka’s empire and also the site of the so-called Third Buddhist Council.²⁵ Little remained of the magnificence seen by the pious Faxian in the fourth century; when Faxian was there, he couldn’t believe that Pataliputra had been made by mere mortal hands.

Worshipping at the Bo Tree in Bodh Gaya

Always thinking of Bodh Gaya, Xuanzang wended his way along with the other monks and pilgrims to the Bo tree—the place of the Buddha’s ultimate triumph. His fellow pilgrims were also searching for the Bo tree with its sheltering branches. The long-awaited moment had finally come. Xuanzang, the observer, described the sacred precincts (Fig. 6.6) with his usual precision.

It is a description largely applicable even to the present-day remains. From him we learn that

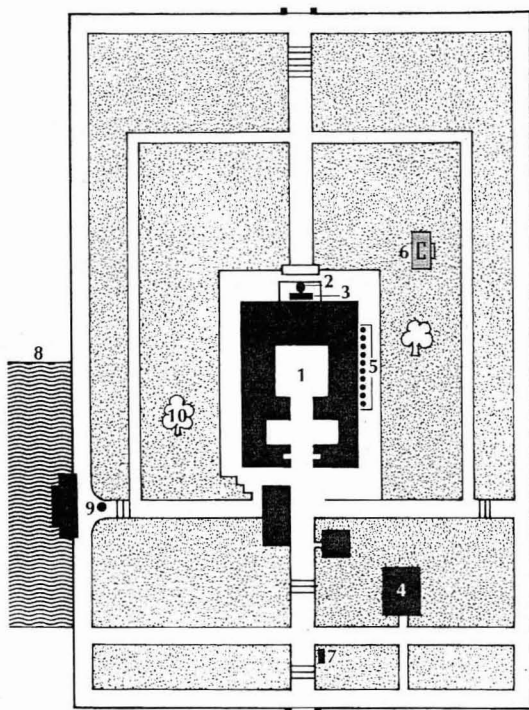


FIGURE 6.6
 Site plan of Mahabodhi temple at Bodhi Gaya, where the Buddha achieved enlightenment. (1) temple, (2) Bo tree, (3) Diamond Throne, (4) Unblinking Shrine, (5) Jeweled Walk, (6) Rainbow Shrine, (7) Goatherd's tree, (8) Mucalinda lake, (9) Asoka column, (10) Rajata tree.

a journey of 14-15 *li* south-west from the Pragbodhi Hill brought one to the Bodhi Tree. The enclosing walls . . . are built of brick, high and strong; the inclosure is long from east to west, and narrow from north to south, and it is above 500 paces in circuit. . . . The principal gate opens east toward the Nairanjana River, the south gate is connected with a large flower-tank, the west limit is a natural defense, and the north gate communicates with the grounds inside the walls of a large monastery.²⁶

What a sense of awe Xuanzang must have felt as he walked with his fellow pilgrims in the garden of the Bo tree! What a feeling of exhilaration as they exchanged glances with the knowledge of common purpose, their eyes meeting, their hearts knowing that this was where the Buddha achieved enlightenment. Like mountain climbers who have finally reached the summit at 18,000 feet, so these pilgrims must have felt a sensation of infinite peace and happiness.

Xuanzang wandered from one holy place to another with his fellow pilgrims at Bodh Gaya, each shrine recalling to him the path by which the Buddha had come to meditate under the Bo tree. Perhaps he stopped first at the Stupa of the Five Ascetics, the ones who believed that the way to truth was to starve the body. Or maybe he lingered at the temple with the image of the Buddha in an emaciated condition, a subject popular with the artists of Gandhara. For six years the Buddha had tried this path, but found it taught him nothing. This was one extreme. The other extreme had been the life of pleasure he knew well from his palace years. And thus he had sought the Middle Way.

Walking among the rare trees and fine grasses, Xuanzang reached the place where the Buddha, having obtained an old shroud, had stopped to wash his clothes. The god Indra had created a tank for him as well as a large rock. It was sometimes alluded to as "Hit by the Hand Pond," recalling the way Asian women slap their clothes on rocks to get the dirt out.

Continuing to visit the shrines for seven days, Xuanzang noted the strange plants and flowers everywhere. He went down to the Nairanjana River, where the Buddha had bathed to rid himself of impurities. He paused at a shrine marking the home of the two cow-herd maidens who had presented the Buddha with rich, boiled milk before his enlightenment.²⁷ Nearby was the stupa marking the place where the Buddha had received four bowls from the gods. In order to prevent jealousy, he accepted them all, put them together and compressed them into one, and this is why the Buddha's bowl has a four-fold rim.

Xuanzang might have searched his memory at yet another shrine, for it was dedicated to Buddha's first disciples, two nomad traders from Balkh who had fed the Buddha his first food after his Enlightenment. The legend said that the gods of the place had told the traveling merchants that the Buddha's mind had been fixed in contemplation for forty-nine days, and that by offering him whatever they had, they would reap great and excellent benefits. Accordingly they had given him some parched grain flour and honey from their traveling stores. Years before, Xuanzang had visited the Balkh stupa north of the Hindu Kush Mountains, which was dedicated to those intrepid traders.

Every time he went near the Bo tree, he saw people meditating by the Mahabodhi temple, lighting little oil lamps or offering incense

and flowers. Many, like himself, were from faraway countries, thankful to have reached their destination at last. Not far from the Bo tree itself with its ever fluttering green leaves, Xuanzang stopped by an Asoka stupa. One hundred feet tall, it commemorated the spot where the Buddha, when he was on his way to the sacred tree, had obtained grass for a seat from Indra disguised as a grass cutter.

Xuanzang described the famous Bodh Gaya temple:

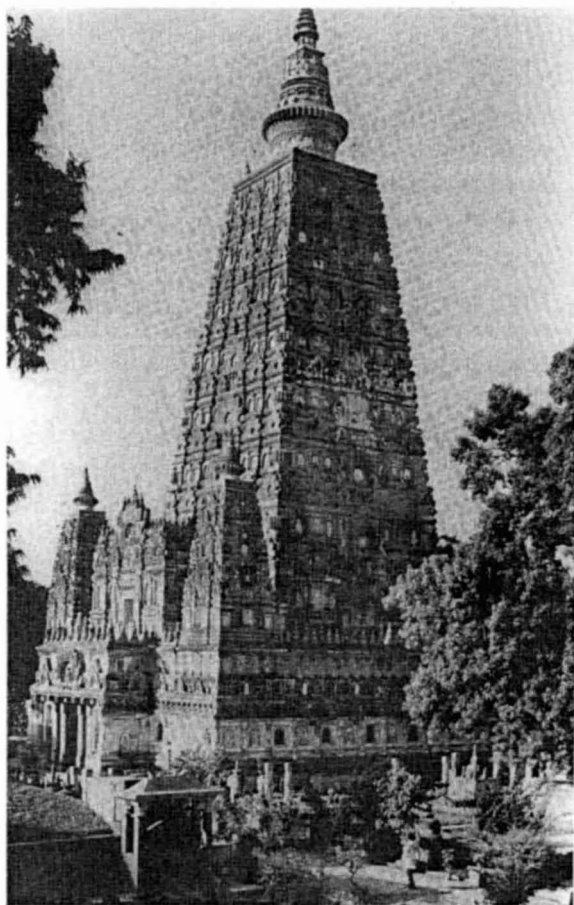
To the East of the *bodhi* [Bo] tree there is a *vihara* [temple] between sixty and a hundred and seventy feet high, with a base of about fifty feet. It is carved with several niches, each of which contains a gilded statue of the Buddha. On all four sides the walls are covered with beautiful sculptures, festoons of pearls and figures of sages. On its summit there is a gilt copper *amalaka* fruit. The architraves and pillars, the doors and windows are all ornamented with gold and silver casings, amongst which pearls and precious stones are inserted. To the right and left of the outer door are two large niches containing statues of Avalokiteshvara and the *buddha* Maitreya. Both statues are of solid silver and are about ten feet high.²⁸

For nearly three centuries after Xuanzang's visit, no repairs or improvements to the temple appear to have been made. There were major alterations after the eleventh century, but what we see now (Fig. 6.7) is more or less the same building he depicted.²⁹

Xuanzang observed that the sacred tales of the Buddha legend were so thick he could not recount them all; neither could he bear to leave out three of the most important stories—legends of the Temptation of Mara, the wicked one. Like Christ who was faced with three temptations, the Buddha was tempted by Mara representing the forces of evil. Xuanzang tells us that Mara had marshaled all his forces in battle array, with spears, bows, and arrows, to terrify the Buddha. He had created thunder and lightning, and filled the air with sands and stones and darkness. At that moment the Buddha went into the *samadi* (meditation) of great compassion. All the warlike weapons were changed into lotus flowers and Mara's army fled in panic.

A second stupa, commemorated by yet another Mara story, related to the time Mara challenged the Buddha's authority, where-

FIGURE 6.7
Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya, the holiest place of all for Buddhist pilgrims, with the Bodhi tree, where the Buddha achieved enlightenment. American Institute of Indian Studies. The Archaeological Survey of India.



upon the Buddha called the earth to witness and stretched his right hand to the ground. Immediately the earth goddess emerged to testify to the Buddha's multitude of past lives of accumulated achievement. Xuanzang described the third temptation. Mara tempted the Buddha with the magic of his daughters, but the Buddha was able to change their fascinating bodies so that "they went away tired and decrepit in each other's arms."

The Chinese monk, along with a host of pilgrims, walked with reverence and joy in the Buddhist rite of circumambulation around the Mahabodhi temple sheltering the Bo tree. Many of them stopped to prostrate themselves before the miraculous Diamond Throne. Xuanzang related that "the throne reached from the surface of the earth to the Golden Wheel," the center of the Buddhist

world; "It was the seat on which the thousand Buddhas of this *kalpa* attained Emancipation." It had remained "undisturbed by cosmic convulsions and is the sacred point from which all else in Buddhist faith emanates."³⁰

To the north of the Bo tree, Xuanzang continued, was the place where the Buddha himself had walked up and down in ecstatic contemplation. After the Buddha had remained motionless under the tree for seven days, he had walked up and down, east and west for seven days. The Buddha's famous walk is now the Jeweled Walk.

The moment he had been waiting for. Finally Xuanzang kneels down before the Sacred Tree. He thinks of the time the Buddha reached Perfect Wisdom. He remembers how the Buddha, in the first watch of the night, meditated on all worlds, the rising and falling of things, the ascending and descending rhythm of existence; how in the second watch from ten to two A.M., the Buddha reviewed his own life, and in the third watch, from two until six A.M., he meditated on human suffering and arrived at the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path of Salvation. What an awakening! "His mind was liberated, ignorance vanished, knowledge was acquired, darkness melted away, light sprang out."

*With the most sincere devotion, Xuanzang casts himself face down on the ground. Filled with grief, he sighs and says: "At the time when the Buddha perfected himself in wisdom, I know not in what condition I was in the troublous whirl of birth and death." To him it is inescapably clear his evil deeds mean that he is condemned to live in this lesser age, when Buddhism is in decline, instead of living in the golden age of the Buddha's life on earth. His eyes overflow with tears.*³¹

In one of the most touching passages in his book, Xuanzang's biographer described this scene. Thousands of monks are present for the summer retreat. All of them were moved by the words and emotions of their grieving Chinese visitor. In his innermost heart, Xuanzang knew the perfection of the Buddha and his own unworthiness. This fearless traveler and powerful metaphysician was down on his knees weeping; his outpouring of emotion, far from being a sign of weakness, reveals a new depth of feeling.³²

SEVEN

NALANDA MONASTERY AND ENVIRONS

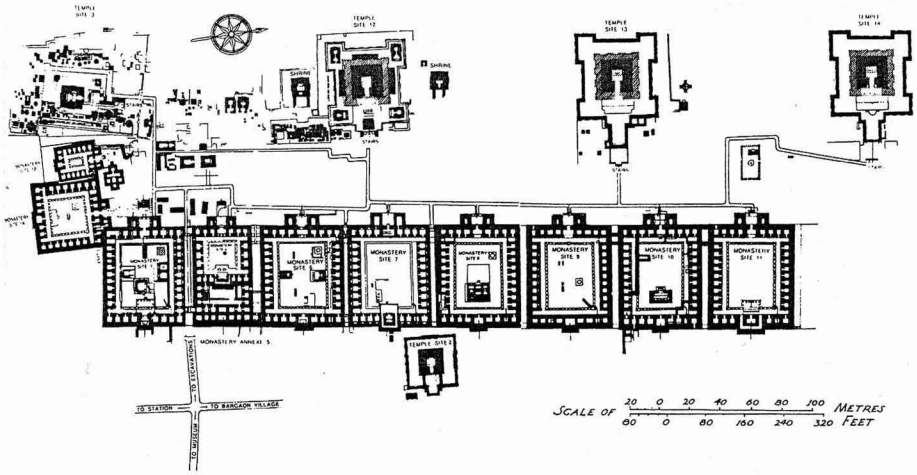


FIGURE 7.1

Survey plan of the excavated remains of Nalanda showing monasteries and temples. The monasteries are arranged next to each other like colleges on a university campus. The Archaeological Survey of India.

*X*uanzang's anguish that he did not live when the Buddha was still alive was short-lived. Not long afterward, four monks from Nalanda, sixty miles from Bodh Gaya, came to take him back to their monastery.¹ Monks from Korea, Tokhara (Turkestan), China, Mongolia, Tibet, all came to study there.²

What Cluny and Clairvaux were to medieval Europe, Nalanda was to medieval Asia—a cloister for Buddhists from all over the world. It was also the most distinguished of all the monasteries and universities in India.³

Meeting the Venerable One

637 C.E. After a night quivering with stars. The monks come to escort him to their cloister. They are joined by one hundred monks and one thousand lay persons who surround him recounting his praise. With banners, with parasols, with flowers and incense, they make their entrance into Nalanda, where the entire community of ten thousand people awaits Xuanzang. He is welcomed by the presiding monk, who orders the great gong to be sounded and declares, "While the Master of the Law is present, everything is at his disposal." Twenty reverend seniors of the monastery coach him in the proper ways to approach the head of Nalanda, who is so venerable and so saintly that no one dare address him except by the title "Treasury of the Righteous Law." His name is Silabhadra. Xuanzang does homage to him in a scene reminiscent of a Chinese imperial court. He crawls on his hands and knees, kisses the foot of Silabhadra, and touches his head to the ground.

The Venerable Silabhadra orders a seat to be provided for Xuanzang and the other monks. After Xuanzang is seated, Silabhadra turns to him and asks, "Where do you come from?"

Xuanzang explains that he has come from the country of China to learn from him the principles of the Stages of Yoga Practice.⁴

When the Venerable Silabhadra heard what Xuanzang had said, he shed tears and begged his nephew to tell about Silabhadra's severe illness and how three years ago it had grown to such an extent that he became tired of his body and wished to end his life.

FIGURE 7.2

Fragment of a hand holding a leaf from a palm-leaf book, found at Nalanda Monastery, where Xuanzang was in residence for at least two years, possibly five. The Archaeological Survey of India.



Xuanzang listens as the nephew explains. One night the Venerable Silabhadra had a dream in which he was visited by three Bodhisattvas who told him that it was taught not to give up the body. They said that in one of his past lives he had been a king and had caused much pain to his people, and that he was suffering his retribution now. He should not think of starving himself to death, but rather he should propagate the Right Law and preach the Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice and other books to the people who had not heard them. If he did so, they said, he would recover. Finally they declared that a Chinese monk who wished to learn the great Law would come to study with him. "You may wait to teach him," they said.

His disciples conclude by saying that he is relieved of his painful illness and is now teaching this scripture.

The Venerable One asks, "How many years have you spent on the way?"

Xuanzang is unable to control his feelings of joy. The fact that the message of the Bodhisattvas in the Venerable Silabhadra's dream that he should preach the very doctrine Xuanzang had come to India to understand is overwhelming; the Master's task in life is to teach, and his is to learn, the very same scriptures. In the awe and excitement of the tremendous moment, Xuanzang forgets everything and replies, "three years." Both men are enchanted that the prophecy seemed to have been confirmed, although Xuanzang had been traveling now from 629 C.E. to 637 C.E., a full eight years!⁵

While he was traveling around Magadha, Xuanzang reported that he came across the Silabhadra stupa. In the course of telling the story behind its building, he noted:

Silabhadra was a scion of the Brahminical royal family of Samatata [in East India]; as a young man he was fond of learning and of exemplary principles. He travelled through India seeking the wise, and in Nalanda he met Dharmapala P'usa who gave him instruction, and in due time ordained him as a bhikshu. Then Silabhadra rose to be eminent for his profound comprehension of the principles and subtleties of Buddhism, and his fame extended to foreign countries.⁶

Xuanzang didn't indicate to us that he remembered the Silabhadra stupa and perhaps it isn't important, for he had finally found the great master, the incomparable metaphysician who would reveal to him new insights about the mystic philosophy of the Yogacara.

After his famous meeting with Silabhadra, Xuanzang was shown to his quarters at Nalanda. He was the guest of the Venerable One's nephew for seven days, staying on the fourth floor of a convent built by the king of Magadha. Later he moved to another dwelling. From his quarters Xuanzang could look out at the beauty of the extensive grounds.



FIGURE 7.3
View from Stupa 3 at Nalanda Monastery; the outline of one of the monastic courtyards can be seen, with the flat, verdant countryside of Bihar in the background.

The whole establishment is surrounded by a brick wall, which encloses the entire convent from without. One gate opens into the great college, from which are separated eight other halls standing in the middle (*of the Sangharama*) [monasteries]. The richly adorned towers, and the fairy-like turrets, like pointed hill-tops are congregated together. The observatories seem to be lost in the vapours (*of the morning*), and the upper rooms tower above the clouds.

From the windows one may see how the winds and the clouds (*produce new forms*), and above the soaring eaves the conjunctions of the sun and moon (*may be observed*).

And then we may add how the deep, translucent ponds bear on their surface the blue lotus, intermingled with the Kie-ni (*Kanaka*) flower, of deep red color and at intervals the Amra groves spread over all, their shade.

All the outside courts, in which are the priests' chambers, are of four stages. The stages have dragon-projections and coloured

eaves, the pearl-red pillars carved and ornamented, the richly adorned balustrades, and the roofs covered with tiles that reflect the light in a thousand shades, these things add to the beauty of the scene.

The Sangharamas of India are counted by myriads, but this is the most remarkable for grandeur and height.⁷

Down below him were monks in their orange robes going to and fro among the eight lecture halls, numberless stupas, five temples, and many monastery complexes for students and priests, spacious libraries, the observatory building, ten ponds, and garden courts on campus. He may have watched the building of a new brass temple, which had been commissioned by King Harsha.⁸

Did Xuanzang often visit the great temple, which must have dominated Nalanda then as it does today? Now called Stupa 3, it was enlarged and beautifully embellished in the seventh century; the foundations of the original structure must have been laid two centuries earlier. Xuanzang mentions a large temple 300 feet high (Fig. 7.4) which "recalls the form of the Mahabodhi temple at Bodhgaya."⁹

When Xuanzang visited Nalanda, it may have been in existence for seven centuries. Successive Indian kings had contributed to its welfare. The monastery was richly endowed by, among others, the King of Magadha, who provided that the revenues of one hundred villages should be given for the upkeep of Nalanda. Day by day two hundred householders of these villages contributed several hundred pounds of rice, butter, and milk. Clothes, food, beds, and medicines were also provided.

Every day Xuanzang received 120 betel leaves for chewing, twenty areca nuts (a variety of betel palm), the same number of cardamoms, an ounce of camphor, and about one and one-half pounds of Mahasali rice. He recalled that this rice, grown only in Magadha, had grains as large as black beans, and was scented and of an exquisite flavor and shining color. His daily rations also included ghee (clarified butter) and other staples.

Water clocks were used to keep track of the time. The entire day was divided into periods of study and worship. A gong sounded every morning to remind priests of the bathing hour. "Sometimes a



FIGURE 7.4

Stupa 3, remains of the great stupa of Nalanda Monastery, which has some resemblance to the temple at Bodh Gaya. The Archaeological Survey of India.

hundred, sometimes several thousand” priests left their rooms together and proceeded to take a bath in one of Nalanda’s ten ponds. And so we may picture Xuanzang going out with his fellow pilgrims in the cool, early morning hours. This bath was followed by the devotions before the holy images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Tara, Hariti, the Mother Goddess, either in the cells of individual monks or large courtyards. Monks offered incense and flowers, and lighted lamps in adoration, or in the case of Hariti, they proffered food as well. Neither Xuanzang nor Yijing, who stayed at Nalanda from 675 to 695 C.E., spoke of any Tantric images, but perhaps those came later.

After public lectures there was a large meal, which was probably brought directly to the monks’ cells, for there seems to have been no community kitchens or common dining rooms. Four strokes of a drum, the blowing of a conch shell, followed by two more strokes, announced the noon hour.¹⁰

Study and discussion seem to have continued until twilight, when there was an evening service. At Nalanda, owing to the large size of the monastery, instead of the monks walking three times around a central stupa performing their devotions, a precentor was sent to chant and offer hymns around the three hundred apartments. He was preceded by lay servants and children carrying incense, lamps and flowers. "At every hall he chanted the service, every time three to five *slokas* (stanzas) in a loud tone, so the sound was heard all around."¹¹ There seems to have been an evening service in which a reader intoned selected texts. The night was also divided into watches; the first and third were occupied by meditation and chanting. During the middle hours, the monks could take rest.¹²

Even if there were only one-third as many monks at Nalanda as the figure of 10,000 monks given by Huiji, the sound of thousands of monks chanting by the light of a full moon in the Indian night must have been overpowering.¹³ Over and over their deep voices would have repeated their sutras. At last there would be the long, brooding cry of the conch shells. Silence; and the monks would return noiselessly to their cells to meditate or to sleep.

Riding an Elephant to Rajagriha (Rajgir)

Most monks had two lay servants to attend to their needs. As a special guest coming from so far, Xuanzang was also given two servants and the use of a palanquin or an elephant for his excursions outside the university. Of the thousands of host and guest monks only ten persons were given such privileges. Riding on elephants was not usually the prerogative of ordinary citizens but was confined to religious processions and royal usage.¹⁴ Xuanzang would ride on an elephant again in a glorious religious procession for King Harsha's grand debate. In addition, King Harsha, in an unusual gesture, would give him his best elephant for his journey back to China.

Riding high on a *howdah* on his elephant, Xuanzang visited the holy places of Rajagriha (modern Rajgir), where the Buddha had spent many long periods of his life. It was the central point of the kingdom of Magadha, where King Bimbisara (c. 544-493 B.C.E.) had fixed his capital at the time of the Buddha. Xuanzang's descrip-

tion explains why: "High mountains surround it on each side, and form as it were its external walls. On the west it is approached through a narrow pass, on the north there is a passage through the mountains. The town is extended from east to west and narrow from north to south"¹⁵ (Fig. 7.5).

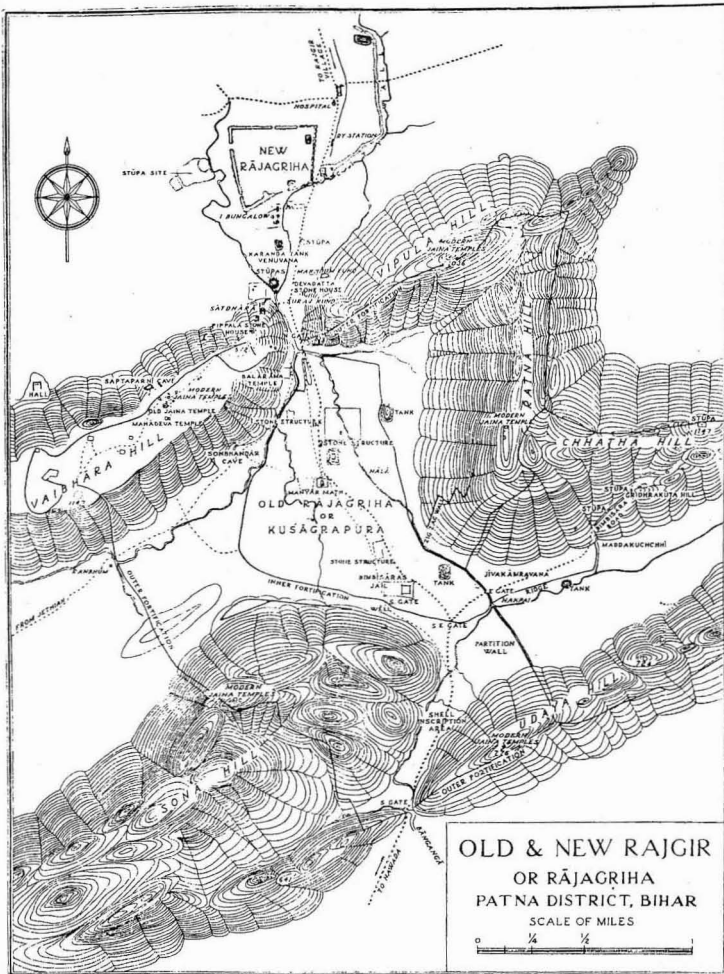


FIGURE 7.5
 Site plan of old and new Rajagriha. Xuanzang traveled from Nalanda to the old town on his elephant. The Archaeological Survey of India.

One can imagine Xuanzang on his high perch on the elephant's back jotting down notes about this fine natural fortress. Xuanzang repeated a colorful legend attached to Rajagriha which fits in with this dramatic countryside. It is the story of the Buddha taming the wild elephant Nalagiri, which marks the last of the *eight miracles* and the last of the traditional places of pilgrimage.

The drama took place as the Buddha went about the city of Rajagriha with some of his disciples to gather food. An elephant was drugged by palace guards at the instigation of the wicked Devadatta. This Judas had tried several times to murder the Buddha and failed, but this time he felt that he would surely succeed. The crazed elephant galloped through the city creating panic everywhere; it had just thrown its guard to the ground, killing him instantly, when it saw the radiance of the Master. Immediately the elephant sought forgiveness and knelt before the Buddha (Fig. 7.6).

Climbing Vulture Peak

Xuanzang must have been eager to climb Vulture Peak where the Lord Buddha is supposed to have preached some of his most famous sermons; among them was the *Lotus Sutra*, which enjoyed great popularity in China. To the northeast of Rajagriha, on a small spur of what is now called Chhatha Hill, is this most picturesque of the five mountains surrounding the old city. Xuanzang noted that the mountainside had clear springs, trees covered with thick foliage, and extraordinary rock formations. This is still true. Scrub bushes, fewer trees perhaps, but orange and black striated rocks dot the foothills, while grey rocks streaked with white, all of them with peculiar, almost anguished shapes, are at the summit. Some see them in the shape of vultures, and others describe the peak as a resting place for vultures.

At the foot of the hill is the beginning of King Bimbisara's road. "Bimbisara raja [king], for the purpose of hearing the law, raised a number of men to accompany him from the foot of the mountain to its summit. They leveled the valleys and spanned the precipices, and with the stones made a staircase about ten paces wide and 5 or 6 li long."¹⁶ In the middle of the road, Xuanzang observed, were two small *stupas*, one called "Dismounting the Chariot" because the

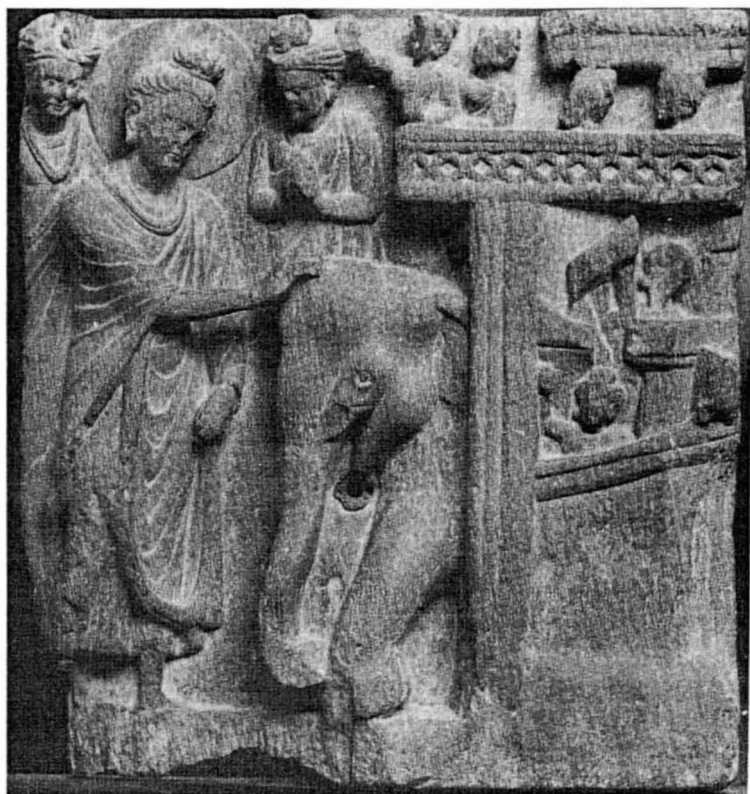


FIGURE 7.6

Taming of the elephant Nalagiri at Rajagriha, one of the eight famous miracles of the Lord Buddha. The Buddha is depicted as much larger than the elephant. The Archaeological Survey of India.

king, when he got there, went forward on foot. The other was called “Sending Back the Crowd,” because the king, separating from the common folk, would not allow them to proceed with him.¹⁷

Climbing on this Bimbisara road of rough undressed stones, pausing where the king stopped, and exploring the mountain caves along the way, one reaches the flat terrace at the top of the Vulture Peak. A sense of timelessness pervades the air. Xuanzang surely would have made his prayers and offering of flowers at the top, remembering that the pious Faxian had done so and had spent the night in meditation on this very peak two centuries earlier. Buddhist communities elsewhere in India and Sri Lanka regarded local hills and mountains as sacred places blessed by their founder.¹⁸

As a symbol of remembrance, Xuanzang obtained a golden figure after the model of Buddha preaching the *Lotus Sutra* on Vulture Peak. This was the sixth of the famous images that he would take back to China as part of his continuing search for genuine artifacts which would be useful when he returned. The seventh and final image was also made of gold and came from Pragbodhi Mountain not far from Bodh Gaya.

Descending from the mountain by elephant, Xuanzang probably went through the north gate of the old city to visit the famous hot springs where the Buddha's disciple Ananda had bathed. Nearby was the Venuvani or Bamboo Grove of Kalanda, presumed to be the first piece of land ceded to the early Buddhists. Later this beautiful garden given to them by King Bimbisara became one of the favorite places of the Lord Buddha where he had stayed after his enlightenment.

About six *li* southwest of the Bamboo Grove, Xuanzang visited another forest of bamboo and a large cave. His interest was theological. That is where, a few months after Buddha's final nirvana, Kasyapa, a senior monk, presided over a meeting to establish the Buddhist canon called the *Tripitaka* or *The Three Baskets*. The canon was, in effect, created by Kasyapa's questioning of five hundred monks regarding what the Buddha had said. Xuanzang tells us that Kasyapa told Ananda, "The *Tathagata* [Buddha] used to praise you among monks saying that you were the most learned disciple and could understand all the *Dharmas*. Now you may take the chair to recite the Sutra-pitaka, i.e. all the scriptures, for the assembly."¹⁹

After Kasyapa had said this, Ananda rose to his feet, paid homage in the direction of the far-off place where the Buddha entered nirvana, and then took a chair and recited the scriptures. The monks listened carefully and orally corrected what he said. This is why when each Sutra begins, "Thus I have said," it is Ananda speaking. Thus the first compilation of the Buddha's sermons was established but not written down.

At this same First Council, Upali expounded the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the Rules of Discipline. The third basket, or *Abhidharma*, consisting of scholastic elaboration of the doctrine, was done by Kasyapa himself. A second meeting was held, according to Xuanzang's biographer, which included lay folk as well as *arhats*.

Attending Lectures at Nalanda

After touring the nearby holy sites, Xuanzang returned to Nalanda and was finally able to hear his master, the Venerable Silabhadra, lecture on the basic Yogacara scriptures, only a portion of which had been transmitted to China. At long last Xuanzang had found an incomparable teacher in the very school of Buddhism that had inspired him to leave China in the first place. From him Xuanzang could learn the pure tradition handed down from master to pupil, beginning with Asanga (fourth century C.E.) to Vasubandhu (fourth–fifth century C.E.), who had both come to Nalanda, one from Peshawar and the other from Ayodhya. Next in the chain after these two luminaries of the *Yogacara* school was Dignaga (late fifth–sixth century C.E.), founder of the New Logic, who in turn trained Dharmapala (sixth–seventh century), the head of Nalanda Monastery before Xuanzang's arrival. Finally there was Silabhadra, the Venerable One, who was the pupil of Dharmapala and succeeded him, and who had greeted Xuanzang with such joy and accepted him as his pupil.

Over a period of fifteen months the Venerable One—some said he was 104 years old—expounded on *The Stages of Yoga Practice* no fewer than three times. Xuanzang listened carefully to each exposition. He praised his teacher for making clear the most abstruse points. In a famous letter Xuanzang said of the Venerable One,

He was thoroughly conversant with the teaching of all sects . . . whether they were deficient or perfect; and even with the writings of heterodoxy. . . . They not only permeated his mind, but also liquefied in his heart. His literary style was circuitous while thoroughly expressing his ideas. His reasoning was allusive while clearly putting across his message. All this led to a mass following of his teachings, both the religious and the secular hail him as a spiritual leader of India.²⁰

Xuanzang also attended courses in grammar, logic, and Sanskrit. His biographer interrupts his narrative to include a three-page summary of Sanskrit grammar. Huili seemed impressed with Xuanzang's linguistic skills and might have thought that he could best

show the monk's expertise by demonstrating to his Chinese audience the complexity of Sanskrit grammar.²¹

Xuanzang himself recognized that Indians were expert scholars of their own language and wanted to show that Sanskrit was structured entirely differently from Chinese. He notes that "one who is skilled in the language may write his compositions without any ambiguity and may express himself in a most elegant manner." This nice appreciation of Sanskrit, which Xuanzang had been studying for so many years in China and Kashmir, foreshadows his later career as a translator of Sanskrit into Chinese. In the latter years of his life, he would confine himself to adventures of the mind; he would spend nineteen years translating the Buddhist scriptures. The sheer volume of Buddhist literature translated by Xuanzang and many other monks, and the resultant infusion of Sanskrit words into Chinese, has been compared to the influence of Shakespeare on the English language.²²

Gradually Xuanzang discovered that the disparity between Indian and Chinese Buddhism "involved much more than the missing chapters of one text." As Dr. Lusthaus put it:

Xuanzang also discovered that the intellectual context in which Buddhists disputed and interpreted texts was much vaster and more varied than the Chinese materials had indicated; Buddhist positions were forged in earnest debate with a range of Buddhist and non-Buddhist doctrines unknown in China, and the terminology of these debates drew their significance and connotations from this rich context.²³

The longer he stayed the more impressed he became with the whole atmosphere of Nalanda.

The priests, to the number of several thousands, are men of highest ability and talent. Their distinction is very great at the present time, and there are many hundreds whose fame has rapidly spread through distant regions. Their conduct is pure and unblamable. . . . The rules of this convent are severe, and all the priests are bound to observe them.

The day is not sufficient for asking and answering profound questions. From morning till night they engage in discussion, the

old and the young mutually help one another. Those who cannot discuss questions out of the *Tripitaka* [canon] are little esteemed, and are obliged to hide themselves for shame. Learned men from distant cities, on this account, who desire to acquire quickly a renown in discussion, come here in multitudes to settle their doubts, and the streams (*of their wisdom*) spread far and wide.²⁴

Several thousand monks lived at the monastery-university, and it appears that secular researchers and non-Buddhist scholars pursued studies there. One hundred pulpits were used and set up daily for the delivery of discourses which the students attended without fail. The monks studied Mahayana Buddhism and the eighteen schools of Hinayana Buddhism, Indian subjects such as the Vedas, logic, grammar, philosophy, medicine, mathematics, Sanskrit, and astronomy, as well as literature and the works of magic. Such a broad curriculum was based on the notion that logic, grammar, and literature are studied in order to vanquish one's adversaries; the science of medicine should be studied for administering health to others; and that of metaphysics for acquiring knowledge of oneself.²⁵

Xuanzang naturally was put into the top level. It was reserved for those who had mastered fifty books, a very select group consisting of only nine monks when Xuanzang arrived. The Venerable One, Silabhadra, had read and fathomed all the sutras and sastras without exception, and the high rank he occupied was due to his eminent virtue, his learning, and his age.

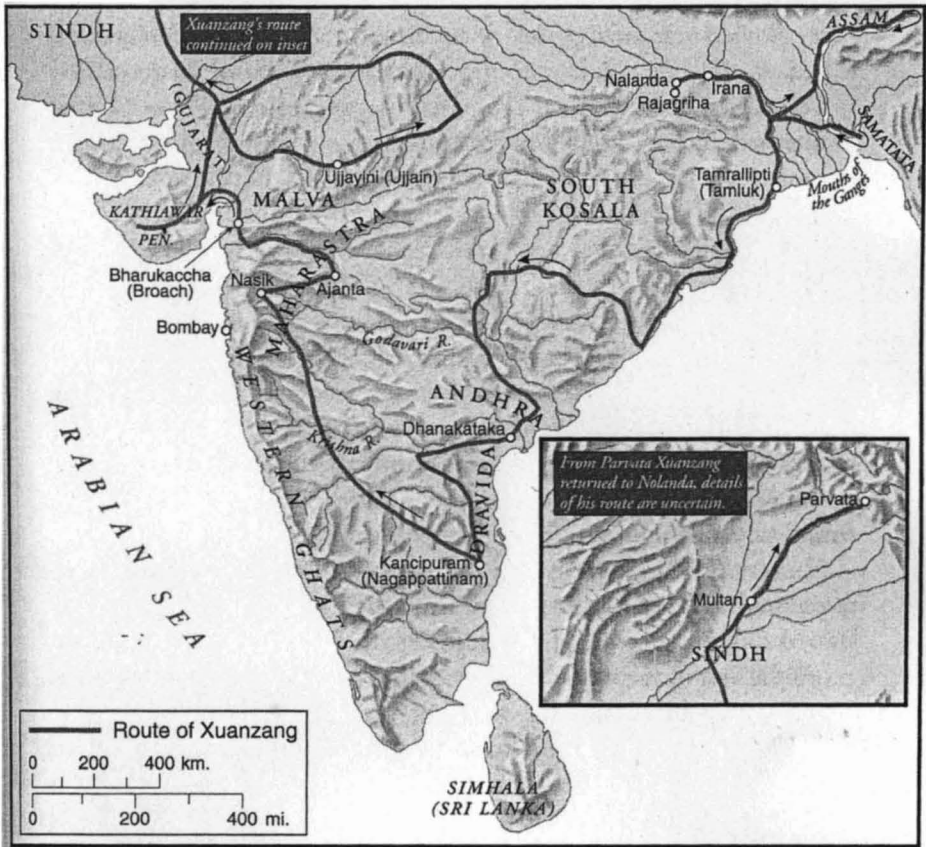
Lecturing and Writing at Nalanda

At the end of 642 C.E., after an extended tour of the whole continent of India that took several years, Xuanzang returned to Nalanda for another period of study. The Venerable One asked him to give some lectures on Idealist texts. Xuanzang did so and also wrote a 3,000-stanza treatise called the *Treatise on the Harmony of Teaching*, which is no longer extant. The venerable Silabhadra thought highly of it, and it was widely read.

Xuanzang found that there were some texts that were unknown to his Indian colleagues, such as the "Awakening of Faith in the

EIGHT

PHILOSOPHERS, CAVES, AND A FORTUNE-TELLER




MAP 8.1

Itinerary of Xuanzang around the Indian continent (from Nalanda to Parvata)

638 C.E. *The best time of day in India—dawn. The place is Kapota Monastery, east of Nalanda. Xuanzang worships at a famous sandalwood statue of the Bodhisattva called Avalokitesvara, on his way to Bengal. It is a precious statue surrounded on all sides by a wooden balustrade. People go there seeking an omen, which depends on their garlanding the image with flowers. If the flowers rest on the image, pilgrims believe that their innermost wishes will be answered. Xuanzang kneels and makes three prayers.*

His first is that if the flowers rest on the hand of the Sandalwood Buddha, he may safely return to his own country after he has completed his studies. His second prayer is that if the flowers hang on the arms of the Sandalwood Buddha, he may be reborn in the Tushita Heaven to serve the Maitreya Buddha. His third is that if the flowers rest on the neck of the Buddha, he will know that he had the Buddha nature and may become a Buddha of the Future. The garlands stay on all the places he prays for and the Bodhisattva is covered with flowers.¹

 It does seem extraordinary that Xuanzang was really in doubt about his Buddha nature. Yet he did come to believe, along with the Venerable Silabhadra, that not everyone had the Buddha nature, that not everyone could attain salvation. This belief very much lessened the attraction of the Buddhist school he tried to found when he returned to China.²

Xuanzang's intellectual curiosity was insatiable. At a time when it seemed as if he had achieved most of his goals, he was determined to go on, to see what was there, to try to understand, to explore the rest of the vast subcontinent of India. For four years, from 638 to 642 C.E., Xuanzang would be touring both coasts of India, and much of the interior, a trek of 3,000 miles and more. Was it that, having opened the door to Buddhist philosophy and metaphysics, and to Indian logic and Sanskrit, he found that there was always more to know, always yet another school to master? Another attraction must have been to visit the birthplace of some of

the other great Buddhist philosophers—Nagarjuna, the skeptic; Dharmapala, the teacher of Silabhadra; and Dignaga, the logician, just as in the north he had been to the places connected with the Idealist philosophers Asanga and Vasubandhu, who had meant so much to him.

Probably by this time on his journey he felt an ever-greater urge to collect new scholarly treatises, discourses on Ultimate Reality, works on logic and grammar, and healing sutras from other Buddhist centers. These could be packed in the 527 boxes he would take back with him to China. Xuanzang not only was seeking the truth for himself but was collecting 224 sutras and 192 treatises from Mahayanist works, as well as the sayings, rules of discipline, and treatises from six Hinayanist schools—to form a “library of truths.” His Chinese compatriots at home would need never be confused by varying translations; they could read the texts for themselves from original sources.

Xuanzang had become the “Master of the Law” of Buddhism, but he was also an explorer who relished adventure. He knew the lure of the next country, the mists on the far horizon, the attraction of wild and awesome places in India, or even of countries beyond its border—Simhala (Sri Lanka) and Persia (Iran). Always he was hungry for experience as well as knowledge.

His energy in the most torrid parts of India was remarkable. Even in the area around the mouths of the Ganges River he said that the climate “was soft and agreeable because of the sea.” Not many would concur with him unless the climate of the seventh century was drastically different than it is now.

Or it may be that he was inspired by the Buddhist ideal as it was expressed in one of the *Wisdom Sutras*: “If thou goest eastward . . . abandon all thy thoughts about growing tired, about sleep, eating and drinking, day and night, cold and heat; do not trouble thyself at all about such affairs; have no thought whatever about them.”³

Traveling Around the East Coast

Xuanzang’s written account of the kingdoms he visited in the rest of India is much less detailed than his description of northern India and

much vaguer about the length of his stays in each place.⁴ However, we do know that he spent time in the kingdom of Irana to the east of Nalanda in western Bengal. He reported that there were ten monasteries and four thousand priests in the area. He immersed himself once again in studying Hinayana scriptures, books that were the farthest removed from his own Idealist beliefs.⁵ From there Xuanzang followed the Ganges River until he reached modern-day Bangladesh, and what was then an area of dense forests, inhabited by wild elephants, rhinoceroses, wolves, and black leopards.⁶ Keeping a path in a northerly direction, the pilgrim reached Assam. "The country was low and moist; the crops were regular; the Jack fruit and Cocoa were in great esteem though plentiful; there were continuous streams and tanks to the towns; the climate was genial. . . . The reigning king . . . was a brahmin by caste. . . . His Majesty was a lover of learning and his subjects followed his example; men of ability came from far lands to study here; though the king was not a Buddhist he treated accomplished sramanas [monks] with respect."⁷ Later on Xuanzang would visit Assam on the invitation of this king even though he was a Hindu.

In Assam Xuanzang learned that the borders of Sichuan in China were only two months' journey distant. However, the mountains and rivers were filled with poisonous snakes and pestilential vapors. When he was farther south along the coast at Samatata (near present-day Dacca), he heard of six kingdoms lying to the east; among them were what are now Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

Perhaps he felt a surge of homesickness before he turned back toward India, recrossing all "the mouths of the Ganges River" as they are called on modern maps, to reach the famous seaport from whence both the pious Faxian and Yijing had made their sea journeys back to China! There at Tamralipti (Tamluk), forty-one miles southwest of Calcutta, he heard that in the middle of the ocean was a country called Simhala (Sri Lanka), which was distinguished for its scholars of early Buddhism. A south Indian whom he met explained that this holy island was thousands of miles away. He should not go by sea because of the dangers of storms and bad weather; it would be far better to go south through Orissa, see the sacred traces along the east coast, and talk with scholars, traveling until he reached the

southernmost tip of India. From there he might take a boat across the Palk Straits and reach Simhala in a few days.

This he proceeded to do. When he came to Odra country (Orissa), he found one hundred Buddhist monasteries and “a myriad of brethren, all Mahayanist. There were more than ten Asoka topes at places where the Buddha had preached. In the southwest of this country was the Pushpagiri Monastery.” Xuanzang’s description remained a mystery in the absence of any archaeological findings to prove it until recent excavations, which have brought to light what is called eastern India’s oldest Ashokan stupa and stone inscription bearing his name, dating back to the third century B.C.E.⁸

Xuanzang stopped at an Orissa seaport. On hot tropical nights when the sky was clear and without clouds, he sometimes fancied that he saw “at a great distance the glittering rays of the precious gem placed at the top of the Stupa of the Tooth of Buddha; its appearance [was] like that of a shining star in the midst of space.”⁹ This imagining of emanations from Simhala (which is at least 1,000 miles away by sea) is in great contrast to his precision in debate, his fine-tuned discrimination in matters of philosophy, and his general accuracy in reporting. It seems rather to be a kind of imaginative leap in which the Temple of the Tooth (Fig. 8.1) becomes the beckoning star for his long journey to the south of India.

Exploring a Rock-Cut Cave in South Kosala

The next important Buddhist center Xuanzang visited was South Kosala. “This country, more than 6000 *li* in circuit, was surrounded by mountains and was a succession of woods and marshes, its capital being above 40 *li* in circuit. The soil of the country was rich and fertile, the towns and villages were close together; the people were prosperous, tall of stature and black in colour; the king was a kshatriya by birth, a Buddhist in religion, and of noted benevolence. There were above 100 Buddhist monasteries; and about 10,000 Brethren, all Mahayanists.”¹⁰ South Kosala was well-known as the home of the famous Nagarjuna, who is thought to have lived around 100–200 C.E. Nagarjuna was a founder of the Madhyamika school of Buddhism, whose principal ideas have survived to the

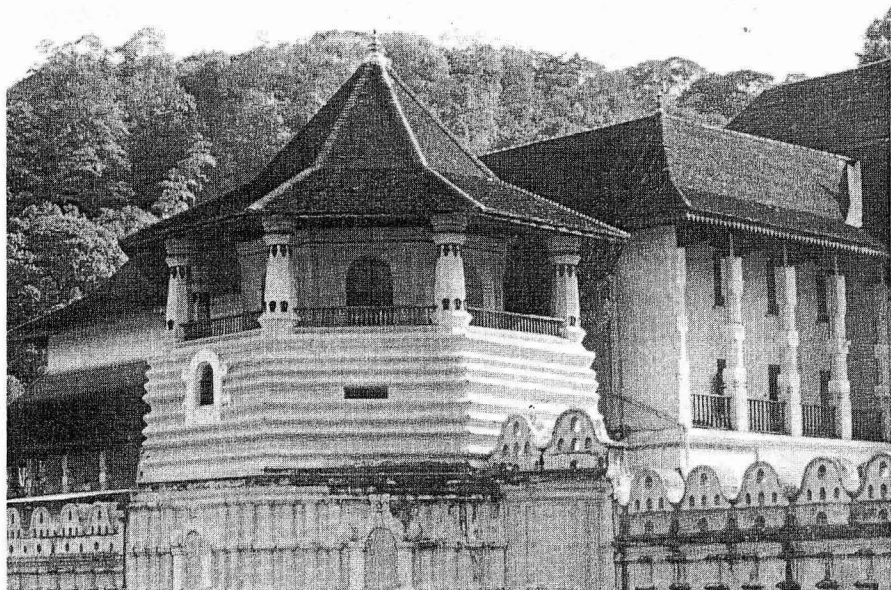


FIGURE 8.1

Temple of the Tooth in present-day Sri Lanka. When Xuanzang was on the northeast coast of India, he thought he saw the glittering of the gem topping the Stupa of the Tooth.

present day in Tibet, China, and Japan. The Madhyamika school was known especially for the systematizing of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*. Madhyamika means “middle”: The Madhyamikas are those who take the middle way between affirming and denying.

Nagarjuna was among those who developed the Mahayana concept of *Emptiness* and opposed the rigid categories of existence and non-existence, seeking a middle way between affirmation and denial. He believed that the way to salvation was the contemplation of unreality or emptiness. The Doctrine of *Emptiness* or *void* provided a new basis for Buddhist art, for it became possible to render the Buddha without asserting that it was a representation of true reality but rather a pale reflection of it.¹¹

While Xuanzang was in South Kosala, he heard some of the legends that had grown around “this second Buddha,” as Nagarjuna

was sometimes called.¹² There were several about Nagarjuna as a magician, but one of the legends Xuanzang recorded was how the king was having a monastery quarried for Nagarjuna in the mountains and ran out of funds. The monastery, sometimes called the Pigeon Monastery, was an extraordinary place with cloisters and lofty halls: "These halls were in five tiers . . . with temples containing gold life-sized images of the Buddha of perfect artistic beauty . . . the chambers were lighted by windows cut in the rock."¹³ And even more intriguing, "From the high peak of the mountain, descending streamlets like small cascades, flow through the different stories, winding round the side galleries and then discharging themselves without."¹⁴ But in the building of this monastery the king's treasure became exhausted, and Nagarjuna then provided an abundant supply of funds by transmuting the rocks into gold!

This wonderful rock-cut monastery with golden Buddhas and cascading waterfalls was also described by the pious Faxian when he visited India two centuries earlier. Caves were particularly adapted to Indian climate for they are both cool in summer and warm in winter.¹⁵ Several of these monastery caves, such as Ellora and Ajanta, are as grand in size as this one; their sculpture and wall paintings are world-renowned.

In the 1950s during the Communist upheavals in China, a historian retold Xuanzang's journey to the West in the form of a novel.¹⁶ The book has a haunting description of Xuanzang visiting a cave set deep in the side of the mountain. The cave was inhabited by a demon, and men were afraid to enter. Its pavilions had fallen into ruin. Xuanzang found candlesticks that had fallen over, spiderwebs, and pitch-black halls. Behind jeweled curtains were images of the Three Buddhas of the Past, Present, and Future. Xuanzang prostrated himself, feeling saddened and cold. Then he dusted the altar in front of the Buddhas. The farther he went in the mountain, the higher were the halls. Passing through several courtyards, he climbed a tall tower. A fox—or was it a cat?—ran past his feet. One building was for storing sutras, Sanskrit texts written on palm leaves, now covered with dust and mildew. He heard the whirring wings of bats as he came to a tall, seated jade-covered body of the Buddha. In the flickering light of his torch, it almost seemed as if Buddha had come to life in a moment of discovery and reward.

Visiting Andhra and the South

From South Kosala, where he had heard that the king was well disposed toward learning and the arts and that there were a hundred monasteries and ten thousand monks, Xuanzang headed back toward the coast through a vast forest to the ancient Kingdom of Andhra between the Godavari and Krishna Rivers.¹⁷ He stated that there were twenty monasteries and five thousand monks. This was the home of Dignaga, the great logician, whose writings Xuanzang knew very well. He had studied them both in Kashmir and more recently in South Kosala. A stone stupa marked the place where Dignaga had composed his classic, the *Treatise on Logic*. Xuanzang related the legend of how Dignaga listened to the advice of Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, a story that is meant to show how Dignaga gave up Hinayana Buddhism when he listened to the Bodhisattva.

From South Kosala Xuanzang went on to Dhanakataka, the kingdom usually identified with the modern city of Bezwada. Xuanzang tells us that there was a crowd of Buddhist monasteries, many of them deserted, with about twenty still in use, with three thousand monks, mostly adherents of Nagarjuna's philosophy. He studied with them during the rainy season in 639, and he in turn taught them some of his favorite texts. The most famous site in the kingdom was the great stupa at Amaravati, a third-century C.E. stupa whose exquisite carvings have made it well known in the history of Indian sculpture.¹⁸

He was eager to reach Dravida, the land of the Tamils, in the south, whose capital was Kancipuram. He stayed there for a considerable period during the Rain Retreat in 640, hoping to go to Simhala. Kancipuram was the birthplace of Dharmapala (528-560), who has been called Xuanzang's spiritual grandfather because he had been the teacher of the Venerable Silabhadra. Xuanzang recounted a dramatic story of the young Dharmapala: He was about to be married to the princess of Kancipuram, and on his wedding night when he was in the midst of his prayers he was suddenly whisked off by a god to a monastery where he might pursue the vocation of a monk.

Xuanzang was greatly influenced by this follower of the Yogacara School who was the author of a number of celebrated works of Mahayana literature; among them was his commentary on Vasubandhu's *Thirty Verses*. In 649 C.E., when Xuanzang returned to China, he

made a synthesis of ten commentaries by Indian philosophers on the *Thirty Verses*, based chiefly on Dharmapala's commentary. It became the standard textbook of Idealism in China and Japan.¹⁹

Imagining Simhala (Sri Lanka)

It is not too surprising that Xuanzang, who had dreamed or imagined that he saw the glittering rays of the Temple of the Tooth in Simhala when he was in northern India, devoted an entire chapter to the holy island when he got to the south. He had thought that the monks in Simhala were knowledgeable about the *Treatise of the Stages of Yoga Practice*, but when he talked about it with a Sinhalese monk, it turned out that he could not give a better explanation than the Venerable Silabhadra had. However, Faxian had written a glowing account of his two years in Simhala, which perhaps whetted Xuanzang's desire to see it. He does not fail to repeat Simhala's most famous legends, that of the founding of its people and the story of Mahendra, the son of Asoka who brought Buddhism to the island. Xuanzang described the Temple of the Tooth whose emanations he had seen earlier. He referred to Simhala as the Land of Gems because of the many precious stones found there. It continues to be known by that name, and for the same reason.

Xuanzang recounted that the monks "were very precise in the observance of rules, perfectly clear in meditation and wisdom, and very grave in their model deportment." Fine words of praise, but the country as a whole was not as blessed as its monks. While Xuanzang was making his way to Kancipuram, Simhala was enduring both civil wars and famine as a result of a palace revolution. Just as he was about to leave on a three-day sail to Simhala, three hundred monks who had fled their land came to him and urged him to abandon his plans.

Touring the West Coast

Xuanzang did not have much to say about his journey from Dravida, in the south of India, to the area around what is now

called Bombay, in the north on the west coast, a distance of roughly 900 miles. Accompanied by seventy Simhalese monks, he made his way to Nasik, the capital of King Pulakesin II. This area was already known as Maharashtra. The king was a powerful monarch with strong military inclinations who boasted of his arms. The people of the country preferred death to disloyalty, and the king being of the warrior caste by birth loved the military arts. Xuanzang's biographer relates that whenever "generals went to fight with his enemies and were defeated in battle, they were not inflicted with any punishment, but were simply ordered to wear women's dress in order to humiliate them."²⁰ Many of them committed suicide.

Like King Harsha, King Pulakesin kept several hundred wild elephants, to which, as the time of battle approached, he gave much wine to drink; then they routed the enemy. Relying on military strength and discipline as well, he held his enemies' kingdoms in contempt. Xuanzang wrote, "The king in consequence of his possessing these men and elephants, treats his neighbors with contempt. He is of the Kshatriya caste, and his name is Pulakesi. . . . His plans and undertakings are wide-spread, and his beneficent actions are felt over a great distance. His subjects obey him with perfect submission. At the present time Siladitya Maharaja [King Harsha] has conquered the nations from east to west, and carried his arms to remote districts, but the people of this country alone have not submitted arms to him."²¹ Xuanzang's description of these warlike characteristics of the people of Maharashtra reflects their reputation even in British imperial times; they were the last to submit to colonial rule.

Although the Calukya dynasty was Hindu, there were one hundred Buddhist monasteries in the kingdom. What is of greatest interest is Xuanzang's description of one of them:

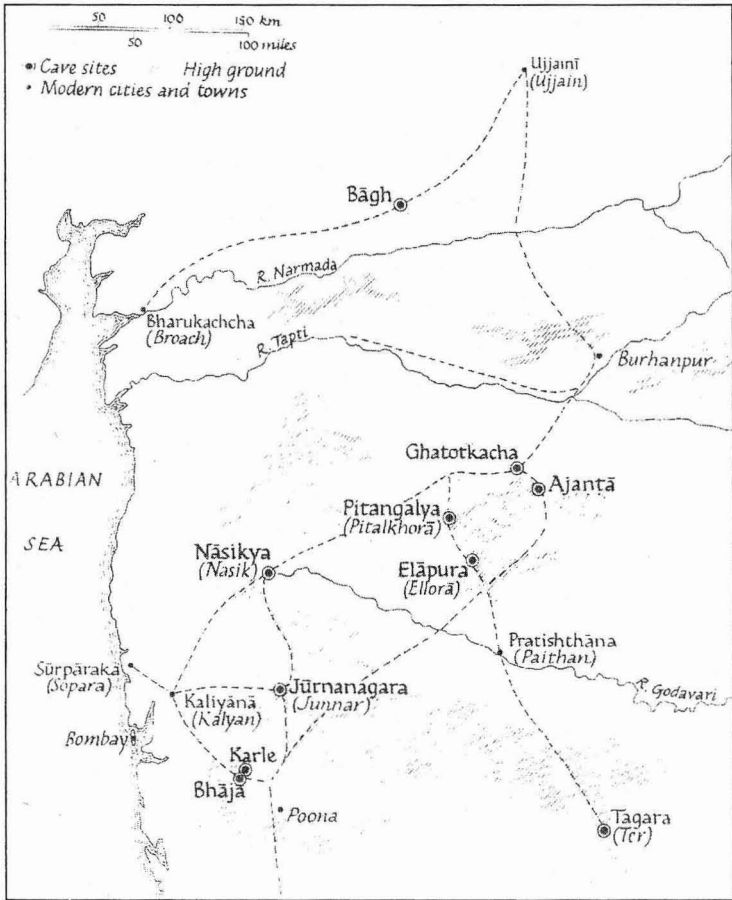
In the east of this country was a mountain range, ridges one above another in succession, tiers of peaks and sheer summits. Here was a monastery the base of which was in a dark defile, and its lofty halls and deep chambers were quarried in the cliff and rested on the peak, its tiers of halls and storeyed terraces had the cliff on their back and faced the ravine. . . . Within the establishment . . . was a large temple above 100 feet high in which was a stone

image of the Buddha above seventy feet high; the image was surmounted by a tier of seven canopies unattached and unsupported. . . . The walls of this temple had depicted on them the incidents of the Buddha's career as Bodhisattva, including the circumstances of his obtaining bodhi and the omens attending his final passing away, all great and small were here delineated.²²

Xuanzang captured the monumentality of Ajanta. He mentioned that the logician Dignaga “stayed much in this place”—surely a special attraction for him. This monastery has been identified with the magnificent caves of Ajanta and its famous rock temples (Fig. 8.2).

FIGURE 8.2
*Ajanta Cave #1:
Interior shrine door
and large Buddha
image. The cave
(late fifth century
C.E.), one of the
most famous of the
more than thirty
rock-cut Hinayana
and Mahayana
caves at Ajanta,
may have been vis-
ited by Xuanzang.*





MAP 8.2

Archaeological Survey of India map of trade routes and sites of major rock-cut caves, including Ajanta and Bhaja. Monks often located their retreats near ancient trade routes, which passed from the western seaports to the inland centers. The Archaeological Survey of India.

Huili did not mention Ajanta, although the distance and direction of the pilgrim's next journey support the claim that he did indeed visit Ajanta and see the splendid wall paintings there. The setting is dramatic, with spectacular cliffs sheering down to an emerald pool with an enchanting waterfall spilling into it at one end. Thirty rock-hewn caves have been cut into the scarp of a horseshoe-shaped cliff.

Like the monasteries on the Silk Road oases, the Indian monks' retreats were usually located near ancient trade routes. Because of salt marshes along the coast, these routes passed from the western seaports near Bombay through the Ghats, which Xuanzang described, to the inland centers of Ujjaini (Ujjain) or to Bharukaccha (Broach) on the coast. Xuanzang undoubtedly followed such a trade route when he went from Ajanta in Maharashtra on his way to Broach.

During that summer of 641 at Nasik, he might have visited the rock-cut caves of Bhaja (Fig. 8.3) to the south, or stood in Ajanta's pillared hall, where religious ceremonies or meetings of the Sangha were held, or worshipped at a sanctuary with a stupa or a solid figure of the Buddha at one end.

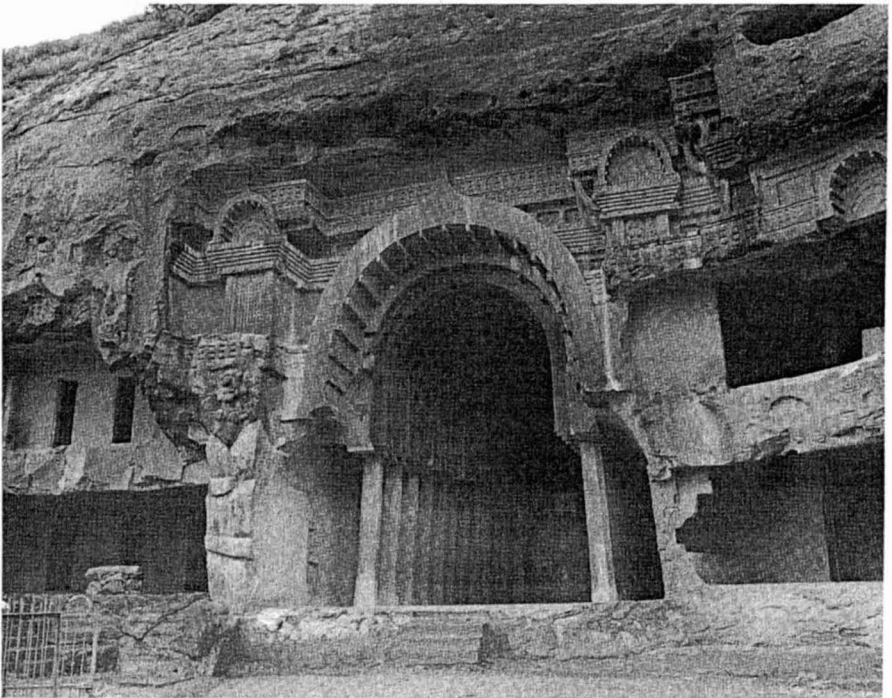


FIGURE 8.3
Exterior view and entrance of the sanctuary of the ancient rock-cut cave at Bhaja, dating from the late second–early first century B.C.E. Such caves, important centers of ritual and places of pilgrimage and learning, had large halls of worship.

Or perhaps he stopped before the majesty of a painting, known as the Bodhisattva of the Blue Lotus (Fig. 8.4). If indeed he viewed the perfect peace and tranquility of this face, he would have been part of an endless stream of pilgrims throughout the centuries who have done so.

Farther north Xuanzang visited Malva, a cultured and civilized part of India, which he compared with Magadha. He said that there were several hundreds of monasteries and more than twenty thousand Hinayana Buddhists, by far the largest number mentioned. "Their language is elegant and clear," he told us. "Their learning is wide and profound." In the fifth century, Malva was the home of Kalidasa, perhaps the greatest of the Sanskrit poets.



FIGURE 8.4

Painting known as the Bodhisattva of the Blue Lotus, on the wall of Cave #1 at Ajanta. The only Buddhist paintings that survive in India are at Ajanta.

Xuanzang was on his way to the Kathiawar Peninsula (Gujarat). There he found more traders than farmers; then as now, the people of the kingdom of Valabhi on the peninsula lived on its trade with the Persian Gulf. In one of the west coast seaports he learned about Persia, then on the eve of the fall of the Sassanid empire. Xuanzang reported: "They draw the water up to irrigate their fields. The people are rich and affluent. The country produces gold, silver, copper, rock crystal, . . . rare pearls, and various precious substances. Their artists know how to weave fine brocaded silks, woollen stuffs, carpets and so on. They have many *shen* horses and camels. . . . There are two or three *sangharamas* [monasteries] with several hundred priests, who principally study the teaching of the Little Vehicle."²³ He also learned about Hormuz, a city on the Persian Gulf, and an island to the southwest called the Land of the Western Women.²⁴

At this point the pilgrim's travels become more difficult to follow. His own account and that of his biographer diverge.²⁵ He traveled around northern India and through Sindh, in what is now Pakistan. Multan, in the country of Morasampuru, is the only place we can distinguish with certainty. The people there sacrificed to the gods, and worshipped the Sun God, Surya. Xuanzang visited the famous sun temple at Multan and depicts it vividly: "There is a temple dedicated to the sun, very magnificent and profusely decorated. The image of the Sun-deva is cast in yellow gold and ornamented with rare gems. Its divine insight is mysteriously manifested and its spiritual power made plain to all."²⁶

Xuanzang observed that even the kings and high families of the Five Indias²⁷ never failed to make offerings of gems and precious stones: "Men from all countries come here to offer up their prayers; there are always some thousands doing so." There was also a house of mercy which provided food, drink, and medicines for the poor and sick.²⁸

Perhaps Xuanzang remembered seeing the portrayals of the Sun God at Bodh Gaya and Bamiyan. There were several important temples dedicated to Surya worship in northwest India. "Even in primitive Buddhism, Sakyamuni [The Historical Buddha] had come to be identified with the Sun God, and his nativity likened to the rising of another sun."²⁹

The Sun God statue and temple at Multan, as Xuanzang reported, were surrounded by ponds and flowery groves of trees, tastefully arranged tiles, surrounding steps, all of which inspired feelings of admiration. Such an oasis does not accord with the popular Persian rhyme about Multan:

*With four things rare Multan abounds,
Dust, beggars, heat and burial grounds.*³⁰

Staying at Nalanda Monastery Again

Xuanzang remained for two months at Parvata in the region of the Jamur River, 700 *li* northwest of Multan, before returning to Nalanda in 642 for his second visit there. After paying his respects to his teacher, the Venerable Silabhadra, at Nalanda, he went on a short distance from the monastery to study for two months with a philosopher who was an authority on grammar and logic. Then he went on to study for two years with the distinguished scholar and eccentric named Jayasena, who had his own school of wisdom. Xuanzang was becoming well-versed in the hidden meanings of various schools of Buddhism, though there were many difficulties in the rich, speculative commentaries of each; Buddhist philosophy had become one of the most developed systems of Indian thought.³¹

Xuanzang studied the *Lankavatara Sutra*, a verse compendium of Idealist philosophy, with Jayasena. He kept trying to solve some of the ambiguous parts of the *Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice*, a work that he knew well; this scripture was the very text that had lured him to India in the first place. He struggled over passages of a work in logic having to do with methods of refutation and argumentation. He kept asking for explanations of passages in the Yoga and Hetuvidya sastras that still caused him doubt.³² Did he, like the French philosopher Abelard in the twelfth century, regard healthy skepticism as the key to knowledge and understanding? What was the nature of his doubts? Even after twenty years of study, he wasn't sure of some of the ideas and interpretations he encountered on his Indian travels.

Yet his fundamental character seems to suggest someone with a well-defined goal, a set of principles. It may be that when the young

Xuanzang journeyed forth from China he was inspired by the Buddhist Ideal as expressed in one of the *Wisdom Sutras*. After urging that the true pilgrim should not think about food, sleep, fatigue, cold, or heat, it advises being completely detached in the human sphere. Finally it goes to the heart of Buddhist doctrine: "Assert no dualistic notions as to subject and object, inner and outer, etc; while walking along, do not turn either side, left or right; do not think of the points of the compass, front or behind, above or below; do not be disturbed with thy form (*rūpa*), sensation (*vedana*), thought (*samjñā*), conformation (*sanskāra*), and consciousness (*viñāna*). Why? Because he who is disturbed in these walks into birth-and-death, and not into the Buddhist life will never attain Prajnaparamita (True Wisdom)." ³³

During Xuanzang's two-year stay with Jayasena, the two of them visit a Bodhi monastery in which Jayasena comments on the unusual size of the Buddha relic bones and is skeptical about how genuine they might be. Xuanzang also expresses his doubts, which is very unusual since Xuanzang is often portrayed as being devout to the point of gullibility. Indeed it is this very characteristic that is played out in the caricature of Xuanzang in *Journey to the West*. Does this suggest that an unusual candor existed between them, as Lusthaus suggests? It is an intriguing idea. ³⁴

While he was at Jayasena's hermitage, Xuanzang had an ominous dream. He saw the cells of Nalanda deserted and filthy, and when he looked more closely, they seemed to be inhabited by water buffalo. Then he beheld the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, Manjusri, who showed him a fierce fire burning through all the villages and towns outside the monastery. Manjusri said to him: "You should return soon, for after ten years, King Harsha will be dead and India will be laid waste. Remember what I have said."

In point of fact King Harsha died in 647 C.E., even sooner than had been foretold. India, however, suffered famine and disorder as the dream predicted. For a period of five or six hundred years there was obscurity, confusion, and disintegration. Apparently the death of King Harsha "loosened the ties which held the empire together." ³⁵

In 642, Xuanzang returned once more to Nalanda Monastery. This time he lectured occasionally and devoted himself to writing a treatise called *On the Harmony of True Principles* or the *Non-Difference Between Madhyamika and Yogacara*. In it he tried to

reconcile the Idealist School that sprang from the two great Idealists, Asanga and Vasubandhu, and the School of the Middle Way of the skeptic, Nagarjuna. He attempted to show that there was no significant difference between believing that mental happenings alone are real (Idealism) and believing that the only reality is the wisdom that consists in denying all reality (Prajna School).³⁶

His return coincided with an invitation from King Harsha to send four men from Nalanda to engage in a religious debate with Hinayana believers in Orissa. Although Xuanzang was among those chosen to go, for some reason this debate was put off. Instead Xuanzang found himself engaged in a dispute with a Hindu Brahmin. This man, like Martin Luther, who would nail his famous ninety-five theses on the doors of All Saints' Church at Wittenberg, had hung up forty-four propositions on the monastery gates of Nalanda, declaring that if anyone could refute a single one of the propositions, the supporter would be willing to forfeit his head!

Xuanzang took up the challenge. Before he dealt with the Brahmin, he criticized the adherents of the *Samkhya* and *Vaiseshika* systems of Hindu philosophy, two of the most famous rival schools of the day. After addressing the arguments of the adherents of those schools, he reproved them for the variety of Hindu ascetics such as the man whose body was smeared all over with ashes, saying that he looked just like a cat who had slept in a chimney corner; or the man wearing only a chaplet of skulls, who reminded him of a vampire in a graveyard; or the man belonging to a sect which smeared themselves with dung and ate human excrement, who, said Xuanzang, "stank like a pig in a cesspool." He asked, "How can you Hindus regard these things as proofs of wisdom? Are they not evidences of madness and folly?"

For all his attraction to Buddhist philosophy in India, a part of Xuanzang stayed true to a belief in moderation, consistent with his Confucian upbringing. And as he begins to think about going back to China, this side of Xuanzang becomes more evident.

In the end, Xuanzang was victorious in argument against everyone including the Brahmin who had issued the challenge. Instead of asking him to "forfeit his head," Xuanzang first asked him to be his servant. Then he insisted that the two of them engage in many long conversations, and on the basis of these talks, he composed *The Destruction of Heresy*, refuting Hindu arguments. Then Xuanzang

released the Brahmin, who, filled with joy, went forth to the king of Assam to tell him of the remarkable qualities of the Master of the Law. The king lost no time in dispatching a messenger bidding Xuanzang to come to his court.

Meeting with a Fortune-Teller

The end of 642 C.E. An ordinary day, a day like any other. One day before the king of Assam's messenger arrived, a naked Jain named Vajra unexpectedly walked into Xuanzang's cell at Nalanda. Knowing that Jains are famous for their fortune-telling skills, Xuanzang asked him a series of questions. "Should I return immediately? Should I stay longer in India? Will I get back safely? How much longer am I going to live?" The Jain diviner gave the kind of answers that could be construed in several ways. However, when Xuanzang told him that he had collected so many sacred images and books that he didn't know how he can carry them back to China, the fortune-teller gave him some interesting information.

"King Harsha and King Kumara of Assam will supply you with transport," he said.

"But I have never met either of them," objected Xuanzang. "There is no reason for either of them to do me such a kindness."

"Do not be anxious." The diviner then told him that both kings would dispatch escorts for him and that he would successfully return without accident.³⁷

Xuanzang made up his mind to return to China. When the monks at Nalanda heard about it, they begged him to remain, saying that India was the place of the Buddha's birth and that the sacred traces of the Buddha were in India. What is more, China was a country of no importance with a shallow religion. Of course the Buddhas were never born there. The people were narrow-minded and their coarseness was profound. The climate was cold there and the road dangerous. "Why do you think of going back?"

The Indian monks underestimated the deep and underlying loyalties of Xuanzang's nature. "The King of the Law in establishing the principles of his doctrine, designed them for universal diffusion,"

retorted Xuanzang, the Chinese monk. And then Xuanzang, the Chinese patriot, subject of the Tang empire and loyal to the Emperor Taizong, launched forth: "Moreover, China is a highly civilized country where the people have a high standard of behaviour, the Emperor is sagacious, and his ministers are loyal, and the father is kind toward his son, while the son is filial toward his father. Kindness and righteousness are esteemed and the aged and wise are respected."³⁸

That was pure Confucian doctrine, for Confucianism regards a benevolent social order as the highest good. This order begins with the ruler at the top, with the prince, through officials, scholars, and gentlemen to the father of the family, each with authority over those below them, but each also with the responsibility to set a good example. "Right relationships" are carefully defined for each association, father and son, subject and ruler, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and so on.³⁹

This benevolent order extends to the right relation with the ruler of Heaven or the gods. Thus the Confucian patriot continued: "Their wisdom is corresponding with that of the gods. They act in accordance with the laws of nature. . . . They are able to enslave the birds and beasts, inspire the ghosts and spirits and employ the principles of negativity [Yin] and positivity [Yang] for the benefit of all creatures."⁴⁰

A panegyric composed after he returned to China? Perhaps, but certainly one that might have come from Xuanzang's own lips at the very thought of returning to his homeland.

And Xuanzang reminded the monks that no less a sage than their own Vimalakirti had once asked, "Why does the sun travel over the world of men?"

"To disperse the gloom," was the answer. This also is the reason Xuanzang proposed to return to his native land. To his teacher, the Venerable Silabhadra, he elaborates the reasons for his return.

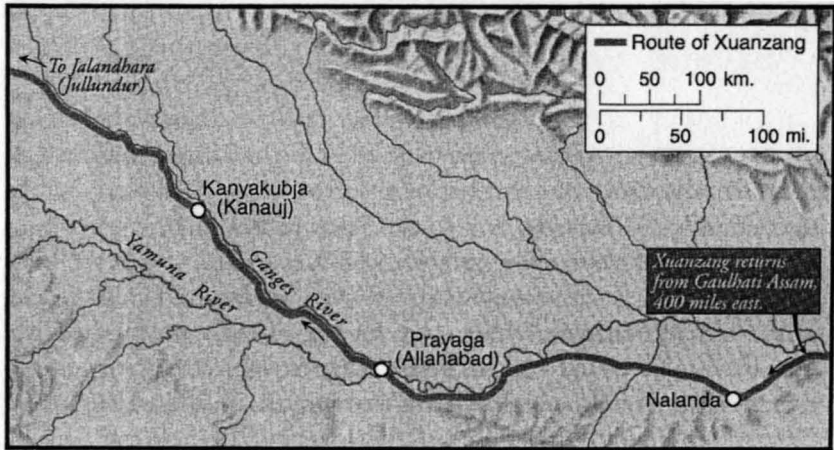
This country is the place of Buddha's birth; it is impossible not to regard it with affection; only Hiuen-Tsiang's intention in coming hither was to inquire after the great law for the benefit of his fellow creatures. Since my arrival here, you, sir, have condescended to explain (or, *recite*) the Yogacharya-bhumi-sastra, and to investigate doubtful passages. I have visited and adored the sacred ves-

tiges of our religion, and heard the profound exposition of the different schools. My mind has been overjoyed, and my visit here has, I protest, been of the utmost profit. I desire now to go back and translate and explain to others what I have heard, so as to cause others also to be equally grateful to you, with myself, in hearing and understanding these things; and for this reason I am unwilling to delay my return and remain here.⁴¹

Xuanzang began to gather up his books, his statues, his manuscripts, preparatory to his return. Two days later the messenger from the king of Assam appeared. With his arrival began the dramatic finale of Xuanzang's stay in India.


NINE

THE JOURNEY HOME TO CHINA



MAP 9.1

Itinerary of Xuanzang from India to Western China (Nalanda to Jalandhara).

 The scene of Xuanzang's greatest triumph in debate took place in the capital of King Harsha on the Ganges River, in the twelfth month, 642 C.E. The pilgrim was at the height of his powers; he had consequential meetings with the king of Turfan, met the Great Khan of the Western Turks and the king of Samarkand, and consorted with oasis kings and the kings of Bamiyan and Kapisa, as well as with eminent Buddhist leaders. He had spent twelve or thirteen years crisscrossing the Indian subcontinent, becoming one of the great metaphysicians of medieval Buddhism.

Meeting King Harsha

At age forty Xuanzang would have the heady experience of being sought out and even quarreled over by both the king of Assam and King Harsha, who was the last of the great Buddhist rulers before the triumph of Hinduism and the invasion of Islam.

Just as the fortune-teller had foretold, a messenger from the king of Assam arrived with an invitation to visit his capital Gauhati, 400 miles east of Nalanda. Xuanzang, having already promised King Harsha that he would visit his court at some future date, was uncertain what to do. In the end he spent two months with the king of Assam, who not only received him with honors but, even though he was Hindu, also became a lay member of the Buddhist community. For the king's benefit, Xuanzang composed the third of the treatises that he wrote in India, a work on *The Three Persons of the Buddha*: the Phantom Buddha, who seemed to lead an earthly existence; the Social Buddha, who communicated with the Bodhisattvas; and the Transcendental Buddha.¹

King Harsha, having returned from a military expedition in Orissa, heard that the Chinese pilgrim was with the king of Assam. He demanded that Xuanzang return at once. After a rather foolish display of bravado, the vassal king of Assam complied. He equipped a grand river flotilla and made his way with his Chinese guest to the camp of King Harsha on the Ganges River.

On the river journey on his way to meet the illustrious king Harsha, did Xuanzang remember the first time he was summoned by a king? How indeed, having left China as a fugitive, and nearly losing

his life in the desert, the Turfan king, like King Harsha, had demanded that he come to his court? How, from then on, his fortunes changed? How he was then given royal welcomes, and royal escorts all the way to Afghanistan?

In a dramatic middle-of-the night rendezvous (presumably the king could not wait until morning) several hundred men played golden drums by the light of flaming torches. As the king marched, he was always accompanied by drummers who “beat one stroke of the drum for every step taken”; no other king was permitted to march with drums keeping time to his gait. King Harsha came to Xuanzang’s pavilion, bowed at his feet, scattered flowers and recited long verses praising him.

Such was the respect paid to religious leaders in India as well as in Central Asia. Such also was his reaching out to Xuanzang and to Mahayana Buddhism. Like many a ruling monarch, King Harsha had a conscious policy of evenhandedness toward the ardently competing religions of his kingdom. He engaged publicly in the sun worship of his father, sacrificed to the Hindu god Siva, and supported Buddhist endeavors. When he began to favor Xuanzang and lose sight of this balancing of many religions, the consequences were serious and nearly cost him his life.

King Harsha placed a high value on the talented men of his kingdom, according to Xuanzang, often leading them “to the lion throne,” or highest place of honor, and listening to what they had to say. The king himself was both a poet and dramatist. One of the luminaries of his court had been the illustrious Hindu poet named Bana, who subsequently wrote about him in a famous Sanskrit poem. King Harsha was continually rewarding “the learned, the clever and the pious.”²

For this patron of learning Xuanzang had an additional exotic attraction—he was from far away, and specifically from China. When describing their portentous meeting, Xuanzang writes that the king had said: “You came from China, and I have heard you have a musical composition called the ‘Triumph of the Prince of Chin’ [Qin] in your country. I do not know who this Prince of Chin is and what meritorious deeds he has done to earn such praises for himself.”³

Xuanzang replied in an unusual passage. Normally it was only his biographer who recorded his personal reactions. This time he included his own reply to King Harsha in his *Record of the Western*

Regions, written for the Tang emperor. He explained to King Harsha that his emperor had been the Prince of Qin and the people had composed this song and dance to celebrate his victory in 620 C.E. over the last opponents of the Tang dynasty. Then Xuanzang used the opportunity to deliver in high-flown Chinese a eulogy of his emperor.

At that time the whole country was in a condition of complete tumult without a lord to rule over the people. Human corpses piled high in the wild fields and human blood flowed in the rivers. Evil stars appeared in the sky at night and an ominous atmosphere condensed during the day. The three rivers were suffering under avaricious pigs and the four seas were troubled by poisonous snakes. Being a son of the emperor, the prince led his troops personally and suppressed the rebellious forces, in compliance with the order of Heaven. With his military power he established peace in the whole country and restored tranquility in the universe, making the sun, the moon and the stars shine brightly again. As people in the whole country felt grateful to him, they composed music in praise of him.⁴

After these flattering words, did Xuanzang go on to suggest that there should be diplomatic relations between King Harsha and the Tang court? Or was it King Harsha himself who initiated fruitful contact between the two great powers? Whichever it was, Chinese sources record the arrival of an embassy from Kanauj (Kanyakubja) in 641. There were four Tang embassies to Middle India between 641 and 658. On one of them the Chinese envoys returned with a "longevity doctor" who claimed to be 200 years old and able to produce an elixir of long life. (The emperor tried some of his medicine.) On another mission the Chinese sought to learn the technology of sugar making. At no other time, at least until the Ming dynasty, were so many embassies sent to an Indian kingdom so frequently in so short a period.⁵

At their next meeting at King Harsha's palace, the king was eager to see *The Destruction of Heresy*, a treatise Xuanzang had composed at Nalanda. After examining this polemic against the opponents of Mahayana Buddhism, both Hinayana and Hindu, the king addressed his court: "I have heard that when the sun rises in its splendour, the light of the glow-worm is eclipsed, and when the sound of heaven's thunder is heard, then the noise of the hammer and chisel is silenced,

so with regard to the doctrine which the Master defends, all the others have been destroyed.”⁶

King Harsha was so impressed that he proposed a grand tournament at Kanyakubja, to which he invited the disciples of all religious schools. Many years before, Xuanzang had participated in a five-day religious debate called by the king of Kapisa, but that was on a small scale compared to this one.

Debating in the Grand Tournament

642 C.E. Twelfth month. Kanyakubja. Hour after hour of waiting. Xuanzang watches the kings of eighteen vassal kingdoms, three thousand Buddhist monks, three thousand Hindus and Jains, gather. Some of the visitors arrive on elephants, others in chariots, some are carried in palanquins, many are surrounded by parasols and standards, and all of the celebrated visitors are accompanied by a retinue of servants. King Harsha and the king of Assam lead the procession. A huge, elaborately caparisoned elephant carries a golden image of the Buddha on its back. King Harsha, dressed as the god Indra and holding a white fly whisk, walks on the right of the image, and the king of Assam, dressed as Brahma, holding a parasol, is on its left.

Monks chant holy verses. Flowers are scattered in the path of the holy procession. Before and behind the statue one hundred elephants carry musicians beating drums. Xuanzang and the king's chaplains also ride on elephants followed by vassal kings and distinguished visitors. King Harsha places the golden Buddha image on a jewel-encrusted throne. This celebration of "more than oriental splendor" takes place on a mile-long ride from the king's palace to the place of the Great Debate. As a grand climax King Harsha provides a sumptuous banquet and makes offerings of gold, robes, and other valuables to the Buddha image and gives presents to all the monks. Only then is the Buddhist Master of the Law permitted to speak. Xuanzang explains in a voice that is clear and forceful, and in language elegant and harmonious, his treatise on the superiority of Mahayana Buddhism. He departs himself gravely, and is as handsome as a figure in a painting.⁷

The drama intensified. During their five-day meeting the theological battlefield became a bloody one. Xuanzang's opponents were seething with rage and made threats on his life. When the king heard of their vicious intent he issued a proclamation that anyone daring to harm the monk would be beheaded, and anyone insulting him would have his tongue cut out. As no one dared to refute Xuanzang's teaching during the eighteen-day period when challenges were entertained, the king declared him winner of the debate and arranged a triumphal procession to celebrate his victory.

In his account Xuanzang recorded that the Buddha shrine was set on fire. The fire was extinguished and the irate Brahmins went even further in their fury: They hired a man to kill King Harsha. The brave monarch was able to subdue the would-be assassin and hand him over to his officers. The political wisdom that King Harsha had until then shown in encouraging all major religions had been violated this time and the consequences were immediate.

Xuanzang, too, was in a difficult position. He was becoming closer and closer to the king, who was attracted to him and to Mahayana Buddhism. Although Xuanzang had experience with many monarchs by this time, he must have reminded himself of the injunction in Buddhist Wisdom Sutras: "Be done away with flattery; cherish no self-conceit, or arrogance; free thyself from the idea of being, from the desire of making a name, of amassing wealth; free thyself from the five hindrances, from envy."⁸

Many years later Xuanzang acknowledged in a letter to one of his opponents: "As one of us expounded the tenets of the Mahayana school, the other advocated the aims of the Hinayana. In the course of debate, our arguments unavoidably got heated. In order to defend the truth there was scant regard for personal feelings. Thus, there were clashes. But, as soon as the debate was over, we did not take each other amiss."⁹

Xuanzang was longing to begin his journey home, but King Harsha insisted on taking him to Prayaga, modern Allahabad, where he was about to celebrate his sixth Quinquennial Almsgiving. King Harsha gave away all his possessions with the exception of his war horses, war elephants, and military stores. Rare jewels, precious stuffs, and special foods were offered first to the Buddha, next to the Sun God, then to the Hindu god Siva, on down the line to ten

thousand monks, to the Brahmins, the Jains, and last of all, to the poor and orphans. At the end, the king—like Prince Visvantara of the Buddha legend who donated his possessions and his family to charity—also gave away all his jewels and his outer garments until he was obliged to cover himself with tattered rags.

Then came the turn of his eighteen vassal kings to go from one beneficiary to another and ransom back the king's gifts. Xuanzang had encountered this curious ceremony before at Bamiyan; what was perhaps different this time was that it took place at a site that was especially holy for Hindus at Prayaga, on "the field of charity."

Starting His Journey Back to China

When the almsgiving was over, Xuanzang sought permission to depart. Both King Harsha and the king of Assam tried to detain him on one pretext or another. Finally Xuanzang was desperate. In order to emphasize the urgency of his mission he quoted the scriptures: "whoever hinders men from receiving knowledge of the Law, will generation after generation be born blind."¹⁰

In April 643, the kings finally agreed to his departure, and Xuanzang was given a north Indian king as a military escort to carry his precious books and images on horseback, and one of King Harsha's best elephants to ride. This elephant was of unusual size, capable of carrying eight men in his *howdahs* as well as the 3,000 gold pieces and 10,000 pieces of silver given to defray Xuanzang's expenses along the way. The elephant's appetite was also prodigious, for he could consume forty bundles of hay and twenty buns in two days. People could remember no other example of an elephant being given to a monk.

Three days later, as Xuanzang's procession was making its way, the two kings came galloping up on their horses like happy schoolboys to Xuanzang's caravan. They presented him with letters bearing impressive red seals, letters that commanded the rulers of the countries through which the pilgrim would pass to furnish him with escorts in relay. As much as it lay within his power, King Harsha tendered his help as far as the western borders of China. Only four years later, this remarkable, versatile monarch was gone; for the next three centuries there would be chaos in northern India.

Losing Scriptures in the Indus River

Having decided not to return by sea, Xuanzang and his party turned to the northwest. They stopped in the rainy season of 643 at a monastery north of Kanyakubja. Then they crossed northern India by way of Jalandhara and Taxila, returning in the opposite direction by roughly the same route Xuanzang had taken thirteen years before.

Xuanzang's caravan had been joined at Jalandhara by one hundred priests also carrying scriptures and images, who were glad to have the protection of numbers as they made their way through robber-infested passes. Xuanzang took the precaution of sending a monk ahead of the caravan who was instructed to say if he was stopped: "We have traveled a great distance to see the Law. Our baggage contains only Scriptures, images and holy relics. We pray you to protect us and do not do us violence."¹¹ By this time their loads of Buddhist manuscripts must have been substantial, but apparently this declaration worked, for the many bandits they met did them no harm.

644 C.E. The beginning of the year. Having traveled roughly 900 miles from Prayaga, Xuanzang is finally at Hund, ready to cross the Indus River. He pauses sitting atop his magnificent elephant before he makes the dangerous crossing. The rest of his retinue are in boats piled high with scriptures, relics, statues, and rare flower seeds which he had gathered from the four corners of India. But then a terrible calamity occurs: A storm springs up while they are in the middle of the mile-wide Indus River, shaking the boats and nearly overturning them. The guardian of his scriptures and flower seeds falls overboard and has to be rescued. Fifty of his precious manuscripts and all his seeds fall into the water.

The king of Kapisa is nearby at the time of the catastrophe. When he comes to meet Xuanzang, his very first question is, "Did you not bring with you any Indian flower seeds? That is the sole reason," the king explains, "for the storm that damaged the boat. It has been so from the days of old until now. Whoever attempts to cross the river with the seeds of flowers is subject to similar misfortunes."¹²

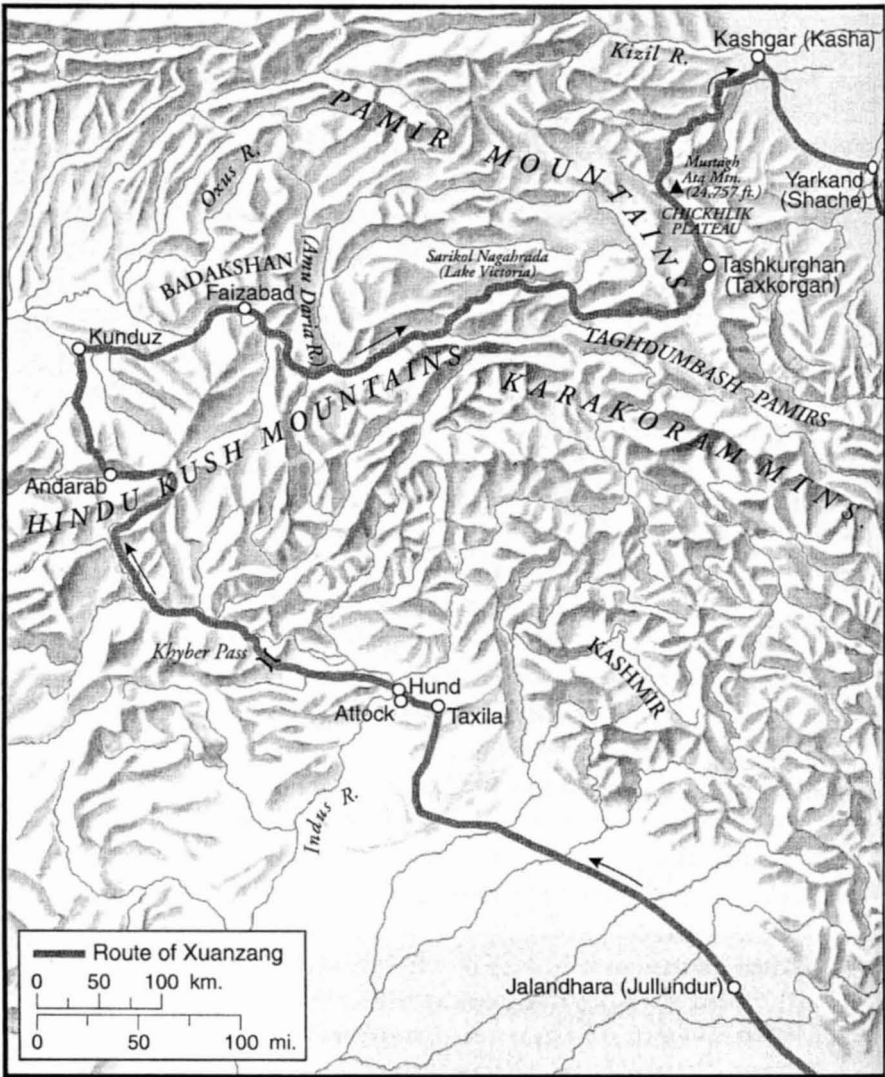
Xuanzang sent to Udyana for fresh copies of the lost scriptures and waited for nearly two months for their arrival at King Kapisa's winter capital at Hund, north of Attock. The king of Kashmir also came to pay homage and to visit with Xuanzang. Their interest could be explained on political as well as religious grounds; they were seeking the help of the Chinese court to defend them from the perceived menace of possible enemies.

Crossing the Hindu Kush and Pamir Ranges

The king of Kapisa personally escorted Xuanzang as far as the Hindu Kush Mountains and then provided him with a guide and the one hundred porters needed to transport provisions, including hay for the elephant. Like Hannibal's crossing of the Alps with his elephants and baggage train, their crossing of Kawak Pass in July 644 proved to be far more difficult than they had imagined. Most of the porters seem to have given up before they reached the pass, which we know to be 13,200 feet in height. Xuanzang's biographer says that the caravan at this point consisted of only seven priests, twenty followers, one elephant, ten asses, and four horses. But let Xuanzang tell it:

This mountain pass is very high; the precipices are wild and dangerous; the path is tortuous, and the caverns and hollows wind and intertwine together. At one time the traveller enters a deep valley, at another he mounts a high peak which in full summer is blocked with frozen ice. By cutting steps up the ice the traveller passes on, and after three days he comes to the highest point of the pass. [Apparently the weather was also against them, for he went on to say:] There the icy wind, intensely cold, blows with fury; the piled snow fills the valleys. Travellers pushing their way through, dare not pause on their route. The very birds that fly in their wheeling flight cannot mount alone at this point but go afoot across the height and then fly downwards. Looking at the mountains round, they seem as little hillocks. This is the highest peak of all.¹³

Struggling on for three days more, they finally descended the pass and came to Andarab, where there were three small monasteries.



MAP 9.2
Itinerary of Xuanzang from India to western China (Jalandhara to Kashgar).

Here they rested five days before pushing on to Kunduz on the banks of the Oxus River. Xuanzang had stayed at Kunduz before, at the time of a family intrigue and palace tragedy. Nothing happened this time. Xuanzang and his party rested again, this time for a month, waiting for copies of some of the important scriptures lost in the In-

dus River. With an escort provided by the ruler of Kunduz, and in the company of some merchants, Xuanzang's entourage departed.

Instead of returning the way he had come to India, on the northern caravan road to Samarkand, he would be ascending the upper reaches of the Oxus River over the Pamirs to Kashgar.¹⁴

This was the route followed later by Marco Polo on his way to China in 1271. From Kashgar Xuanzang would be traveling on the Southern Silk Road, which would take him to Yarkand and Khotan, eastward along the southern edge of the Taklamakan desert to Dunhuang, at the juncture of the Northern and Southern Silk Roads.

In the upper reaches of the Oxus River, the caravan came upon a settlement of White Huns who had been driven to take refuge in this wild terrain. Xuanzang told about their strange customs.¹⁵ About forty miles farther on, Xuanzang and his caravan halted a month near Faizabad in the kingdom of Badakhshan because the passes of the Pamirs were blocked with heavy snow. The area was famous for its horses, lapis lazuli, and ruby mines. There were three or four Buddhist monasteries and a number of monks in this remote outpost.

Still heading east, Xuanzang and his company walked about 200 miles up this bleak, trackless, and nearly inaccessible Penj valley. On some of the makeshift bridges along the river, they felt as if they were "a tear on an eyelash," to use a Russian writer's words. They passed by scabby collections of mud and stone huts until they came to the Pamir ranges. These upland plains of the Pamirs, Xuanzang explained, were situated among the snowy mountains, and "on this account the climate was cold and the winds blew constantly." Here at the height of 13,526 feet they reached the banks of the Great Dragon Lake, which was rediscovered by John Woods in 1838 and renamed Lake Victoria.¹⁶

With his unerring eye Xuanzang noted the huge size of Great Dragon Lake, 200 *li* from east to west and 50 *li* from north to south, and the water's dark blue color, taste, and freshness.¹⁷ He remarked on the aquatic monsters that lived in its depths, and frogs of an infinite variety and some birds about ten feet high with eggs as large as a water pitcher. He even conjectured that they might have been ostriches. Fantastic as this may seem, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* of 1911 mentions the possibility that there were ostriches in the lower Oxus.¹⁸

But for the swelling rivers, which made traveling with heavily laden animals impossible, Xuanzang might have crossed at Wakhjir pass at 16,880 feet! This is the Great Divide of central Asia. The Taghdumbash Pamirs (Fig. 9.1) are the source of the Oxus River, which drains 1,000 miles to the west ending up in the Aral Sea, and of the Yarkand River, which sweeps down hundreds of miles to the east into the Taklamakan Desert, in China. Xuanzang probably went by the Great Pamir route at another pass.¹⁹ In any event, Marco Polo called this mountain mass, this amphitheater of high peaks, the Roof of the World, for the ranges of the Hindu Kush crossing modern-day Afghanistan, the Karakorum in northern Pakistan, the Pamirs in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and the Tian Shan range in China, all meet in the Pamir knot.



FIGURE 9.1

View of the Pamirs, which Xuanzang crossed in order to go from Afghanistan to Kashgar. The American Museum of Natural History.

Stopping at the Kashgar Oasis

Xuanzang rested from his arduous climbing for a month at Tashkurghan, where the Sarikol people lived. He was impressed with the king, whom he described as being upright, honest, and as one who greatly honored Buddhism. In the old palace was a monastery associated with the monk Kumarajiva, one of the great translators of Mahayana Buddhism. Xuanzang had been to Kumarajiva's birthplace at Kucha on his way to India.

At Tashkurghan he saw the ruins of a famous fortress called the Maiden's Castle and heard its fantastic legend. A Chinese princess of the Han dynasty had been betrothed to the king of Persia and was being escorted to his capital. At Tashkurghan the way was blocked by robbers, and so her escort placed her on an isolated peak protected by rock precipices. "When tranquility was restored, and the journey was to be continued, the king's envoy in charge of the bride discovered that she was *enceinte*. On making enquiry he found that the sun-deva had visited the lady every day at noon, and that it was by him that she was with child."²⁰

The people of Tashkurghan were so impressed that they begged her to remain and to rule over them; the chiefs ruling this region were supposed to have sprung from her miraculously born son. Stein is sure that the fort on the west side of the Tashkurghan River was the site visited by Xuanzang.²¹

Xuanzang's caravan was also attacked by robbers as it traveled from Tashkurghan to Kashgar. They were making their way through a narrow gorge between high overhanging rock walls. A robber band came swooping down this treacherous defile; Xuanzang's merchant companions took fright and bolted up the mountain. King Harsha's mighty elephant stampeded. The robbers pursued the frightened elephant until he plunged into the river and drowned. Stein surmised that Xuanzang lost his elephant in the Tangitar Gorge (Fig. 9.2) below Tar Bashi.

At the time Xuanzang was following the track that went across the desolate Chickiklik high plateau, passing by the western slopes of the massive, white dome of Muztagh-Ata.²² The second-tallest peak in the Pamirs, Muztagh-Ata is 24,388 feet high. "A mountain," said Xuanzang, "the vapors of which soaring up, and coming



FIGURE 9.2
*Tangitar Gorge, which Aurel Stein suggested was the narrow de-
file where Xuanzang's Indian elephant was chased by bandits,
fell into the river, and drowned. The British Library.*

into contact with the rocks, raised clouds; its sheer cliffs of imposing height seemed on the verge of crashing down. On the summit of this mountain was a magnificent tope [stupa].”²³ He reported that it had been built in memory of an *arhat* who, according to the legend, had lived in a trance since the time of the Lord Buddha.

Xuanzang seems to have reached Kashgar by way of the River Gez, a tributary of the Kizil (Qizil) river. His first impression of the approach to China's westernmost oasis was of many sand heaps and little fertile soil. Commenting on the oasis itself, he said that "it yielded good crops and a luxuriance of fruit and flowers." How inviting the orchards, the city walls, the winding lanes, and the mud-brick walls of houses must have been! After the bleak and thinly populated Pamirs, how heart-warming the sight of streams of people coming and going, ponies and donkeys laden with goods, heralding an important trade center. Xuanzang went to the famous bazaar at Kashgar. "One gets from this country felt and cloth of excellent quality as well as fine woolen materials. Moreover, the inhabitants are clever at weaving various kinds of fine, fleecy carpets." Xuanzang also remarks that the people have green eyes, suggesting the Sogdian or East Iranian origin of some of the population.²⁴

In Kashgar, there were hundreds of Buddhist monasteries with more than a thousand monks, most of whom were of a realist Hinayana school. Remains of two Buddhist sites near Kashgar still exist. The first, the Cave of Three Immortals, dating from the second century, is hewn from the cliffs of the Quiakmakh River. It now stands thirty feet high above the river bed. It has two chambers; traces of wall paintings survive in the left chamber. The second site, the ancient village of Hanoi, had been a thriving Buddhist settlement in Tang times. Xuanzang is believed to have visited the Mauri-tim stupa there (Fig. 9.3).

He did not comment on the form of government in Kashgar, but we know that in the Tang period it was under Chinese administration and the military governor was a Chinese official.²⁵

Waiting at the Khotan Oasis

Xuanzang's next goal was Khotan, a fortnight's journey on the caravan road. Khotan was the largest oasis on the Southern Silk Road at the foot of the bleak, serrated Kunlun Mountains separating China and Tibet. He halted for a few days at the flourishing oasis of Yarkand (Shache) on the way. The king of Khotan, hearing that Xuanzang was in his territory, went forth to escort him into the

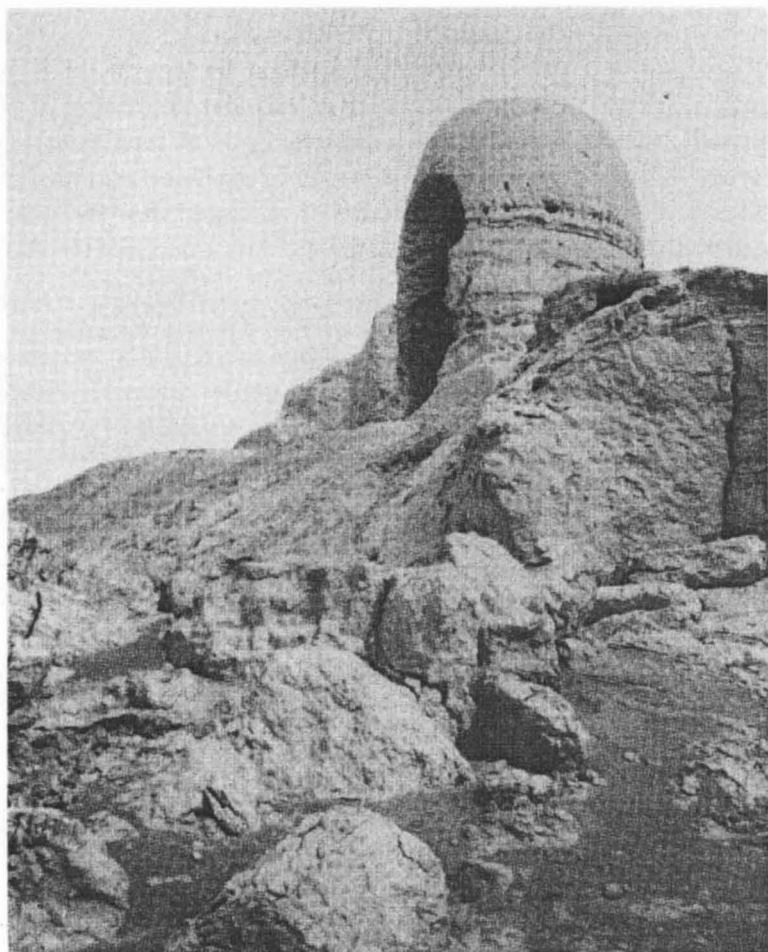


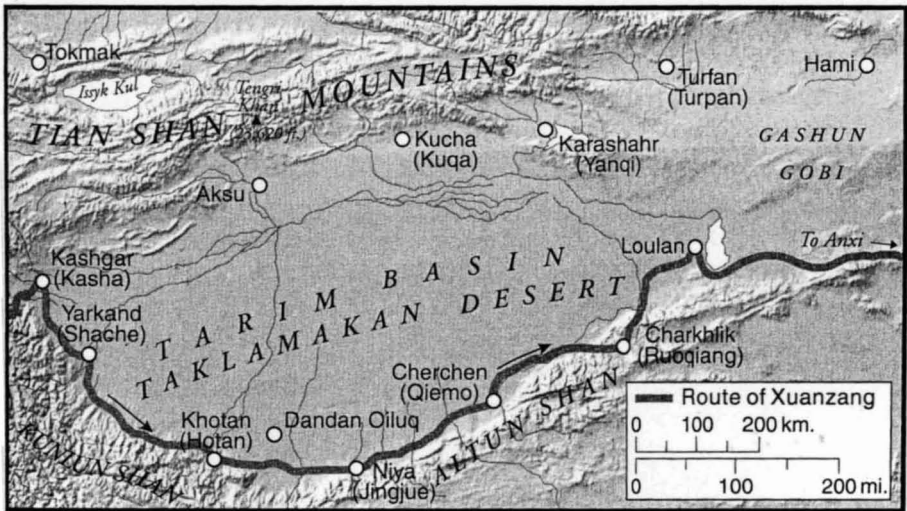
FIGURE 9.3
Mauri-tim Stupa, which Xuanzang is believed to have visited in the ancient city of Hanoi, not far from Kashgar.

capital in September 644. Xuanzang stayed in a Hinayana monastery. There were one hundred monasteries and more than five thousand monks, chiefly Mahayanist.

The remains of the ancient city of Yotkan are believed to have been the capital of Khotan in Xuanzang's time. Xuanzang was clearly impressed.

This country he describes as being above 4,000 li in circuit, more than half of it being sand-dunes; the cultivated land, which was very limited, yielded cereals and fruits of various kinds; the country produced rugs, fine felt, and silk of artistic texture, it also yielded white and black jade. The climate was genial, but there were whirlwinds and flying dust. The people were of gentle disposition, fond of the practical arts; they were in easy circumstances, and had settled occupations. The nation esteemed music and the people were fond of dance and song; a few clothed themselves in woollens and furs, the majority wearing silk and calico. . . . The system of writing had been taken from that of India, but the structure had been slightly altered by a sort of successive changes; the spoken language differed from that of other countries.²⁶

Southeast of the capital, Xuanzang visited a monastery that had been built to commemorate the successful introduction of silk culture from China. (At the time Khotan was an independent kingdom.) From there silk culture was taken secretly to Byzantium.



MAP 9.3
Itinerary of Xuanzang from India to western China (Kashgar to Loulan).

China had been jealously guarding the secret of making silk, and under imperial decree, disclosure meant death by torture. Thus many centuries passed before any knowledge of the source of this extraordinary fabric spread. According to an old legend recorded by Xuanzang, in about 140 B.C.E., silkworm eggs and mulberry seeds were carried to Khotan. The king of Khotan, who was married to a Chinese princess, had instructed her to procure the means of making silk. She hid the silkworm eggs and mulberry seeds in her headdress (Fig. 9.4). At the customs barrier the guards searched everywhere, but they did not dare to remove the headdress of the princess. Later she founded a convent where the first silkworms were bred. Xuanzang saw the ancient mulberry trunks that were supposed to be the remains of the first trees planted there.²⁷

Everywhere Xuanzang went, he found evidence of Indian influence at Khotan. The king himself claimed to be a descendant of Vaisravana, a Buddhist deity of northern India. The Khotanese ascribed their conversion to Mahayana Buddhism to Vairocana, the Indian Buddha of Tantric and Esoteric Buddhism, who had come expressly to Khotan. A monastery was built in his honor. Indian influences were also seen by Xuanzang in the local tradition that the territory of Khotan was colonized by Indian immigrants from Taxila. They claimed to be descendants of the men who had blinded Asoka's son Kunala, for which they were banished.²⁸

Xuanzang visited the site of a splendid figure of the Buddha with a precious jeweled crown, which came from Kashmir. He saw the



FIGURE 9.4

A votive tablet depicting the Silk Princess's headdress, in which she hid silkworm eggs and mulberry seeds, in order to take the secrets of silk-making from China to Khotan. The British Museum.

famous sandalwood image at Pima, outside of Khotan, which came all the way from Kausambi in central India. This was the illustrious Udayana statue commissioned by the king of Kausambi while the Buddha was still alive.²⁹ How did all these statues get to Khotan? It was said that some of them flew, and a charming legend tells how a pilgrim carried a statue by day, but the statue carried the pilgrim by night.

Xuanzang spent seven or eight months in Khotan, partly because the king wished him to stay, and partly because he was still waiting for the arrival of replacement copies of some of the scriptures he had lost in the Indus River. This was the third time he had waited for the replacement of the lost manuscripts; he stayed two months at Hund waiting, a month at Kunduz waiting, and now many months waiting in Khotan. That sheds light on the high value he attached to bringing a complete library of original sources back to China. He had an additional reason for lingering. Early in his stay in Khotan he found a Turfan trader who was going to the Tang capital, and so he wrote a long "memorial" to the emperor advising him that he would be coming home.

With his lively curiosity undiminished, he visited a number of monasteries and sacred sites in the area. Often these were "the sand-buried ruins of Khotan" near the rivers that had once flowed down from the Kunlun Mountains and then dried up; the cities were the buried sites of Dandan Oilik, Rawak, and Niya (Jingjue), later made famous by the archaeological expeditions of Aurel Stein. To the east of Khotan was a once very prosperous region that Xuanzang observed had become a dried-up old city until a Khotanese nobleman sacrificed his life by marrying the "Naga spirit of the river." Once the nobleman married this Naga, the river waters reappeared and the people could irrigate their land again.³⁰ The legend has been useful in interpreting a fascinating painting (Fig. 9.5) Stein found at Dandan Oilik.

West of the capital were mounds inhabited by rats. Xuanzang recounted the legend about the origin of the worship paid to these rodents. A rat-headed divinity in another painting from Dandan Oilik had puzzled knowledgeable British Museum curators until Stein recalled Xuanzang's story of how sacred rats and their Rat King, by destroying the horses' harnesses of an invading Hun host, had

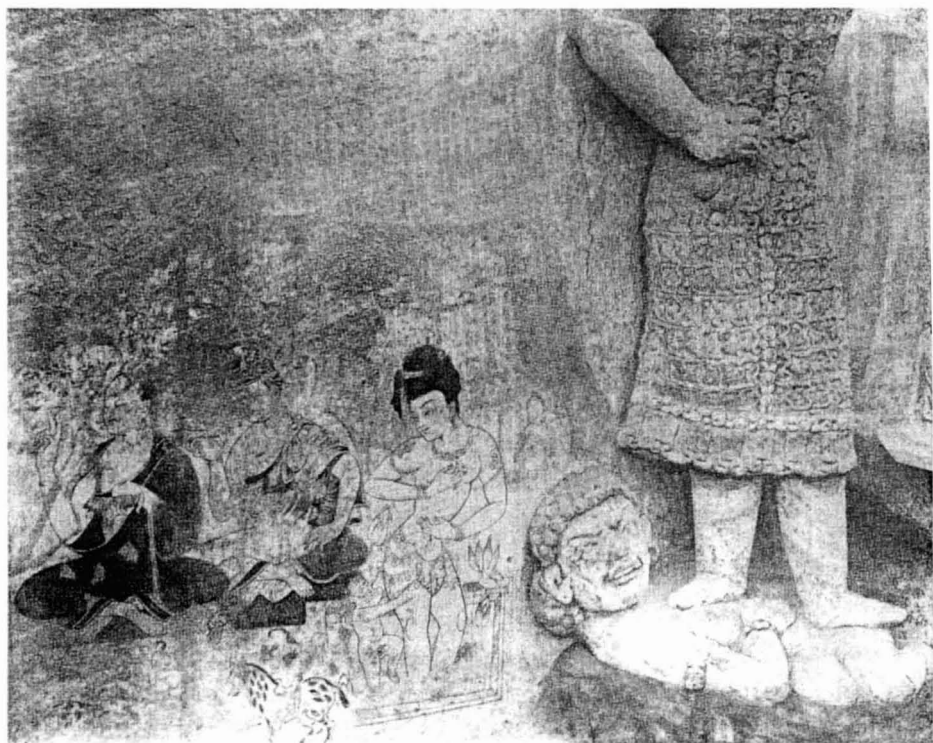


FIGURE 9.5

Painting of a curvaceous woman standing in a tank and a statue of Vaisravana. The woman is thought to be the Nagini, or water spirit. The British Library.

caused its defeat and thus saved the land.³¹ Herodotus told a similar story in which the overwhelming threat of an invasion by the Egyptian army was stopped by mice who gnawed away so much of the enemy's paraphernalia that they were rendered helpless.

In between his explorations in and around Khotan, Xuanzang engaged in a kind of teaching marathon. Over one twenty-four-hour period he lectured to the king and his people on his old favorites, the *Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice* and the *Treasury of Buddhist Philosophy*, written by Vasubandhu when he was still a realist of the Hinayana school, and a famous compendium of Mahayana philosophy translated by Paramartha in 562 C.E. Xuanzang had studied all of these years before when he was a very young monk in Chengdu. He also lectured on a fourth commentary, which

Waley describes as being "the one with the unmanageably long name," which the Chinese call *Tui-fa* (*Abidharma*).³²

Entering the Desert

From Khotan Xuanzang pushed on to Niya in the Taklamakan Desert.

Going east from this, we enter a great drifting sand desert. These sands extend like a drifting flood for a great distance, piled up or scattered according to the wind. There is no trace left behind by travellers . . . and oftentimes the way is lost, and so they wander hither and thither quite bewildered, without any guide or direction. So travellers pick up the bones of animals as beacons. There is neither water nor herbage to be found, and hot winds frequently blow. When these winds rise, then both men and beasts become confused and forgetful, and then they remain perfectly disabled (*sick*). At times sad and plaintive notes are heard and piteous cries, so that between the sights and sounds of this desert men get confused and know not whither they go. Hence there are so many who perish in the journey. But it is all the work of demons and evil spirits.³³

Marco Polo expressed similar beliefs, saying that if travelers lag behind their company, "they hear spirits malignant in the air, talking in a way that they seem to be their companions, for they call them sometimes by their names. . . . [They] follow those voices and get out of the right way so that they are never reunited to their fellows and found . . . and in this way they know not how to return and being without food and drink, many of them are dead in the past and lost." Sometimes they hear "many instruments of music sounding in the air, and especially drums more than other instruments, and the clashing of weapons."³⁴

But the stark realities of brackish water and no fodder for animals or food for human beings are daunting enough. Xuanzang's caravan with all its precious statues and manuscripts finally reached the present-day Cherchen (Qiemo). The desert is blasted by

sand, which is blown by force 5 winds 145 days of the year, bearing out Xuanzang's and Marco Polo's descriptions of the perils of desert travel.³⁵ Xuanzang provided us with few details of his journey to Charkhlik (Ruoqiang), the next oasis, or the desolate lands of the vast region comprising the dried-up Lake of Lop Nor, whose salt-encrusted bed was worse to walk on even than glacial ice.

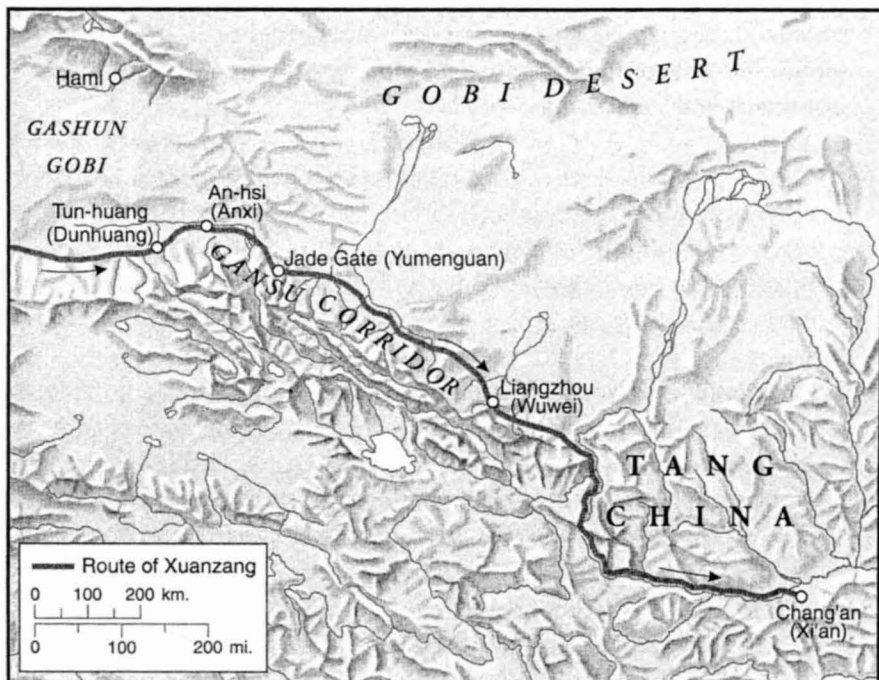
Not far from the Charkhlik oasis is the astonishing archaeological site of Miran, where there are many statues and yet another portrayal of the Visvantara Jataka, the self-sacrificing king. Xuanzang probably saw the ruined temples there. At this site Aurel Stein reflected once again on his patron saint, Xuanzang. "In a region where all is dead and waste, spiritual emanations from those who have passed by centuries ago, seem to cling much longer to the conspicuous landmarks than in parts where life is still bustling."³⁶

Unfortunately Xuanzang ended the record of his travels with his arrival in the territory of Loulan, a once powerful kingdom 1,500 *li* from Khotan. Evidently he considered the remaining portion of his journey home as being within the borders of the Chinese empire and hence outside the scope of his record. Huili, his biographer, takes us to Dunhuang, but the pilgrim ended with a few graceful sentences, which form a stylish epilogue:

I have set forth at length national scenery and ascertained territorial divisions. I have explained the qualities of national customs and climatic characteristics. Moral conduct is not constant and tastes vary; where matters cannot be thoroughly verified one may not be dogmatic. Wherever I went I made notes, and in mentioning what I saw and heard I recorded the aspirations for [Chinese] civilization. It is a fact that from here to where the sun sets all have experienced [His Majesty's] beneficence, and where his influence reaches all admire his perfect virtue. The whole world having been united under one sway I have not been a mere individual on a political mission traveling a myriad *li* along a post road.³⁷


Xuanzang considered this the end of his journey. He was in China now.

BACK IN CHINA



MAP 10.1

Itinerary of Xuanzang from western China back home (Loulan to Chang'an).

 Sixteen years earlier, Xuanzang had left China in secret by night, against the wishes of Emperor Taizong. Now as he drew closer to the borders of the Tang empire, he did not know how he would be received. In Khotan, he entrusted to a young Turfanese, traveling with a merchant caravan to China, a letter to Taizong assuring the emperor that he was returning as a loyal subject.

In his letter Xuanzang wrote of his search for Buddhist learning, and of the sublime words of the scriptures. He outlined his travels across the vast plains of shifting sands, over precipitous mountains covered with snow, and along by the tumultuous waves of the hot sea.

Thus I accomplished a journey of more than 50,000 *li*, yet, notwithstanding the thousand differences of customs and manners I have witnessed, the myriads of dangers I have encountered, by the goodness of Heaven I have returned without accident, and now offer my homage with a body unimpaired and a mind satisfied with the accomplishment of my vows. I have beheld the Ghridrakuta Mountain [Vulture Peak], worshipped at the Bodhi tree; I have seen traces not seen before; heard sacred words not heard before; witnessed spiritual prodigies, exceeding all the wonders of Nature; have borne testimony to the high qualities of our august Emperor; and won for him the high esteem and praise of the people.¹

He concluded by saying that after the great elephant had drowned, he had not succeeded in obtaining enough horses for the library of scriptures that he had brought back, but despite this difficulty he hoped to go forward at once to visit His Majesty.

Seven or eight months elapsed. Finally a messenger returned with a reassuring reply from the emperor, who may have been aware of some of Xuanzang's conversations with King Harsha and his contribution to Tang China's good relations with the king of Middle India.²

I am highly delighted to hear that the teacher is returning home after seeking the Way in the foreign lands. You may come to see me as quickly as possible, and you may, as well, bring the foreign

monks who understand the Sanskrit language and the meanings of the scriptures to come with you. I have already ordered the authorities of Kustana [Khotan] and the other regions to escort you, and so you will not be in want of carriers and horses. I have also instructed the officials of Tunhuang [Dunhuang] to receive you at the Desert, as well as those of Shanshan [Charkhlik] to receive you at Chemo [Cherchen].³

Resting at the Dunhuang Oasis

Shortly after he received the emperor's letter, Xuanzang departed from Khotan. The king provided him richly with guides and equipment, and help was furnished by every oasis along the way, but desert travel is always arduous and uncertain. Like many an exhausted traveler before him, Xuanzang rested at the Dunhuang Oasis. He is likely to have paused before some of the fine paintings and sculpture of the impressive shrine, library, and gallery of Buddhist art at the Cave of a Thousand Buddhas. He probably saw many of the cave interiors and read some of the inscriptions of merchants who contributed funds out of gratitude for successful journeys or in the hopes that their caravans would arrive safely at their destinations. Dunhuang was the gateway to one of the oldest long-distance trade routes in history, the Silk Road, dating from the first centuries of the common era and perhaps earlier. Camel and horse caravans from India and the Turfan basin in Central Asia in one direction, and from the Tang capital Chang'an in the other, all stopped there.

Xuanzang's record closes at Loulan before he reached Dunhuang, which was part of the Tang empire. His biographer says only that he wrote a second letter to the Emperor at Dunhuang. However, a painting in Cave #103 at Dunhuang (Fig. 10.1) shows Xuanzang's caravan before the elephant given to him by King Harsha was drowned on the way down the Pamirs from Kashmir; it also portrays the pilgrim giving thanks for a safe journey.⁴

Several Dunhuang paintings on silk banners depict the prototype of the pilgrim traveler. One of them which is wonderfully suggestive (Fig. 10.2) can be seen in the Musée Guimet in Paris.⁵



FIGURE 10.1

Wall painting at Dunhuang Cave #103 showing Xuanzang returning from India with the great white elephant given to him by King Harsha. The Lo Archive, Princeton University.

By a curious twist of fate, more than twelve centuries after he rested at Dunhuang, Xuanzang played a crucial role in a strange drama that unfolded there. Aurel Stein had heard that a vast hoard of manuscripts was sealed in one of Dunhuang's caves. On his second expedition (1906–1908), Stein met the ignorant and somewhat eccentric Daoist Abbot Wang, self-appointed guardian of the caves,



FIGURE 10.2

Silk temple banner showing an itinerant monk, the prototype of the pilgrim traveler. Musée Guimet, Paris.

which by the early nineteenth century had fallen into ruin. The abbot had commissioned a local artist to illustrate familiar scenes from the by now legendary travels of Xuanzang on a Dunhuang temple loggia. When Stein saw these portrayals, he told Abbot Wang how he had followed in the pilgrim's footsteps over 10,000 *li* from India to Dunhuang.

The moody Abbot opened up the hitherto sealed-up cave for Stein; it had been closed since the eleventh century because of marauding armies.⁶ Stacks of manuscripts were piled up to the ceiling, and silk temple banners were wrapped in stout sheets of canvas. The size of this treasure trove, 30,000 manuscripts and 20,000 other artifacts, including paintings on silk and paper, banners and embroideries, was beyond belief.⁷ Many that were in Chinese were examined by Paul Pelliot when he visited the shrine a year after Stein (Fig. 10.3).

This opening of cave #17 alerted the world to the long-forgotten caves of Dunhuang. Not unlike Angkor Wat, which had been swallowed up by the jungle, Dunhuang, with its mile-long galleries of medieval art, had been lost or ignored until Stein was allowed to enter. Later a copy of what is one of the world's earliest documented printed books, the *Diamond Sutra*, dated 868 C.E., was found inside.

Triumphant Return to Chang'an

From Dunhuang, Xuanzang wrote again to the Emperor Taizong and then hurried to meet him in person. Because the emperor was conducting a military expedition in the northeast, he ordered one of his lord-lieutenants to arrange for Xuanzang's reception in Chang'an. The news of the pilgrim's return soon spread, and the streets were filled to overflowing; Xuanzang was obliged to spend the night by a canal at the western outskirts of the city.

Seventh day of the first month in 645 C.E. Morning comes slowly. A body of high officials clears the way to bring Xuanzang to the capital. They arrange for a huge group of monks to parade his books, relics, gold, silver, and sandalwood images through Chang'an. The procession the next day begins at the Street of the Red Bird and ends at the main gate of the Monastery of Great Happiness. All the monasteries send monks and nuns in their ceremonial robes for the occasion. The people vie with one another in preparing their best banners, tapestries, umbrellas, precious tables, and carriages. When they reach the street of the Red

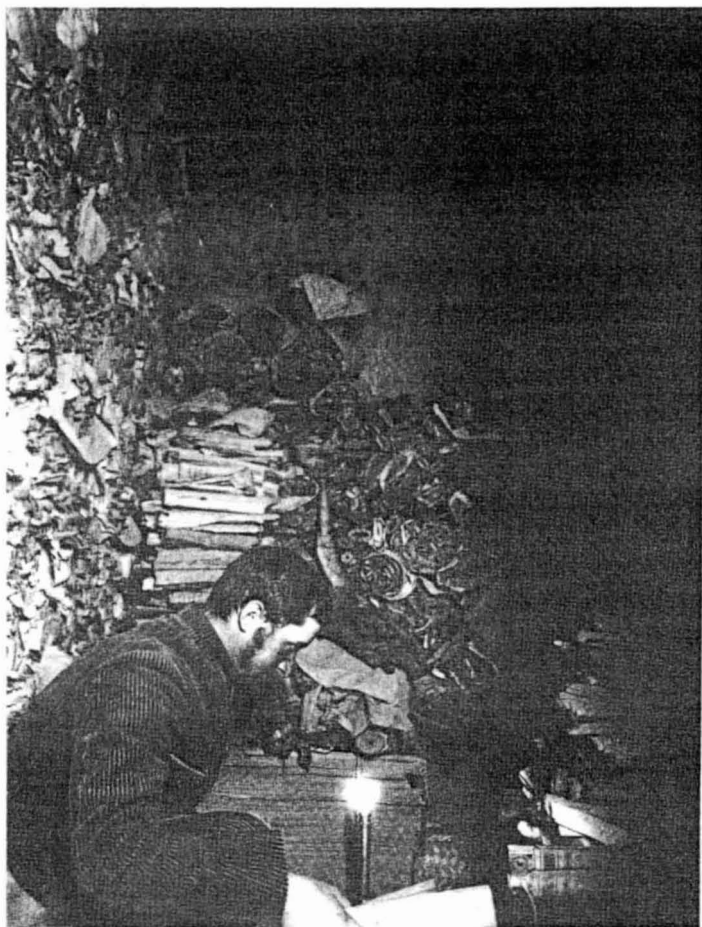


FIGURE 10.3

Photograph of Paul Pelliot, a French Sinologist, in cave #17 at Dunhuang, examining by candlelight one of the thousands of manuscripts found there. Early twentieth century. Musée Guimet, Paris.

Bird, they march forward with the sound of pearls and jade hanging from their belts tinkling in the air amidst golden flowers scattered on the road. Scholars and local officials line the ceremonial path.

The authorities, fearing that the crowds might tread on one another, order them to stay still, burn incense and scatter flowers

*where they are standing. Then the whole congregation witnesses a colored cloud in the sky that seems to float over the scriptures and the gold, silver and sandalwood images as if it is welcoming the holy objects. "It is indeed the most splendid event since the death of the Buddha."*⁸

Xuanzang was proud to donate 150 pellets of the Buddha's flesh and a box of his bone relics at the Monastery of Great Happiness. That was not all. He brought seven statues of the Buddha, some as tall as four feet, which had been transported all the way from India. What a flood of memories must have passed through his mind as he deposited these precious likenesses!

First, there was a sandalwood image, three feet five inches tall, of the Buddha preaching his first sermon at Sarnath on a glittering pedestal; then another sweet-smelling sandalwood statue, two feet nine inches tall, after the image of King Udayana when he was desirous of seeing the Buddha. Each statue called up the setting, the experiences of the famous places of pilgrimage, which Xuanzang had visited. The third image, which was the largest statue in his baggage train from India, was a shining silver Buddha fully four feet high, in imitation of the Buddha descending from heaven at Sankasya. The fourth replica, three feet five inches high, may have been made of gold. It was the Buddha preaching the *Lotus Sutra* at Vulture Peak. Xuanzang could well remember his feelings when, like the pious Faxian before him, he had gone to pay reverence to this holy mountain. He knew this statue would be well-received, for the *Lotus Sutra* was popular in China. To these he added a fifth image, an aromatic sandalwood statue about fifteen inches high, carved in imitation of the Buddha's shadow left in the cave at Nagarahara. This was where he himself had been vouchsafed a vision of the Buddha. It was one of the first statues he had collected on his journey. Somehow he located a golden image three feet three inches tall from the Dragon Cave at Pragbodhi Mountain near Magadha. This sixth replica resembled the Sarnath image of the Buddha Turning the Wheel of the Law. Finally, he deposited another sandalwood image of the Buddha, this one with the Buddha making his daily rounds at Vasali, where he had preached so many sermons.⁹

We know what three of these images looked like. One was the Udayana image, copies of which are believed to have been made century after century. The Udayana images were typically standing images garbed in long robes with folds arranged in a very symmetrical fashion and with the hands assuming gestures of reassurance and charity. Two of the images were copies of the Sarnath image of the Buddha preaching. Pratapaditya Pal wrote that some of the images Xuanzang brought back with him must have looked very much like this bronze of another standing Buddha from the John D. Rockefeller Collection (Fig. 10.4).¹⁰

FIGURE 10.4
Bronze image of a Sakyamuni Buddha standing with his right hand raised in the "fear not" gesture. The Asia Society, New York.



Xuanzang also collected 657 books with strange Indian writing on either birch bark or the trimmed leaves of palm trees strung together in layers, bound in 520 cases. These were classified as 224 Mahayanist sutras and treatises; writings from a number of Hinayanist sects that were for the most part quite unknown; and no fewer than thirty-six general works of logic and thirteen works on grammar.¹¹ A charming silk scroll painting from Dunhuang (Fig. 10.5) shows twenty horses bearing these scriptures, trotting into a temple with elegantly dressed priests and officials looking on.

Once safely home, Xuanzang's greatest wish was to translate as many of these scriptures as possible.

Being Interviewed by the Emperor

Xuanzang had two interviews with the emperor in the Palace of the Phoenix at Luoyang, the second imperial capital. Their second meeting was well-documented.

Having sat down the emperor asked: "Why did you go (to India) without telling me?"

The Master replied with apology. "When I was preparing for my journey, I had sent petitions to Your Majesty several times,



FIGURE 10.5

Chinese painting on silk scroll from Dunhuang, called Return of Xuanzang with the Buddhist Scriptures. The Courtesy Fujita Museum.

but as my project was unworthy, I did not enjoy the favour of being granted with an official permission. Because of my utmost sincerity for seeking the Law, I went away privately for which offence I beg the pardon of Your Majesty."

The emperor said: "Since you are a monk, you are different from lay people in this matter. I am delighted that you went to seek for the Law at the risk of your life for the benefit of all the people. There is no need to ask my pardon."¹²

When the emperor showed astonishment at his being able to make such a journey, Xuanzang replied in the language of diplomacy that it was the universal prestige of the new dynasty that made it possible. "I have heard that it is not far to reach the Heavenly Lake for those who could ride on a speedy wind, and it is not difficult to cross a stormy river, if one sailed in a dragon-boat. Since Your Majesty ascended the throne to rule over the country, your virtue and benevolence prevailed in all the areas, with the wind of morality blowing to the hot countries in the south and your political influence reaching as far as beyond the Pamirs."¹³

Here Xuanzang was acknowledging the notable foreign policy successes of the emperor and perhaps even his own. He was no longer the young idealist who defied the king of Turfan; he spoke with the poise of a man who had been honored by King Harsha, and who, on his journey, had consorted with the Great Khan of the Western Turks as well as many kings and princes.

The emperor found Xuanzang full of valuable information on the climate, products, rulers, customs, and history of the peoples of Central Asia and India. The emperor suggested he write a book. "These Buddhist kingdoms," said the emperor at last, "are so far off that up until now our history books have given us very imperfect accounts of the sacred sites and the religious teachings. As you have recently seen it all for yourself, you ought to write a book containing this new information."¹⁴ This was an unusual comment from an emperor who is usually portrayed as being anti-Buddhist because of the powerful influence of one of his Confucian advisors.

That same emperor, realizing that Xuanzang was a man of great talent who could be useful, exhorted him to become his advisor on Asian relations. Xuanzang explained that he had become a monk at

an early age and had been totally absorbed in Buddhist studies. "If your Majesty orders me to return to secular life, it would be like dragging a boat from the water to the land." The emperor had been busy giving instructions to his general about launching a campaign in the northeast. He had intended to give Xuanzang a few minutes' audience, but the conversation was of such interest that the emperor's brother-in-law had to remind him that Xuanzang was staying in the official hostel and would be locked out if he didn't leave soon.

According to Huili, the emperor protested. "I have not yet said all I wish to say in our hasty conversation. I wish you to go with me to the East on my political inspection, so that I may talk with you beside my work of commanding the troops. What do you think of it?"¹⁵

Xuanzang tried to decline, excusing himself on grounds of fatigue. The emperor reminded him that he had been able to travel all alone in foreign countries and that this was but "a short distance for him."

Xuanzang protested that he would add nothing to the campaign, and furthermore the monastic rules stated that a monk was forbidden to watch a military campaign. "Since this is the teaching of the Buddha, I must report it to Your Majesty. It will be good fortune for me if your Majesty will have compassion on me." The emperor took him at his word and dropped the subject.¹⁶

Writing the Record of the Western Regions

Xuanzang lost no time in beginning his book, *Record of the Western Regions*. He had brought back with him a mass of papers consisting partly of accounts of his own experiences and impersonal records of various kingdoms in India and elsewhere. Xuanzang noted that each province had its own official for preserving a record of events in writing. "Official annals and state papers, good and bad are recorded and instances of public calamity and good fortune are set forth in detail."¹⁷ These materials from "the above seventy kingdoms" in India must have been useful to him as he collected information for his book.¹⁸

It is doubtful that anyone had drawn on them in such a comprehensive way or used so many sources. No one before had made

fresh observations after traveling the length and breadth of India: Xuanzang would become a major source for historians studying the India of the seventh century before the coming of Islam.

The writing of history has been one of China's great strengths. Chinese annals exist dating from the first century C.E. Indeed, the greatest literary achievement of the Han dynasty (210 B.C.E. to 220 C.E.) was historical writing.¹⁹ The Chinese have traditionally viewed human affairs in a temporal framework and have excelled at compiling detailed, fact-laden, objective histories. (In contrast to the Chinese concept of time, which is linear, the Indian concept of time is often described as cyclical.²⁰) Xuanzang exhibited the Chinese pattern of historical awareness and scholarship even in his travel chronicle.

Although he was heir to this tradition, Xuanzang carried with him certain predilections reflecting his background. With his keen interest in government and administration, his early reading in Confucian classics, and his fervor toward Buddhism, he showed a bias in those areas.²¹ However, Xuanzang was not blindly partial to Buddhist rulers or oblivious to the qualities of non-Buddhist kings.²² It must have been just this impartiality that impressed the Emperor Taizong and caused the emperor to support his next task—the giant translation project that engaged Xuanzang for the next nineteen years of his life.²³

2 ELEVEN

THE LAST YEARS

2 **T**he fulfillment of a dream. The Emperor Taizong sanctioned Xuanzang's translation work; later it was supported by other members of the imperial family. Twelve monks of great learning from all over China were appointed to assist him along with nine grammarians. Among them was Huili, his biographer. Not counting stenographers and copyists, over twenty-three monks were assigned to the translation team. Xuanzang was able to embark on what was to be almost twenty years of labor totaling seventy-four different works translated into 1,335 chuan (chapters) of Chinese.¹

The true complexity of translating texts from Sanskrit into Chinese is hard to imagine. No languages could be more different than those of India and China.² Consider that

when Xuanzang made his one hundred-fascicle translation of the Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice (Yogacharabhumi-shastra), (1) he himself translated from Sanskrit to Chinese, (2) a recorder transcribed the oral Chinese translation, (3) a Sanskrit reader verified the correctness of the Sanskrit characters, (4) an ideogram corrector confirmed the accuracy of the written Chinese, (5) a meaning verifier carefully studied and discussed the meaning of individual translated sentences in addition, (6) a sentence arranger put them in correct order, (7) a revision supervisor oversaw the whole project. Because of this system, Xuanzang's translations were exceedingly accurate.³

Such elaboration was the result of many years of the growth of Buddhism in China. In the first stage, roughly from the second to the fourth century, all the monks and other translators were foreign missionaries. In order to make Buddhism attractive to Chinese, missionaries and translators often took liberties; Indian terms like *dharma* (the Buddha's teaching), *bodhi* (enlightenment), and *yoga* were all translated as "the way," a word that both Daoists and Confucianists had endowed with their own special meanings. Indian abstractions tended to be expressed in terms of concrete images: "perfection" became for the Chinese simply "round." In the second stage, foreign and Chinese monks worked together to achieve very good results. Kumarjiva (344-417) and Paramartha (449-569) were Indians, but they both had lived in China for many years and knew Chinese. (Kumarajiva was the son of an Indian of high birth who had settled in Kucha and later was called to Chang'an because of his great literary gifts.) Sometimes their translations were more liberal and appealing than those of Xuanzang. During the third stage Chinese Buddhist scholars such as Xuanzang and I Ching acted as translators.⁴

How did Xuanzang choose what to translate? At one point the Emperor Gaozong, who followed Taizong, suggested that he translate texts that had not been translated before. Although this seemed logical on the surface, Xuanzang explained that it was not quite so simple. Indeed, some of the previous translations were either very bad or incomplete. So he received royal permission to work on translations that he considered to be inferior.

In the first year Xuanzang's extraordinary team of translators produced a number of worthy translations. During the following year, 646, he continued with his translating and also sent the completed *Record of the Western Regions* to the emperor. Yet there were always unavoidable interruptions. When a Chinese mission returned from India, the emperor asked Xuanzang to translate their diplomatic messages into Sanskrit. Earlier, another Chinese envoy came back from India with a request from the king of Assam, with whom Xuanzang had stayed for two months, asking for a translation of the classic Daoist work *The Way and Its Power* (*Daode jing*; *Tao Te Ching*) into Sanskrit, so the emperor commissioned Xuanzang along with leading Daoists to make a translation.

Xuanzang also began translating *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice*. Since one of the main purposes of his going to India was to acquire, study, and then introduce this work to China, he devoted about two years to perfecting his translation. About this time, in 648, Taizong returned from an expedition to Korea. He was in increasingly poor health and so retired to his summer residence, the Yuhua Gong (Jade Flower Palace), sixty miles north of Chang'an, and asked Xuanzang to join him. The emperor pressed Xuanzang a second time to consider a position in government. Xuanzang declined once again. Then the emperor inquired as to what books he had been reading. Xuanzang replied that he had just finished the 100-chapter *Yoga Treatise*. "What wise man wrote it and what is it all about?" the emperor wanted to know.

Xuanzang explained that the treatise described the seventeen states of Buddhahood. He then enumerated the stages, from a phase of being dominated by the Five Senses to the one entirely independent of Causation. Later the emperor said to one of his courtiers:

Looking at these Buddhist works is like gazing at the sky or sea. They are so lofty that one cannot measure the height, so profound, one cannot measure the depths. The Master was able to get these deep teachings explained to him when he was abroad; but I have been so much taken up with soldiering that I have not been able to devote any attention to the study of Buddhism. I see now that there is no limit to the scope it covers. Confucianism, Taoism and our other schools when compared to it are like mere puddles measured against a mighty ocean. It is sheer nonsense when people say that the Three Doctrines come to much the same thing.

And he gave orders that *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice* should be distributed to the principal towns of China.⁵

The emperor finally got around to writing a preface in his own hand to some scriptures Xuanzang had translated earlier. He bestowed on Xuanzang a magnificent golden cassock, which had been made by the ladies of the palace; it was worth 100 pieces of gold and was so finely sewn, no stitches were visible. The pilgrim

had been in the habit of giving away whatever gifts he received, but this one present he did keep, and after he died, he was buried in it.

Licensing of 18,500 Buddhist Monks

In an important edict of the ninth month 648 in which he ordered the enrollment of 18,500 monks and nuns, the emperor stated:

When the former Sui dynasty lost its power of governance, the empire was shattered to pieces. The people within the Four Seas suffered great misery with all the eight quarters in turmoil and confusion seething like a cauldron. It befitted us to suppress the turbulence, and we had to go in person with our troops. We were frequently attacked by wind and frost and spent the night on horseback. In spite of taking medicine, we were not promptly cured of illness. Only recently have we recovered health. Is it not a symbol of good fortune effected by good and beneficial deeds? Each of the monasteries in the capital and the various states of the empire should ordain five monks, with the exception of Hongfu Monastery which should ordain fifty.⁶

Buddhist sources give full credit to Xuanzang for this increased licensing of monks, and confirm that indeed the emperor said to Xuanzang, "We intend to perform meritorious deeds, but which is the most beneficial?" Xuanzang said in reply, "As the propagation of the Dharma depends upon men, the most beneficial deed is the ordination of monks."⁷

At the end of 648, the Crown Prince announced that the Monastery of Great Maternal Love (Dacun) was complete and ready to be occupied by Xuanzang and his assistants. Built in the southwest corner of Chang'an, this was one of the great monasteries of Chang'an in Tang times. All the relics, images, and sacred texts were transported from the Hongfu Monastery in a grand ceremonial parade. All the inhabitants of Chang'an were present for this occasion, which was celebrated with nine palace orchestras playing tunes from India, Central Asia, and Korea. Would Xuanzang take on the posi-

tion of the new abbot? Xuanzang declined this honor, saying that he wished to devote all his time to translating.

Death of the Emperor Taizong

The next summer, in 649, Xuanzang accompanied the emperor to his retreat south of Chang'an to escape the heat. Freed at last from military battlefield responsibilities, and with ill health to remind him of his mortality, he spent many hours talking with Xuanzang about Buddhism. The emperor had also installed an Indian longevity doctor in a special apartment in the palace, whose task was to produce an elixir to restore his health.⁸ The emperor took some of his pills and began to think about his own karma. What good deeds had he done in his life? Xuanzang answered his many questions about the retribution of good and bad deeds and the surviving memorials of long-ago saints in India and Central Asia. The emperor was moved by Xuanzang's words. Again and again he rolled back his sleeves and said with a sigh, "It is a pity I met you so late and I could not propagate Buddhism to a greater extent."⁹

The emperor, we are told, was a little out-of-sorts when he left Chang'an. On the 25th day of the fifth month, he complained of a slight headache and made Xuanzang sleep in his apartments. Neither karmic good deeds nor the Indian longevity doctor was able to prolong his life. The next day, the Emperor Taizong died at the age of 49. He had presided over one of the most successful reigns in Chinese history.¹⁰

The day before the emperor's death, Xuanzang made a fresh translation of the *Heart Sutra*. In English it runs to only about four hundred words. It is supposed to contain the essence of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* and is recited by monks and nuns in almost all Buddhist schools in Asia.

Xuanzang returned to the Monastery of Great Maternal Love determined to devote every moment to the work of translation.

He made a timetable for himself; and if he did not complete his work because of the interference of some business or other in the

daytime, he would finish it at night. He put down his pen only after the second watch [9 P.M.]. When he had laid aside the scriptures, he would worship the Buddha's image as a means of practicing the Way until the third watch [10 P.M.] and then go to sleep for some time. In the fifth watch [2 A.M.] he would get up to read the Sanskrit texts and mark out with red ink the paragraphs he would translate the following day.¹¹

Even though he was not the abbot, he gave two lectures a day, and was busy consulting with over a hundred students and foreign visitors and supervising eunuchs from the palace who came with orders for scriptures and images.

The Emperor Gaozong and the Big Wild Goose Pagoda

The Emperor Taizong was succeeded by his ninth son, known as the Emperor Gaozong. The new emperor, like his father, held Xuanzang in high esteem, providing support for his translation work until Xuanzang's death. He sponsored two important monasteries in Ch'ang-an. Unlike his father, he showed no personal interest in Buddhist doctrine.¹² Xuanzang boldly suggested that the Emperor Gaozong build a pagoda on the site of the Monastery of Great Maternal Love to house the Buddhist scriptures and images that he had brought back from India.

He pointed out that in a stone building, they would be less exposed to the risk of loss by fire; Chinese structures were usually made of wood. Xuanzang had been thinking of a tall, multi-storied stone building like the ones he had seen in India. Xuanzang desired the pagoda to "show the magnificence of a great country and to be a monument for the Sakyamuni Buddha." However, before construction was begun, an imperial secretary to the emperor was asked to inform the Master: "As the pagoda you intend to construct is so tall, it will perhaps be difficult to build with stone. It should be constructed of brick." The final structure was much smaller than what Xuanzang had in mind. It was built Indian style, with five stories, and reached 175 feet. On the south side were monuments inscribed

with passages from the Preface to Xuanzang's translations, composed by the Emperor Taizong and the Emperor Gaozong. Xuanzang himself helped to carry bricks for the construction of the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, as it came to be called. The project took two years to complete. The much-restored Big Wild Goose Pagoda still stands as a major tourist site in what was the Tang city of Chang'an, present-day Xi'an (Fig. 11.1).



FIGURE 11.1

The Big Wild Goose Pagoda, which was erected in the seventh century to house the scriptures Xuanzang had brought back with him and which has been restored many times.

Letters to the Emperors

Xuanzang and his team translated, on an average, seventy chapters a year, except in 656 and 657, when one or two works were translated. Waley speculates that he must have spent a great deal of time in these years writing letters. Was this because the Master was in poor health and so may have written letters when he was not able to do more serious work?¹³ These were no ordinary letters but elaborate compositions filled with euphemisms and fanciful analogies often drawn from the world of nature. Records of Xuanzang and correspondence with both Taizong and Gaozong, quoted extensively in a new translation by Li Rongxi, reveal both the emperor's respect and affection for the monk and Xuanzang's unceasing efforts to gain imperial recognition for Buddhism and take advantage of his favored position.¹⁴

In one of these letters, Xuanzang suggests that if the emperor did not write an inscription in his own flowery hand, "the sun and moon would change places."¹⁵ On an earlier occasion Xuanzang reminds the emperor that "when the holy image was made in Hongfu monastery, Your Majesty personally went there in an Imperial Carriage to open the eyes of the [Buddha] image which were in the shape of blue lotus flowers. So I hope that now, as the scriptures and the treatises are first translated into Chinese as new literature of the present glorious dynasty, Your Majesty will condescend with the previous event as a precedent, to write a preface with the Divine Pen."¹⁶

Implicit in the analogy is the idea that this preface will open the eyes of the people. It is an inspired analogy that the modern Sri Lankan writer Michael Ondaatje uses to provide a dramatic ending in his novel *Anil's Ghost*.

The artificer reached the head [of the Buddha] a few minutes before the precise hour for the eye ceremony. . . . The boy held up the metal mirror so that it reflected the blank stare of the statue. The eyes unformed, unable to see. And until he had eyes—always the last thing to be painted or sculpted—he was not the Buddha. . . . In the days of the old kings, such as Parakrama Bahu, where only kings performed this ceremony, there would have been temple-dancers who danced and sang the Melodies as if this were heaven.¹⁷

Another reason for so few translations, apart from his involvement in a controversy about the sutras on Logic that he had translated, is that Xuanzang became gravely ill in the summer of 656.¹⁸ In his report to the emperor on the Western Regions he does not include the physical travails he had endured crossing the Tian Shan, Hindu Kush, or the Pamir mountains. His biographer does mention that in crossing the Tian Shan Mountains, three out of every ten men froze to death. Perhaps this ordeal had caused Xuanzang to contract “a cold disease in the form of sealing up the heart,” which caused periods of great pain.

On hearing of Xuanzang's illness, the emperor sent two physicians and all the medicines he might need. When he felt better, Xuanzang wrote letters thanking the emperor for his attention. Then in a strongly emotional appeal, he asked that the emperor (1) change the imperial edict giving Daoists precedence over Buddhists on ceremonial occasions and (2) change the edict that prescribed that Buddhist monks and nuns be tried in civil rather than religious courts: “As I might die any moment I fear I will not have another chance to speak to Your Majesty. So I am writing this note while leaning upon my pillow with a feeling of fear and trepidation.” The emperor sent a reply saying, “We have noticed what you state in your note. As the name and position of the Buddhists and Taoists [Daoists] were designated by the preceding Emperor, the matter needs deliberation and clarification. As for the decree that places (priests and monks) on the same level as lay people (in juridical affairs), it should be cancelled immediately. The Master should be at ease, and try to take medicine.”¹⁹

The first edict, in 637, had come into being when Taizong was seeking legitimacy for the throne (he had murdered his older brother and retired his father). Daoists had influenced the emperor, persuading him that he and his house were descended from Laotzu, the pre-eminent philosopher of Chinese Daoism.²⁰ The second edict, enacted by the Emperor Gaozong in 656, was more typical of early Tang emperors' policies of trying to control the activities of the Buddhist clergy. However, the edict aroused such a storm of controversy, including the protest from the venerable Xuanzang, that the emperor was forced to rescind it. Like many another Chinese monk, Xuanzang admired the position and respect due to monks in India and sought the same independence and status for monks in China.

Xuanzang and a Bird

In the winter of 656 more opportunities for letter writing arose, revealing yet another unexpected side of Xuanzang. The empress asked Xuanzang for his prayers when she was about to have a baby. Xuanzang wrote back suggesting that, if the child were a boy, he should become a monk. Vows were often administered to young children, as Waley has suggested, as a kind of “spiritual vaccination.” More letters, more gifts, more little ceremonies followed and then when the empress was about to deliver, Xuanzang saw a small bird alight on the imperial hall. Xuanzang rejoiced; he knew that birds are often auspicious omens in Buddhist legends. Indeed, both Faxian and Xuanzang noted the spot near the Bo tree where flocks of birds gave the Buddha a happy omen before he sat down to meditate.²¹ He wrote a letter of congratulations saying:

I, Sramana [monk] Xuanzang, beg to say that I have heard that a white turtledove augured prosperity for the Emperors of the Yin period, and that a red bird presented a good omen of happiness for the monarchs of the Zhou dynasty. From this we may know that the presage of human affairs by good omens granted by Heaven has had a long standing. . . . I saw inside the curtain at the courtyard of Xianqing Hall a red bird, its back, abdomen and feet covered all over with red feathers, coming flying from the south. After entering the tent, it stopped at the Throne, pacing up and down and hopping in a leisurely manner. Upon seeing this strange bird, I said to it, “As the Empress is pregnant and the time is yet unripe for the delivery, I am deeply concerned about her safety, for which I have said prayers. If my prayer is to be answered, show me a good sign.” Apparently understanding my human mind, the bird then turned around and stepped with its feet, as a gesture showing safety. Feeling delight deeply in my mind I beckoned at it and moved slowly toward it. The bird showed no fear when I approached it and was not scared when I stroked it. All the people around me witnessed this scene. So in return for its good will, I tried to make it take refuge in the Triple Gem, but before I could catch it, it flew away while I was following it up and down.²²

To take refuge in the Triple Gem is to repeat after a monk, "I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma [teaching], I take refuge in the Sangha [community of monks]." ²³ Later that day, Xuanzang heard the joyful news that the empress had given birth to a son who was to be named "Buddha-Light." After Buddha-Light was a month old and ready for the "tonsure ceremony" (in which his head was shaved in a symbolic gesture), Xuanzang wrote, "This event will (shake) the Palace of Demon and amuse the hearts of the celestials in Suddhavasa."²⁴

In the late spring of 657 the emperor moved to the eastern capital of Luoyang, taking Xuanzang and the baby with him. Xuanzang took advantage of the journey to obtain the right to go to the village of his birth and see his old home. He visited the grave of his parents, pulling up the weeds that had covered their graves for so many years. In thinking of their past goodness, he asked the emperor for additional leave in order to fulfill the tasks that filial piety prescribed. The emperor granted his wish and saw that the cost of re-interring his parents was paid for from the public treasury. A funeral procession of imposing pomp was arranged and more than 10,000 monks and lay people from Loyang attended.

Perhaps after thinking about both birth and death—and he was now in his mid-fifties—Xuanzang longed to return to the (Shao-lin) Little Forest Monastery near Luoyang. When he returned to China in 645, in his very first interview with the emperor he had asked if he might do his translations in this secluded place, which was close to his birthplace in the hills to the east of Luoyang. This time he wrote to the emperor in the late autumn of 657 that he had "translated 600 texts, and so [had] made some return to successive emperors." He had no intention of giving up translating, but he was getting old. He had cultivated only one side of Buddhism and he had been forced to neglect meditation. "We humbly beg for staying in Shao Shi Shan mountain. May you grant our request. May we free ourselves from the noise of the crowd, roll up our shadows and traces from the human society. May elk and deer be our company. May ducks and cranes [be] in our community. May we dwell on a flat stone [to see] the true [picture of Nature]."²⁵ He was turned down again by the emperor, who must have enjoyed writing, "Let it be said of you as was said of the wise men of antiquity, 'The Great Recluse never leaves town!'"²⁶

But the emperor did not always turn down Xuanzang's entreaties. After a year and a half at the new and magnificent Western Brightness Monastery (Hsi-ming) in Chang'an, where he occupied one of the best of the 4,000 rooms, Xuanzang was allowed to move to the Jade Flower Palace, which had been made into a monastery in 651. Because it is in the mountains sixty miles north of Chang'an, Xuanzang thought it would be a better place to work.

The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra

Everyone had been asking Xuanzang to translate the monumental work of the Mahayana school, *The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* (Fig. 11.2).

It is a work of immense size, eighty-four times the length of the Bible, according to Waley, and consisting of sixteen long scriptures, sermons that were supposed to have been preached by the Buddha. Only parts of it had been translated into Chinese. The Master had managed to bring three copies with him from China. When Xuanzang started translating in 660, the disciple translators all wanted



FIGURE 11.2

Frontispiece of the Perfection of Wisdom, one of the many Buddhist texts translated by Xuanzang. Depicts the pilgrim meeting the Buddha to receive the Tripitaka (Buddhist canon). The British Library.

to produce an abridged version. It was much too long. At first Xuanzang agreed and promised to do as they wished.

That night he dreamed that he was climbing over a precipitous peak and some wild animals were trying to catch him. He related his dream to his disciples and promptly decided to translate the full text. Then in his dreams he saw a host of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from whom streams of light poured forth. For several nights he dreamed of heavenly beings bearing heavenly gifts to him—surely a favorable sign.

So Xuanzang didn't change a word. Everything had to be exactly as it was in the original. At the time of translating, he included all sixteen sermons, and he compared the three versions he had brought with him to China in order to arrive at the correct wording. When he came to dubious passages or mistaken points in the text, he had a curious sensation as if someone were actually telling him what it should be, so that "when he had penetrated a profound idea, clarified a doubtful passage or restored a corrupt passage, one might have said that a god had communicated to him the solution which he was seeking. Then his soul opened out/bloomed like that of a man plunged in darkness who sees the sun pierce the clouds and shine in all its splendour. But distrusting always his intelligence, he attributed the merit to a mysterious inspiration of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas."²⁷ While he was translating he was haunted by the fear that he might die before this work was finished. However, on the twenty-third day of the tenth month in 663, the last of the 600 chapters was completed. After completing the *Wisdom Sutra* he was physically exhausted. Knowing that death was approaching, he said to his disciples, "Now my mission is fulfilled. The age of living is also finished. There is no reason to stay longer. After my death, you may wrap up my corpse in a reed mat. Bring it to Reng Ze Shan Mountain and dispose of it in a quiet place."²⁸

On hearing these words his disciples wept and asked him how he suddenly could say such a thing. Still the monks asked him to translate yet another sutra. Upon seeing the sincerity of the monks, he started to translate the sutra and then gave up. "Let us go instead to the Orchid and Mushroom valleys so that I may say good bye to my Buddhas." After worshipping the little images which he had commissioned, he returned to the monastery and engaged only in

religious exercises. A few weeks later one of his disciples had a bad dream in which he saw a very high and beautiful pagoda suddenly totter and fall to the ground. He told the dream to Xuanzang, who said, "This dream does not belong to you, it belongs to me and is a sign of my termination and dissolution."

Final Illness and Death

The evening of that day, when crossing a ditch in a courtyard outside his room, Xuanzang slipped and fell to the ground. His thigh was injured slightly. For the next few days he seemed quite normal. But on the thirteenth day he became ill and did not leave his bed. Thereafter he lay with his eyes open and sometimes shut. Again and again Xuanzang said that he saw huge white lotus flowers, very fresh and bright. He continued to dream of heavenly beings bestowing heavenly gifts on him, when an attendant coughed and he opened his eyes. After he related his dreams to the abbot of the monastery, Xuanzang said, "It seems that all the good deeds I have done in my life have not been done in vain. I am sure the Buddhist law of Causality is not false." And he asked his disciples to write down the number of sutras he had translated and to record his meritorious deeds. Then he wrote:

I, Xuan Zang, when I was
twenty-six
in the year of Yi - Ox (629)
went to India. At my age of forty-two
in the year of Xin - Snake (645)
returned back to China.
From my age of forty-two to the year of the Ren - Tiger,
my sixty-third,
the record of scriptures translated from Sanskrit to Chinese is
the number of the Sutras and Sastras are all together
[seventy-four];
the number of chapters translated are one thousand three hundred
thirty-eight.
. . . I have given alms and offerings to each ten [thousand]

people,
I have lighted candles
services hundreds and thousands of
times. Thus he dictated.²⁹

He asked the recording master to read it aloud. When Xuanzang heard this, he felt satisfied that his work on earth had been accomplished and he was ready to make final preparations to die. Although the recital of a dying man's accomplishments was a Chinese custom practiced by laymen and monks alike, it had a particular meaning for Xuanzang. Throughout his life he had worked to spread Buddhism, for his own salvation but also to help all beings toward enlightenment. For this reason the pilgrim had persevered on his journey from India back to China, bringing holy books, Buddhist statues, and relics. For this reason he had devoted twenty years to translating Buddhist scriptures.³⁰

As his life was coming to a close, he gave away all his goods and clothes for the making of more images. He also asked a sculptor to make an image of the Buddha in the position of attaining enlightenment. Then, in a happy frame of mind, he made his farewell to the monks of the monastery, the translators, and his disciples: "This physical body of mine is loathsome. Since my work has been accomplished, it is unnecessary for me to live any longer. I wish to offer all of the merits of my good deeds to all living beings so that we may all be reborn in the Tushita Heaven to serve the Maitreya Buddha and when the future Buddha comes down to the human world, may we also descend with him to perform Buddhist tasks until we attain to supreme enlightenment."³¹

Xuanzang stayed in silent meditation for awhile. From time to time he recited the most famous passage of the *Heart Sutra*, the very verses he had recited as a young man in the desert when he nearly died of thirst. "Form is unreal. Perception, thought, action, knowledge—all are unreal. The eye, the ear, the mind—all are unreal. Consciousness through the Five Senses is unreal. All the Twelve Causes, from ignorance to Old Age and Death, are unreal. Enlightenment is unreal. Unreality itself is unreal."³² Then, with the outmost devotion, he called upon the Maitreya, just as he had prayed to the Goddess of Mercy in the desert. Xuanzang then made all those around

him repeat after him: "Homage to Maitreya Tathagata, the Fully Enlightened One! May I and all beings speedily be in your presence! Homage to all the inmates of Maitreya Tathagata's abode! May I be reborn among them after I have forsaken my present life."³³

At midnight on the fifth day of the second month of the year 664, the disciple Pu Guang asked him, "Are you sure that you will return in the future in the Inner Courtyard of the Maitreya, or not?" "Quite sure," said Xuanzang. Then his breathing gradually became fainter and he died.³⁴

More than a million people attended Xuanzang's funeral. The ceremony was arranged with five hundred white canopies, religious pennants, and funeral music. The silk makers of the eastern market of Chang'an had used 3,000 pieces of silk in different colors to form the "Nirvana wagon."³⁵ For fear of dishonoring his last wishes, his disciples sent them back. The coffin was carried in a simple bamboo hearse and his body wrapped in a bamboo mat. Xuanzang was buried in a quiet place by the side of a mountain stream far from a palace or a monastery, just as he had requested.

2 TWELVE

THE LEGACY OF XUANZANG

2 **W**hen Xuanzang dictated a list of his good deeds shortly before his death, they included his many translations, his gifts to charity, the thousands of statues, and the sacrificial lamps he had commissioned. Clearly he was proud of his good works and the translations he had made to enable the Chinese to come to know the *true* Buddhist scriptures. He doesn't cite his sixteen-year journey to India and back to China (only in an earlier Uygur version of his biography is there any mention of his 10,000-mile journey). Does this really reflect how he thought about his life in those final hours? Why does his biographer Li Yongshi leave out any mention of his physical journey, his trek of 10,000 miles to India and back on the Silk Road? To be sure, Xuanzang's *intellectual* achievements and his good works did occupy the last nineteen years of his life.

So what about the years of his young manhood, the vigorous years of travel and exploration? Isn't there a challenge of putting together Xuanzang's intellectual and physical achievements—the two halves of his life, his sixteen years of traveling, and his nineteen years of translating? Surely there are human characteristics, which show themselves whatever Xuanzang is doing. And what of his heart? His devotion to the Maitreya Buddha? His political savvy? His translating ability and his human skills with people of many nationalities? His tenderness toward a bird? His diplomatic success? There are so many facets of his life and his personality.

Dunhuang dating from 406 to 995 C.E., which Mirsky has said was a discovery of more general importance than that of the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁴

Among Art Historians

Art historians look to Xuanzang for descriptions of monuments that have since been destroyed and for ideas of the appearance of damaged works. Or even more broadly, according to Seckel: “It is the report of Chinese pilgrims which constitute the richest source of knowledge about life in these oases, and also about Bamiyan, the sacred places of India, and even southern Asia.”⁵

It is tempting to say that Xuanzang is best known among art historians for his portrait in words of the giant statues at Bamiyan, and his descriptions are even more precious in light of the destruction of the statues in 2001. Yet the descriptions by both Faxian and Xuanzang of the tower stupa of King Kanishka are perhaps equally important: “It is only in the accounts of the Chinese visitor . . . that we can get any idea of the sumptuous splendour of Buddhist architecture of the days of Kanishka and his successors,” according to Rowland.⁶ The descriptions of Nalanda, the most illustrious monastery in Asia, which Xuanzang saw at its height, and the account of the temple and grounds where the Buddha attained enlightenment are often cited. Xuanzang’s picture of the highly polished Asoka pillar at Sarnath and the setting of many of the eight places of pilgrimage are also referred to with profit.

Xuanzang knew all the varieties of Buddhism then extant. His commentary included not only valuable descriptions of famous sculptures, monuments, or sites, but usually noted which sect of Buddhism was dominant in each area or each monastery. This helped to combat some of the oversimplifications about Buddhist art, such as the labeling of plain work as Hinayana and more complex art as Mahayana.⁷

In Xuanzang’s record, we find useful clues about Buddhist beliefs and practices that help interpret the iconography and subject matter of Buddhist art. The Buddhist pantheon developed in complex ways into many Buddhas—the Historical Buddha or Sakyamuni and the

Transcendental and Cosmic Buddhas of Mahayana Buddhism, as well as Buddhas of the Past, Buddhas of the Four Directions, Bodhisattvas with many names, and so on. Furthermore, the way in which devotees hold onto one or another set of beliefs is an involved subject with many uncertainties. There are usually two ways to tell Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhas apart—by general context or by special attributes. For example, Xuanzang called one of the giant Buddhas at Bamiyan, which had been badly mutilated, Sakyamuni, the Historical Buddha, and the other a “Buddha image,” or the Transcendental Buddha, because he knew the context, the special kind of Buddhism, that flourished there.

As the great art historian Erwin Panofsky said about Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*, if you didn't know who the characters were and what they represent, you'd think it was just about some men eating, drinking, and probably arguing over money. It is essential to know the meaning of the story depicted in the painting in order to appreciate the work's greatness. Similarly, to identify and understand a story represented in a Gandharan relief, you need the help of the Buddhist written tradition.⁸

Since Buddha legends—Xuanzang's account is full of them—are so often the subject matter of Buddhist art, his narrative not only places these tales geographically but also provides insight into their meaning. In Greater India especially it has been important to give these legends a place of origin. Buddhist art was often a storytelling medium, using the rich materials of the lives of the former Buddhas as well as that of the Historical Buddha for its monastery friezes. The Buddhist monks seemed to know that art gives life to legends and legends give life to art, and people learn their faith from both.

Xuanzang also provided us with a quasi-census of monks and monasteries in India and Central Asia, even though, by modern standards, the numbers are approximate and often exaggerated or misleading.⁹ There would seem to have been between 4,000 and 6,000 monasteries in India and another 1,000 on the Northern and Southern Silk Roads in China and Central Asia.¹⁰ What is perhaps more valuable is his information that the reach of Buddhism extended to such out-of-the-way and unexpected places as Badakhshan, in Afghanistan.

Like the pious Faxian before him, Xuanzang has helped modern art historians reconstruct the history of several of the best-known and holiest images of Buddhism, such as the first sandalwood Buddha, commissioned by King Udayana. The Udayana image that Xuanzang saw at Kausambi was the most popular of all these images. At Dunhuang it was depicted on the Banner of Famous Indian Images (a painting now in the Museum for Central Asian Antiquities in New Delhi). All manner of legends grew up about this famous Buddha image prototype. Xuanzang brought a replica back to China, where more copies were made. In 985 C.E. the Japanese monk Chonen had another copy made, which he took back to Japan with him (Fig. A.1). It is one of the most famous Buddha images in



FIGURE 12.1
Udayana image of the Buddha in bronze. The Seiryoji Temple, Japan.

Japan and still stands in the temple of Seiryōji near Kyoto, where it continues to serve as a model for a large number of other replicas.¹¹

And so the past, present, and future Buddha images survive, not just in Buddhist doctrine but also in art in a chain of authentic images, the prime concern being that something of the omnipresent and beneficial essence of the Buddha be contained in it.

The Gupta images that Xuanzang collected and brought back with him may have had an impact on Tang art, giving it a new plasticity. According to Peter C. Swann, "Hsuan-tsang [Xuanzang] brought seven Gupta images back to China from his travels in India. The 7th and 8th centuries were the critical period for the new influences from India on Chinese workmanship, and the Chinese sculptures seem to have surrendered momentarily to them. Even at this distance one can sense the tremor of delight with which the Chinese in the luxury of the 7th century saw the Gupta images." Xuanzang contributed to this delight. "After the impassive planes of early Yun-kang [Yungang] torsos and the heavy concealing drapery of later Northern Wei figures, diaphanous draperies reveal soft lines and warm flesh of living, physically desirable beings."¹²

Even more mysterious than the transfer of artistic influences from India to China was the way in which Xuanzang's journey, and indeed his character, began to be changed in the public imagination from a real journey to a fantastic and legendary one in which the true hero was no longer a pilgrim but a Trickster Monkey.

Literary Heritage

How did a popular religious folk hero come to acquire his bizarre animal guardians, especially Monkey? The shared motifs of some of Mōnkey's characteristics with the monkey hero of the Indian epic known as the *Ramayana* have caused some to try to establish a connection between the two, and the evidence is impressive.¹³ We do know that Xuanzang's biographers enriched and enlarged the facts and history of his life with stories and miracles. Something about Xuanzang and his exotic travels stirred the Chinese imagination. His seventh-century exploits became folk tales, part of a living oral tradition told first in Chinese monasteries. "Do you know how

the Chinese monk subdued the demon in the cave? How did he get away from the pirates?" Later they were repeated in Chinese inns. In nearly a millennium of development, the story of Xuanzang and his acquisition of scriptures was told, retold, and written down in short poetic tales, stories, plays, and partial narratives. Finally there was a fully developed narrative using both prose and verse. In 1592, probably after the author had died, the earliest extant full edition came out. This epic Ming novel, *Journey to the West*, was said to have been written by Wu Cheng'en.

It is one of the three great Chinese novels of the last several centuries. Sometimes it is compared to *Don Quixote* or *Pilgrim's Progress*—more often to the former, with its playful tone, inexhaustible fun and humor, and layers of philosophical and religious meaning. Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian themes are all present in this very long novel.¹⁴ *Journey to the West* is divided into three parts: (1) an early history of Monkey; (2) a pseudo-historical account of Xuanzang's family and life in which there is an astonishing parallel to the biblical story of Moses (the baby Xuanzang is put into a basket to float down a river, where he is eventually picked up by monks); and (3) the principal story, which consists of eighty-one calamities suffered by the pilgrim and his guardians. In the sixteenth-century classic, Xuanzang has been renamed Tripitaka, meaning the "Three Baskets" of Buddhist wisdom. Not only does he slip into the background, but he becomes a timid and peevish monk. He has been upstaged by the mischief-making Monkey, a slovenly, greedy pig, and a somewhat nondescript monk named Sha, sometimes translated as "Sandy." Tripitaka's animal attendants are, however, delinquent immortals gifted with supernatural powers. They have all been naughty, and their task is to redeem themselves by taking care of Tripitaka on his way to the West.

During World War II, Arthur Waley translated and published about a third of *Journey to the West*, calling it *Monkey*; it was popular with the general reading public. Anthony Yu, a brilliant scholar, made the first complete translation into English of the one hundred chapters, over a period of six years from 1977 to 1983. His four-volume edition—about 2,000 pages—was meant for scholars. Two well-known contemporary authors, Mark Salzman and Maxine Hong Kingston, have used *Monkey* as a chief protagonist in modern novels.¹⁵

The stories of Monkey are so popular in China that they have become part of the repertoire of shadow plays, puppet companies, and Chinese opera, not to mention a TV series, comic books that every Chinese child knows, paper cutouts, and masks. In China there are even murals with a Monkey theme on the walls of the Summer Palace in Beijing, as well as folk temple sculpture in such places as Kunming. Chairman Mao wrote several poems about Monkey. His wife, Jiang Qing, ruthless in her persecution of Chinese artists and literati, was nicknamed the White Bone Demon after one of the chapters of this famous classic. Korean and Japanese children and adults also know the Monkey story.

It is not surprising that the earliest pictorial depiction of Xuanzang sprang from this literary tradition. It is from a recently discovered wall painting 100 miles from Dunhuang at Yulin (Fig. A.2). The scene by a river figures prominently in early versions of *Journey to the West* and dates from between 1038 and 1227.¹⁶

But the origins, development, and promotion of Xuanzang as a cult figure in East Asia have included many and varied portrayals such as “the itinerant monk,” the folk hero, and the patriarch or Chinese sage.¹⁷

Translation Legacy

There were four preeminent translators of Buddhist works into Chinese between the second and the thirteenth centuries C.E.: Kumarajiva, Paramartha, Xuanzang, and Amoghavajra.¹⁸ Xuanzang translated more Buddhist scriptures than any of them. In twenty years he and a specially recruited team of scholars produced over seventy-three works, totaling more than one thousand scrolls.

According to the modern Buddhist scholar Dan Lusthaus, “he was one of the greatest and most prolific (and accurate) Chinese translators of Indian Buddhist texts. Some of his translations, such as the Heart Sutra and Diamond Sutra, continue to play a major role in daily Buddhist forms of reverence until this day. The range of his translations is unrivaled not only representing the teachings of the Yogacara school to which he adheres, but covering the full range of Buddhist literature.”¹⁹



FIGURE 12.2

Wall painting of a pilgrim with a monkey and a horse bearing scriptures, the earliest legendary depiction of Xuanzang, recently discovered at Yulin, 100 miles from Dunhuang. Source: Wang Jingru, "Western Xia Murals from the Muogao Caves in Dun Huang and Yulin Caves in Anxi" (written in 1973), *Wen Wu* 9 (1980): 49–53.

One of his important translations, the *Thirty Verses*, became a bible to the followers of the Idealist school, which survives in Japan as the Hosso, a small sect. The Hosso followers consider Xuanzang "their original founder" and honor him at the Yakushiji Temple in Japan. Although Jiion Daishi was the real founder of the temple, there is a special building in the temple complex dedicated to Ganjo Sanzoin (Xuanzang). In the year 2001, after twenty years of work, the well-known Japanese painter Ikuo Hirayama completed his murals of the journey of Xuanzang on the Silk Road on the walls of the Xuanzang Hall at Yakushiji.²⁰ And Takada Koin, the abbot of Yakushiji, carried

some of the bone relics that belonged to the temple on a pilgrimage to Gandhara, following in Xuanzang's footsteps (Fig. A.3).

Many Chinese and Japanese soldiers carried the *Thirty Verses* on their persons; during World War II a copy of Xuanzang's translation was found on the body of a Japanese soldier killed in the war in China. Today that copy is in the private library of the distinguished Chinese scholar Frederick W. Mote. But the Idealist text that was the magnet for Xuanzang's journey was his *Treatise on the*

FIGURE 12.3
Takada Koin, former abbot of Yakushiji Temple in Nara, carrying a portion of Xuanzang's relic bones. The Yakushiji Temple, Pakistan.



Stages of Yoga Practice. The emperor honored him by writing a foreword, and copies were distributed throughout the empire. It is still used as a text for persons entering the Buddhist clergy.

In China itself, Xuanzang was the founder of an Idealist school known as Faxiang (Fa-hsiang), a branch of the Buddhist tree that ceased to grow and survived his death by only seventy years. Possibly it was too abstruse, too intellectual, and not practical enough to suit the Chinese. Also, Xuanzang eventually came to believe in a sectarian view that certain types of persons could never hope to attain enlightenment, a belief he shared with Silabhadra, the head of Nalanda Monastery.²¹

A branch of esoteric Buddhism, the Cult of the Healing Buddha, appears to have gained special popularity in China and the Far East after Xuanzang's excellent translation of the *Master of Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tāthagatha*.²² This sutra, relating to a healing spell or healing mantra, is of a totally different order than his unique contribution, of bringing the New Logic of Buddhism to China. Waley noted that "systematic treatises dealing with logic were almost unknown" and that "they caused a considerable stir even in the lay intellectual world."²³

From Specialist to Mainstream

But Xuanzang is no longer the property of specialists in archaeology, history, Chinese literature, or Buddhist translations. He is fast becoming mainstream. Someone has compared him to a dormant volcano in the West that is beginning to erupt. Consider. The travel agency Insight Travel uses Xuanzang as their logo because "we believe he represents the finest example of the pilgrim path." (In the early twentieth century, Aurel Stein called him his patron saint.) There are more Silk Road tours with the opening up of China's far west, and the Karakorum Highway that passes through China and Pakistan. More tours include the lands of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in Central Asia along with China. Ordinary travelers quote Xuanzang in describing distant kingdoms such as Tashkurgan in the Pamirs. Tashkurgan? The Pamirs? Where are these obscure places?

The fourth chapter of Xuanzang's *Record of the Western Regions* is now on the Internet. *The New Yorker* recently published a poem about Xuanzang by Charles Wright:

Here is the story of Hsuan Tsang.

A Buddhist monk, he went from Xian to southern India

*And back—on horseback, on camelback, on elephantback and on
foot.*

Ten thousand miles it took him, from 629 to 645,

Mountains and deserts,

In search of the Truth,

the heart of the heart of Reality,

The Law that would help him escape it,

And all its attendant and inescapable suffering.

And he found it.²⁴

Xuanzang is featured in *Murder on the Silk Road*, a mystery by Stefanie Matteson. He is also the subject of *Ultimate Journey* by Richard Bernstein, Book Review Editor of the *New York Times*. Both *Time* magazine and the *BBC News* mention Xuanzang's seventh-century eyewitness description of the Bamiyan statues of Buddha. Students in a high school in Bangor, Maine, have created a remarkable web site on Xuanzang. A university in Taiwan as part of its Digital Library has an interactive website on "The World of Xuanzang." And so it goes.

What is happening? A convergence of at least four phenomena: (1) an explosion of interest in the Silk Road; (2) world attention focused on Bamiyan in Aghanistan; (3) the growth of Buddhism and the development of Buddhist virtual libraries and huge translation projects; and (4) an increase in Asian studies and the teaching of world history in high schools and colleges. Students are learning about broad trends such as the spread of religions from one culture to another.

The Silk Road

The Japan Broadcasting Company (NHK) arranged the first co-production with China of a TV series on the Silk Road, photographed

over a period of ten years at a cost of fifty million dollars. It was shown in the 1980s all over the world and is still available on video. This was followed by Michael Haggiag's *Beyond the Himalayas* by Global Productions in England.²⁵ Xuanzang was featured to a greater or lesser extent in each of them. He was the star along with Aurel Stein in "China's Frozen Desert," part of the National Geographic series called *The Treasure Seekers*.²⁶

Yo-Yo Ma described the Silk Road as the "internet of antiquity" as he promoted his fourteen Silk Road Festivals all over the world. They included concerts around the world, the commissioning of new music, education events, and pieces for publication that climaxed in the Silk Road Festival at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., during the summer of 2001. Over a million people listened to storytellers, to music, ate Silk Road food, watched Kung Fu arts, and saw Silk Road crafts and huge displays of Bamiyan Buddhas, the Bell Tower in Xi'an, China, Nara Gate in Japan, a Samarkand square in Uzbekistan, Istanbul's Blue Mosque, and the Basilica of San Marco in Venice.

Similarly there have been major art exhibitions on the Silk Road all over the world: "In the Footsteps of the Buddha" in Hong Kong, "Along the Silk Roads" in Washington, "Monks and Merchants" in New York, and "Grand Exposition of Silk Road Art" in Paris. Each was accompanied by a handsome catalogue. And in Japan there were three Silk Road exhibitions with equally fine catalogues, including one entitled "The Silk Road and the World of Xuanzang."²⁷

Research organizations such as the International Dunhuang Project have digitalized a treasure trove of 50,000 manuscripts, paintings, and artifacts from ancient caves and temples on the Silk Road, which can now be viewed on the web (<http://idp.bl.uk>). In real life the collection is spread out over museums all over the world, but researchers will be able to find it in digital form on a web site developed jointly by the British Museum and the government of China.

The Silk Road provides a symbol of complex cultural exchange, useful to teachers and professors in introducing themes of cultural borrowing, interaction of civilizations, and development of new economic institutions, technologies, and even businesses. Robert Bloor's book *The Electronic Bazaar from the Silk Road to the eRoad* explores this opportunity. Sometimes it is useful to focus on

specific individuals or even categories or groups such as merchants, pilgrims, and entertainers who embody historic themes. Xuanzang has been a popular candidate in these Silk Road studies.

Bamiyan

Global attention has focused on the impressive Buddha statues 1,500 years old on a mountainside in Afghanistan that were destroyed in March 2001 by the Taliban. They were the largest Buddha statues in the world. Literally thousands of news stories and magazine articles appeared as part of the international outcry against their senseless destruction. (In July 2003 there were 28,100 entries under the word Bamiyan in the Google search engine.) Because of this intense interest in Bamiyan, Afghanistan has become “the land of the Buddhas.” *The New Yorker* ran a full-page cartoon of the Twin Towers in the empty niches at Bamiyan in Afghanistan and the Buddhas standing in place where the Twin Towers used to be in lower Manhattan.²⁸ Before September 11, 2001, such a bizarre juxtaposition or even the idea of a cartoon of Bamiyan would have been unthinkable.

Buddhism

There are an estimated two million Buddhists in the United States, a “guesstimate” perhaps, but one that points to the substantial growth of Buddhism. Immigrants from Southeast Asia and the Far East have their temples, Zen and Tibetan Buddhist retreat centers have sprung up all over the country, Buddhist magazines, Buddhist web sites, and Buddhist studies in colleges have grown along with substantial virtual Buddhist libraries. There are many more popular Buddhist books as well as more serious Buddhist and historical books by distinguished scholars such as Malcolm David Eckel, Dan Lusthaus, and Tansen Sen, who find Xuanzang a fruitful resource in their research.²⁹ The Tibetans have been putting their valuable scriptures on CD-ROMs; other groups such as the Numata Buddhist Center for Research and Translation in California are producing a

complete translation of the *Taisho* edition of the Buddhist canon. Pertinent to Xuanzang studies, is Li Rongxi's new translation into English of Xuanzang's biography, the first new translation since 1911. Li Rongxi has also translated Xuanzang's *Record of the Western Regions*, the first new translation in 100 years.³⁰

World History

The decade of the nineties saw many changes in both teaching of history and teaching about Asia. In 1990 the first issue of the *Journal of World History* appeared. Marianna McJimsey of Colorado College, in an address to a conference of educators, remarked that the 500th anniversary of Columbus's 1492 voyage "fostered a healthy examination of the global diaspora of seeds, germs, technology, science and cultures that brought Asia into the picture that had often only included Europe and the New World." She continued, "Old text books were rewritten. K-12 teachers reviewed historiography and contributed important voices to 'the seeds of change' curricula that grew out of the anniversary."³¹ Old geographic paradigms changed and the study of continents no longer existed. Some agreement for the National Standards of World History was finally achieved in debates that even reached the floor of the U.S. Senate. Large-scale processes such as relations among peoples, trade, and pilgrimage and migrations began to be emphasized. Civilizations were compared and students examined how cultural ideas and knowledge have spread from one area to another.

In 1993 ASIANetwork was founded to focus on teaching about Asia in undergraduate liberal arts colleges. The next year the cyberspace List Serve HASIA (an electronic discussion group) was started; subscribers from around the world signified the coming explosive use of the Internet. In 1996 the magazine *Education About Asia* carefully defined for its readers the terms Internet, World Wide Web, server, and browser, that are now basic to our vocabulary. The speed of change has been extraordinary.

World history focuses on three major areas—comparisons, cross-cultural encounters, and trans-civilization themes such as population and technology—and Xuanzang's story fits extremely well in

the first two. His story is also a vivid account of how ideas travel, how people learn from one another, and how ideas spread in new areas. The spread of “universal religions” is one of the major themes in world history, and Xuanzang played a crucial role in the spread of Buddhism.

Like a dead star that keeps releasing energy and light for thousands of years, Xuanzang is a continuing and abundant resource for historians, archaeologists, art historians, and Buddhist scholars. Historically, he is best known as the inspiration for one of China’s great epics, *Journey to the West*, and less known as a competent translator of Buddhist texts. But today Xuanzang is a new discovery for a wide variety of people: travelers, students of world history, and those newly interested in Buddhism and the Silk Road. With the sole exception of the fourteenth-century Moroccan Ibn Battutah, Xuanzang was the greatest traveler of all time.³²

What has been so compelling for me is not just exploring Xuanzang’s legacy in history but also trying to uncover him as a fully realized human being. Although he may have been naive, credulous, and petty on occasion, he was also brilliant, an indomitable traveler and explorer, clever and charming as a diplomat, a tireless seeker after truth, and a devout Buddhist pilgrim.

Glossary

TERMS

Abhidharma: Philosophical commentaries composed between the third century B.C.E. and the third century C.E. They are part of the Buddhist canon (Tripitaka).

Arhat: One who strives after his own salvation, in Hinayana Buddhism.

Atman: Individual self or soul.

Avalokitesvara: Bodhisattva of Compassion; Bodhisattva of Enlightenment. After about the sixth century C.E., he became the most popular Bodhisattva of Buddhism; later depicted as a female in East Asian Mahayana Buddhism; see Guanyin.

Bhallika: One of Buddha's first disciples from Balkh; he fed the Buddha after his enlightenment.

Bodhisattva: Enlightened Being who renounces entry into nirvana until all other beings are saved.

Bo tree, Bodhi tree: Fig tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment.

Brahma: Creator, chief of the Hindu trinity with Vishnu and Siva.

Brahmin: Member of the highest of the four Hindu castes of India.

Buddha Legend: The stories and miracles associated with the life of the Buddha.

Caste: Hereditary social-class system in Hinduism that restricts both the occupations of its members and their associations with members of other castes.

Confucianism: Moral and religious system in China. Its origins go back to *The Sayings of Confucius* and to ancient commentaries such as *The Book of Mencius*. Before the third century B.C.E., it was entirely a system of ethical precepts for the management of society.

Daoism (Taoism): Major religious philosophy in China. The Dao (Tao, The Way) is hard to define, since basic Daoist axioms include silence and even inaction. Of far more importance than the world of immediate human concerns is the greater cosmic world of nature.

Deva: Divine beings or gods who inhabit Buddhist heavens.

Dharma: Universal norms that govern human existence; variously translated as "the law," "the truth," and so on. In Buddhism, it is the law of the universe

- discovered and preached by the Buddha. Can also mean a potential object of consciousness.
- Diamond Sutra:** Discourse that is part of the Prajnaparamita-sutra. It shows that all phenomenal appearances are not ultimate reality but illusions or projections of one's own mind.
- Dipankara Buddha:** The first of the twenty-four Buddhas preceding the Historical Buddha, Sakyamuni.
- Emptiness Doctrine:** Sunyata, emptiness, nothingness, void. The mental state that is to be achieved as the final result of Buddhist practices; neither existence nor nonexistence, a state of complete neutrality that is considered to be the ultimate reality seen as a dynamic, not a passive, state.
- Faxiang (Fa-hsiang):** A school founded by Xuanzang and his disciple, Kuiji (K'uei-chi) (632-682 C.E.). Also called the Wei-shih, Consciousness Only school.
- Guanyin (Kuan-yin; Japanese, Kannon):** Goddess of Mercy. East Asian name for Avalokitesvara. Originally represented as a male, later popularized as a female deity.
- Harmika:** Base of a parasol shaft on a stupa. Sometimes a balcony or railing surmounting dome.
- Heart Sutra, Heart of Wisdom Sutra, Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra (Prajnaparamitahridaya-sutra):** Important Mahayana sutra, especially emphasized in Zen. "Form is Emptiness, and Emptiness is no other than Form." It concluded with the mantra: "Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone altogether beyond. O, what an Awakening! All hail!"
- Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle):** Southern Buddhism, an early form of Buddhism emphasizing the ideal of the arhat, rather than worship of Bodhisattvas. Practiced in Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia.
- Hinduism:** Dominant religion of India, emphasizing dharma, its ritual and social observances, and other mystical and ascetic practices.
- Indra:** In Hinduism the deity that controls thunder, lightning, wind, and rain. Adopted as one of the protective deities of Buddhism.
- Jainism:** Religion founded in sixth century B.C.E. in India. Emphasis on austerity, penance, and the practice of nakedness.
- Jataka:** Stories about the Buddha's previous incarnations.
- Journey to the West (Xiyouji or Hsi-yu chi):** A sixteenth-century epic novel by Wu Cheng'en that drew its inspiration from Xuanzang's seventh-century journey.
- Kalpa:** An aeon, an infinitely long period of time.
- Karma:** The idea of retribution in the life cycle, whereby acts in a previous existence lead to inevitable results in the shape of good or bad incarnations in later lives.
- Kuan-yin:** See Guanyin.
- Lankavatara-sutra (Sutra of the Descent into Lanka):** A verse compendium of Idealist philosophy.

Lapis Lazuli-sutra (Master of Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata): Discourse relating to the Cult of the Healing Buddha and the Bhaishajya-guru-sutra, which flourished in China, Japan, and Tibet.

Li: A Chinese unit of distance; one *li* is equal to about one-third of a mile.

Logic: See New Logic.

Lotus Sutra (Saddharmapundarika-sutra; Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Dharma): Discourse delivered by the Buddha toward the end of his ministry on Vulture Peak.

Madhyamika: Centrist school of Mahayana Buddhism, which affirmed the middle way between affirming and denying. Founded by Nagarjuna and Aryadeva.

Mahaparinibbana-sutta (Sutra of the Great Decease; Sutra of the Glorious Decease): Early Pali account of Buddha's last days, his final sermon, death, and funeral. This Hinayana sutra also lists four places of pilgrimage for Buddhists. Composed about 480 B.C.E.

Mahaparinirvana-sutra: Discourses concerning the *Great Parinirvana Sutra*. A collection of Mahayana sutras. They deal mostly with "the Buddha nature" and other Mahayana concepts.

Mahayana (Greater Vehicle): Northern branch of Buddhism. Its ideal is the Bodhisattva, the Compassionate One, who helps others attain salvation.

Maitreya: Both a Bodhisattva who is said to reside in the Tushita Heaven, where he awaits birth as the next Historical Buddha, and a Future Buddha who will preside over an earthly paradise.

Manichaeism: A hybrid religion founded in Persia about the third century C.E.; derived partly from both Zoroastrian dualism and Christian soteriology.

Manjusri: Bodhisattva of Wisdom. Often depicted riding a lion.

Mara: The evil one, or tempter.

Maya: Refers to the illusory nature of the phenomenal world. Also creation of illusion or artifice. The power of the gods to assume different shapes.

Mount Sumeru: World Mountain at center of the universe, dwelling place of the gods.

Naga; Nagini (Naga, male; Nagini, female): A serpent, especially a serpent divinity.

Nestorian Christianity: A fifth-century heresy, maintaining that Jesus Christ was two distinct persons. Nestorius held that the father of Jesus was God and that Mary bore him as a human being.

New Logic (Hetuvya sastra): A system founded by Dignaga in the late fifth century C.E. Employed to win points in religious debates.

Nirvana: Ultimate goal of Buddhist endeavor, the extinction of craving and separate selfhood, a life that has gone beyond death.

Pali: Ancient language derived from Sanskrit. Used as the liturgical and scholarly language of Hinayana Buddhism.

Parinirvana: Sometimes called the "Great Decease." Complete nirvana. Final passing away of Sakyamuni Buddha.

Perfection of Wisdom Sutra: See *Prajnaparamita-sutra*.

Prajnaparamita-sutra (Perfection of Wisdom Sutra): Discourses gathered together dealing with wisdom (prajna). Best known in the West are the *Diamond Sutra* and the *Heart Sutra*.

Questions of Milinda: The most important noncanonical work of the Hinayana; a dialogue between the monk Nagasena and King Milinda (Menander), the first-century B.C.E. Greek conqueror of northern India. Milinda is said to have converted to Buddhism.

Quinquennial Almsgiving: Gathering in which a ruler gives away all his possessions, which his officials ransom back afterwards.

Rain Retreat: A variable period of monsoon when Buddhist monks take up residence in monasteries.

Record of the Western Regions: Full name is *Account of the western lands of the Great Tang Dynasty (Da Tang Xiyouji [Ta T'ang Hsi-yu chi])*. Xuanzang's account of his journey (646).

Reincarnation: Rebirth of the soul in a new life.

Samadi: A concentration of mind, the deepest form of Buddhist meditation.

Samsara: Continual bondage of life, death, and rebirth experienced by the unenlightened, from which only nirvana offers release.

Sangha: The Buddhist community; usually limited to the priesthood.

Sanskrit: The ancient and sacred language of India; oldest known member of the Indo-European family.

Sastra (Shastra): Commentaries, as distinct from original Buddhist teachings.

Siva: Major Hindu deity, part of Hindu trinity; embodies principle of creation and destruction.

Stupa: Monument originally shaped like a stylized tumulus commemorating the death of the Buddha or an Enlightened Being, often containing relics.

Sutra; Sutta (Sutra, Sanskrit; Sutta, Pali): A short text "threaded together," considered to be the teachings of the Historical Buddha.

Sutra of the Eleven-Faced Avalokitesvara: Discourses containing spells for charming holy water, incense, firewood, medicinal herbs, and so on.

Tantric Buddhism: Later branch of Buddhism associated with emphasis on female sexual symbolism and secret esoteric traditions and practices.

Taoism: See Daoism.

Tathagatha: One of the ten titles of Buddha that he himself used when speaking of himself or other Buddhas.

Thirty Verses: Vasubandhu's Treatise in Thirty Verses on Consciousness Only, or Vijnaptimatratra-trimsika. Summary of essentials of Yogacara Buddhism.

Transcendental Buddhism: Belief that Cosmic Buddhas have supernatural powers beyond our experience but not beyond our knowledge.

Trapusa: One of Buddha's first disciples from Balkh, who fed him after his enlightenment.

Treasury of Buddhist Philosophy (Abhidharma Storehouse Treatise, Abhidharma kosa-sastra, Abhidharmakosha): Composed by Vasubandhu; reflects transition from Hinayana to Mahayana Buddhism.

Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice (Yogacarabhumi-sastra, Yogacharabhumi-shastra): Composed by Asanga and Vasubandhu. Basic text of the Yogacara school. Presents seventeen stages on the path to enlightenment.

Tripitaka: "Three Baskets." Pali canon with three parts: Sutra-pitaka (Sayings of the Buddha), Vinaya-pitaka (Rules of Discipline), and the Abhidharma-pitaka (Systematic Philosophy).

Tushita Heaven: The third-lowest heaven, in which Bodhisattvas await their last rebirth. This heaven is presided over by Bodhisattva Maitreya.

Udayana Image: Authentic Buddha image commissioned by King Udayana of Kausambi; he ordered an artist to go to heaven to carve a likeness of the Buddha. A copy exists in Japan today. ("Udayana" is often confused with Uddiyana or Udyana, the area in Pakistan.)

Vairocana Buddha: "Illuminator," one of the Five Transcendental Buddhas. His symbols are the wheel of teaching and the sun.

Vaisravana Buddha: Guardian deity of northern India, associated with wealth.

Vimalakirti-sutra; Vimalakirtinirdesha-sutra: Discourse named for its principal character, a rich adherent of the Buddha who lives a worldly life and yet treads the path of the Bodhisattva.

Vinaya: Rules of Discipline.

Visvantara Jataka: In a famous Jataka tale a prince named Visvantara makes the supreme self-sacrifice: He gives up his elephant, his wife, and his children.

Yoga: Practices by which the individual attempts "to yoke" himself with the Universal. The chief yogas are hatha yoga (mastery of the body); bhakti yoga (emphasizing devotion); jnana (intellectual yoga); and karma (work yoga).

Yogacara: Buddhist school founded by Asanga and Vasubandhu. It maintains that everything is experienced as mind only, as processes of knowledge. The external world is purely mind. There is no subject who experiences. Process explained with the help of "storehouse consciousness." Also teaches that there are three bodies of the Buddha.

Zen (Chinese: Ch'an): A stream of Chinese and East Asian Buddhism that rejects the scriptural tradition and preaches a sudden experience of enlightenment as the culmination of meditation.

Zoroastrianism: Ancient Persian religion teaching that the worship of God, Ahura Mazda, requires men's good deeds to help in his cosmic struggle against the evil spirit. Founded in sixth century B.C.E. by the prophet Zoroaster.

PEOPLE AND DYNASTIES

Alexander the Great: King of Macedon, conqueror of much of Asia, and one of the greatest leaders of all time (lived 356-323 B.C.E.).

- Amoghavajra:** Indian monk and translator known for his espousal of Esoteric Buddhism in China at Chang'an (705-774 C.E.).
- Ananda:** The Buddha's disciple. His exposition of the Buddha's discourses became the basis for the codification of Buddhist scriptures.
- Asanga:** One of the founders of the Yogacara Buddhist school. Elder brother of Vasubandhu (c. fourth century C.E.).
- Asoka:** King of Mauryan dynasty who ruled all but the southern tip of India (third century B.C.E.). His edicts inscribed on stone pillars and rocks were famous. Many Buddhist legends record his conversion to and support of Buddhism.
- Bimbisara:** King of Magadha who was the Buddha's patron. His capital was Rajagriha (lived c. 544-493 B.C.E.).
- Buddha, Gautama:** Founder of Buddhism, i.e., Sakyamuni (563-483 B.C.E.).
- Calukya Dynasty:** Rajput warriors who organized the Mahratta people. Ruled over the northwest Deccan. Pulakesin II was their most famous ruler (sixth century C.E.).
- Chandragupta I:** Emperor and founder of the Mauryan Empire who ruled over much of north India from about 322 to about 298 B.C.E.
- Ch'i:** See Qi.
- Chih-yen:** See Zhiyan.
- Chonen:** Japanese monk and pilgrim who brought a copy of the Udayana image to Japan (tenth century).
- Dharmapala:** Spiritual grandfather of Xuanzang; follower of Yogacara school, authoritative commentator on Vasubandhu (c. sixth-seventh century C.E.).
- Dignaga:** Principal teacher (late fifth century-sixth century) of Yogacara Buddhist school, a founder of the New Logic.
- Fa-hsien:** See Faxian.
- Faxian (Fa-hsien):** Famous Chinese monk who traveled to India (399-414 C.E.) to seek the true scriptures.
- Gaozong (Kao-tsung):** Successor (649-683 C.E.) to Tang dynasty Emperor Taizong; completed his father's work in foreign expansion in early years of his reign. At the end was a weak ruler swayed by harem intrigues.
- Genghis Khan:** See Jenghiz Khan.
- Great Khan of the Western Turks (T'ung Shih-hu):** A seventh-century Central Asian emperor who defeated the Ephthalite Huns and expanded the Turkic empire into Persia and China.
- Gupta:** Empire in India during period of flowering of Sanskrit literature, classical sculpture, and monument building, which began at the end of third century C.E. It reached its zenith during the reign of Kumaragupta (415-455).
- Han:** Dynasty that consolidated China into a unified empire; during its reign many Chinese political and social patterns were set (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.).

Harsha: Last monarch of classical India; built an empire that extended from the Himalayas to the Vindhya range and from Bengal to Gujarat. Patron of Xuanzang (reigned 606–647 C.E.).

Hsuan-tsang: See Xuanzang. Other spellings of his name beginning with “H” are Hhuen Kwang, Hioen Tsiang, Hiouen Thsang, Hiuen Tsang, Hsuan Chwang, Huan Tsang, Hsuan Tsiang, Huan Chwang, and Hwen Thsang.

Huilì (Hui li or Hwui-li): Monk and friend of Xuanzang; wrote Xuanzang’s biography in 648–649 C.E.

I-ching: See Yijing.

Jayasena: Famous philosopher of Mahayana Buddhism who lived near Nalanda. Xuanzang studied with him (seventh century C.E.).

Jenghiz Khan (Genghis Khan): Mongol conqueror who ruled most of China, Turkestan, Transoxiana, and Afghanistan. He raided Persia and ruled one of the largest land empires the world has ever known (1167?–1227 C.E.).

Jetavana: Prince who aided in establishing the Jetavana Monastery in Sravasti in India, one of the Buddha’s favorite sojourning places (sixth century B.C.E.).

Kanishka I: Kushan ruler of northern India, most of present-day Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and parts of Central Asia. Estimates of the beginning of his reign range from 78 B.C.E. to 225 C.E. Ruled for more than twenty years, was a patron of Buddhism, the arts, and scholarship.

Kao-tsung: See Gaozong.

Kasyapa: One of Buddha’s chief disciples, along with Ananda.

Kumarajiva: Monk from Kucha who was taken to Chang’an by imperial order to be head of the State Translation Bureau (lived 344–415 C.E.).

Kushan: Famous dynasty whose invasion of India began during the first century C.E. Empire established in Afghanistan and northern India; its influence extended into Central Asia. Kanishka I was its most famous king (reigned for more than two decades c. 100 C.E.).

Marco Polo: Venetian traveler (1254?–1324?) to China then ruled by the Mongol Yuan dynasty; he became a favorite of Khublai Khan. During the Renaissance, his report was a popular source of information on the East.

Mauryan: A dynasty (320–180 B.C.E.) that gave a considerable degree of unity to the Indian subcontinent. Its most illustrious rulers were Chandragupta and Asoka.

Maya: Queen, the mother of the Historical Buddha.

Nagarjuna: One of the most important philosophers of Buddhism and founder of the Madhyamika school (c. 100–200 C.E.).

Nehru, Jawaharlal: Independent India’s first prime minister (1889–1964).

Paramartha: Famous translator (500–569 C.E.); brought the Yogacara school to China in 545.

Parthians: Ancient Iranian people whose empire was at its height in the first century B.C.E. It extended from the Euphrates across Afghanistan to the

- Indus River and from the Oxus to the Indian Ocean. Conquered by the Sassanians in 226 B.C.E.
- Prasenajit:** Ruler of Kosala in India who was a contemporary and patron of the Buddha (reign: sixth century B.C.E.).
- Pulakesin II:** Warrior king of Mahratta people. Calukyan king who was so strong that King Harsha could not defeat him (reign: 608–642 C.E.).
- Qi (Ch'i):** One of the five dynasties (479–501 C.E.) in southern China when China was divided before the unification under the Sui dynasty.
- Sakyamuni:** The Historical Buddha, the sage of the Sakya clan.
- Santideva:** Poet who wrote of the mystic doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism; he lived (c. seventh century C.E.) during the reign of the son of King Harsha.
- Sassanian:** Last dynasty (224 or 228–651 C.E.) of native rulers to reign in Persia before the Arab conquest.
- Scythians:** Nomadic conquerors and expert horsemen in regions to the north and northeast of the Black Sea. Noted for their gold ornaments and implements (eighth to fourth centuries B.C.E.).
- Silabhadra:** Buddhist scholar, teacher, head of Nalanda Monastery; he was Xuanzang's spiritual mentor (seventh century C.E.).
- Sogdian:** People of ancient Persian empire between the Jaxartes (Syr Darya) and Oxus (Amu Darya) Rivers. Sogdian people were known as caravaners on the Silk Road.
- Suddhodana:** King. Father of the Historical Buddha, Sakyamuni (sixth century B.C.E.).
- Sui:** Dynasty (581–618 C.E.) that reunited China for the first time after the collapse of the Han dynasty. The Sui supported Buddhism and built great art works.
- Taizong (T'ai-tsung):** Tang dynasty emperor (626–649 C.E.) and patron of Xuanzang; one of China's greatest emperors, integrated China and expanded the Tang empire into Central Asia.
- Tang (T'ang):** Dynasty (618–907 C.E.) that brought to China its great golden age of culture. The empire expanded, and the capital Chang'an became the greatest city in the world.
- Tardu:** Prince in Kunduz in Afghanistan (seventh century C.E.).
- Tokharian:** A people of considerable culture and presumably Indo-European origin dwelling in Central Asia in the first millennium of the common era until they were overrun by the Uigurs. Term also refers to their language.
- Tuoba Wei (T'o-pa Wei):** Turkish tribe that settled in Shanxi province, united north China, and founded the Northern Wei dynasty (386–535 C.E.). The Buddhist caves of Yungang were built (452–512 C.E.) during this period.
- Turkic:** Relating to a subfamily of Altaic languages, including Turkish, and its speakers.
- Uighur (Uigur):** Turkic-speaking people who live in northwest China and Xinjiang.

- Vasubandhu:** One of the founders of the Yogacara Idealist Buddhist school (fourth or fifth century C.E.).
- White Huns (Epthalite Huns):** Proto-Mongol nomadic people who dominated the steppes; invaded north India, Persia, and parts of China and remained until they were displaced by the Turks in the middle of the sixth century.
- Wu Cheng'en (Wu Ch'eng-en):** Author of *Journey to the West*, which features Xuanzang as a Buddhist monk who travels to the west in search of Buddhist scriptures (c. 1506-1582 C.E.).
- Xuanzang (Hsuan-tsang):** Chinese pilgrim and translator who went to India in search of Buddhist scriptures (lived 596- or 602-664 C.E.).
- Yijing (I-ching):** Chinese Buddhist scholar and translator (634-713 C.E.) who was the first to go to India by sea. He wrote about sixty other Buddhist pilgrims who went to India in the Tang period.
- Yuan:** Mongolian dynasty that ruled China at time Marco Polo came to China (1271-1368).
- Yuan Chang, Yuan Chuang, Yuen Chwang, Yuan Chwang.** See Xuanzang.
- Zhiyan (Chih-yen):** A Chinese traveler who, like Faxian, inspired Xuanzang to undertake his journey.

GAZETTEER

- Afghanistan:** Country in western Asia, east of Iran. Capital is Kabul.
- Ajanta:** Buddhist caves in Maharashtra, north-northeast of Arungabad, in India.
- Aksu:** Oasis 162 miles west of Kucha oasis in Xinjiang.
- Allahabad (Prayaga):** City in north India, in south Uttar Pradesh, on the Ganges River, west of Varanasi (Benares).
- Amu Darya (Oxus):** River more than 1,400 miles in length in central and western Asia, flowing from Pamir plateau into the Aral Sea.
- Andarab:** Settlement on the north side of the Hindu Kush.
- Andhra:** State in eastern India, north of Madras, bordering on Bay of Bengal. Corresponds to modern state of Hyderabad.
- Anxi (An-hsi):** Oasis in Gansu province, straddles juncture of Silk Roads; was once of considerable importance.
- Assam:** State in northeast India at edge of Himalayas.
- Attock:** Site used for modern crossing of Indus 12 miles from Hund.
- Ayodhya (Faizabad or Saketa):** City in northern India in Uttar Pradesh. Legendary capital of Rama.
- Bactria:** Ancient country in Southwest Asia between Hindu Kush and Oxus River.
- Badakhshan:** Settlement in mountainous area in Penj Valley, in eastern Afghanistan, surrounded by the Pamirs. Near modern Faizabad.
- Balkh (Fo-ho):** Ancient walled city in northern Afghanistan at juncture of caravan routes linking China, Iran, India, and Central Asia.

- Bamiyan:** Buddhist site in Hindu Kush Mountains in Afghanistan.
- Bangladesh:** Country in South Asia bordering on India and Bay of Bengal.
- Begram (Hilo):** Archaeological site forty miles north of Kabul, Afghanistan.
- Benares:** See Varanasi.
- Bezeklik:** Buddhist cave site thirty-five miles east of Turfan.
- Bihar:** State in northeastern India bordering on Nepal; goal of Buddhist pilgrimages.
- Bodh Gaya:** Site of Buddha's enlightenment, five miles from Gaya, in Bihar in northeastern India.
- Burma (Myanmar):** Country in Southeast Asia on Bay of Bengal.
- Cambodia (Kampuchea):** Country in Southeast Asia bordering on Gulf of Siam.
- Central Asia:** Area composed of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, i.e.; the region west of the Pamir Mountains and east of the Caspian Sea.
- Chang'an (Ch'ang-an):** See Xi'an (Sian).
- Charkhlik (Ruoqiang):** Oasis near Loulan, in Xinjiang, China.
- Charsadda (Pushkalavati):** City twelve miles northeast of Peshawar.
- Chengdu (Ch'eng-tu):** Capital of Sichuan (Szechuan), province in southwestern China.
- Cherchen (Qiemo):** Oasis city in China on Southern Silk Road in Xinjiang.
- Chinabhukti:** City near modern Firozpur, south of Sutlej River in Himalchal Pradesh in northern India.
- Dandan Oiluq (Dandan Uiluq):** Archaeological site in China between the Khotan and Keriyen Rivers in Xinjiang.
- Darel:** Site of famous statue on the upper Indus River in Pakistan.
- Dhanakataka:** Kingdom southeast of Andhra, on the lower Krishna River.
- Dravida:** Ancient kingdom in southern India. Capital was Kancipuram.
- Dunhuang (Tun-huang):** Oasis town on western edge of Gansu province; for millennia it served as a major entrepôt of the Silk Road.
- Faizabad:** The name of two different cities, one in northern Afghanistan, and the other in India. The Indian city is usually known as Ayodhya. See Ayodhya.
- Gandhara:** The boundaries of Gandhara are variously defined according to the period and subject of reference. Usually Gandhara refers to eastern Afghanistan and Pakistan. Also, area where school of art flourished in Afghanistan, northwestern India, and Pakistan.
- Ganges:** River 1,550 miles in length. Flows from Himalayas southeast and east to unite with the Brahmaputra and empty into Bay of Bengal.
- Gansu (Kansu):** Province in north-central China. Contains so-called Hexi corridor.
- Gaochang (Kao-ch'ang, Kocho):** Ancient Buddhist center, 29 miles southeast of Turfan.
- Gashun Gobi (Mo-ho-yen):** Desert in China between Anxi and Hami, east of Taklamakan and west of Gobi Deserts.

- Gobi:** Desert located in Inner Asia in Mongolia and China; covers an area about 500,000 square miles.
- Hadda (Hi-lo):** Famous archaeological site near Jalalabad in Afghanistan.
- Hami (I-Wu in Tang period; Kumul in Marco Polo's time):** Oasis in China in eastern Xinjiang northeast of Taklamakan Desert.
- Himalayas:** Mountains in South Asia on border between India and Tibet, and in Kashmir, Nepal, and Bhutan.
- Hindu Kush:** Mountain range crossing the center of Afghanistan.
- Hotan:** See Khotan.
- Hund:** Former crossing on the Indus River. Both Alexander the Great and Xuanzang crossed there. Downstream 12 miles is Attock, modern crossing place.
- India:** Subcontinent of South Asia, south of Himalayas between the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.
- Indus:** A river 1,800 miles long, in South Asia, flowing from Tibet northwest, and southwest through Pakistan into Arabian Sea.
- Iran (Persia):** Country in Southwest Asia. North borders on Caspian Sea, and south borders on Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman.
- Irana (Iranaparvata):** Kingdom east of Nalanda in West Bengal. Identified with modern kingdom of Monghyr.
- Issyk Kul:** Lake 114 miles long in south-central Asia, in northeastern Kyrgyzstan.
- Jade Gate (Yumenguan):** Pass 50 miles northwest of Dunhuang. Formerly westernmost pass leading out of China.
- Jalalabad (Nagarahara):** Capital of Nigrahar province in Afghanistan.
- Jalandhara:** See Jullundur.
- Jamuna (Jumla):** River 860 miles long in north India, flowing from the Himalayas south and southeast into the Ganges River.
- Jaxartes (Syr Darya):** River 1,500 miles long. Flows from Tian Shan Mountains west and northwest into the Aral Sea.
- Jiaohe (Yarkhoto):** Ruined city six miles west of Turfan in Xinjiang.
- Jingue:** See Niya.
- Jullundur (Jalandhara):** City in northwestern India.
- Jumna:** See Yamuna.
- Kabul:** Capital of Afghanistan, on the Kabul River.
- Kanauj:** See Kanyakubja.
- Kancipuram:** City in north Tamil Nadu province, north of Madras.
- Kansu:** See Gansu.
- Kanyakubja (Kanauj):** Kingdom fifty miles northwest of Kanpur (Cawnpore), on the middle Ganges River.
- Kao-ch'ang:** See Gaochang.
- Kapilavastu:** Capital of Shakya Republic. Home state of the Historical Buddha. Its exact location on Indo-Nepal border is disputed.
- Kapisa:** Ancient kingdom in Afghanistan; its capital was Kapsi, which was the political capital and commercial center of the Kushan empire.

- Kapitha:** See Sankasya.
- Karashahr (Yanqi, Yen-ch'i):** Archaeological site and seat of Yanqi region, between Turfan and Kucha, in Xinjiang.
- Kasha:** See Kashgar.
- Kashgar (Kasha):** City in far west China, in southwestern Xinjiang.
- Kashgaria (Chinese Turkistan):** Region in west China, in western and central Xinjiang.
- Kashmir:** Mountainous region in north India, west of Tibet and southwest of Xinjiang.
- Kausambi (Kosam):** Ancient capital on the Yamuna River, in Uttar Pradesh.
- Khotan (Hotan, Hetian, Ho-tien):** Oasis town in western China, southwest Xinjiang, at edge of Taklamakan Desert, at foot of Kunlun Mountains.
- Khyber:** Pass between Afghanistan and Pakistan, thirty-three miles long.
- Kizil:** Buddhist cave site forty miles north of Kucha, in Xinjiang.
- Kosala:** Area of northeastern India. South Kosala (Maha Kosal), area in heart of Deccan, in India. Nagpur is modern capital.
- Kosam:** See Kausambi.
- Kucha (Kuqa):** Oasis on Northern Silk Road in Xinjiang province.
- Kunduz (Huo):** Kingdom east of Balkh in northern Afghanistan.
- Kunlun (K'un-lun):** Mountains in western China extending from the Pamir and Karakorum ranges east along northern edge of Tibetan plateau to southeast Tsinghai.
- Kusinagara:** Site in India on Gandak River, in Uttar Pradesh, where Buddha died.
- Kyrgyzstan (Khirghizia, Khirgiz):** Independent state, formerly republic of USSR in Central Asia, on Chinese border, northeast of Tajikistan.
- Liangzhou:** See Wuwei.
- Longmen (Lung-men):** Near present-day Luoyang; site of numerous Buddhist cave temples.
- Loulan (Lou-lan):** Important caravan trading center, west of Lop Nor, in Xinjiang, China.
- Loyang:** See Luoyang.
- Lumbini:** Site of Buddha's birth, in south Nepal close to India border.
- Luoyang (Loyang):** City in eastern China, in northwestern Henan province.
- Magadha:** Ancient state in north India. Included Bihar, where many events in Buddha's life took place, and Bodh Gaya, where he achieved enlightenment.
- Maharashtra (Maharatta):** Region in west-central India, bordering on Arabian Sea. Bombay is chief city.
- Malva (Malava):** Area north of Maharashtra, in India, now in Madhya Pradesh.
- Mathura:** City in north India, in Uttar Pradesh, ninety miles south of Delhi.
- Matipura:** Buddhist site in the present district of Bignor, on Ganges River, in north India.

- Miran:** Archaeological site in China in Xinjiang, near Charkhlik.
- Mongolia:** Region in East Asia, west of Khingan Mountains and east of Altai Mountains. Includes Gobi Desert.
- Multan:** City in northeast Pakistan southwest of Lahore.
- Muztagh-Ata (Muztagata):** Mountain (24,388 feet) in Pamirs, west of Kashgar.
- Nagapattinam:** City in Palar Valley, Tamil Nadu province, southwest of Madras.
- Nagarahara:** See Jalalabad.
- Nalanda:** Famous Buddhist monastery in Bihar state, near Rajgir, India.
- Nasik:** Cave site and center in western India north of Bombay, near Western Ghats. Former capital of King Pulaskesin II, in Maharashtra.
- Nepal:** Country in Asia on northeast border of India and in the Himalayas.
- Niya (Jingjue):** Famous archaeological site east of Khotan, in Xinjiang, China.
- Oxus:** See Amu Darya.
- Pakistan:** Country in Asia, formerly part of British India.
- Pamir:** Mountain region in Asia in Republic of Tajikistan; borders on Xinjiang, Kashmir, and Afghanistan; from this region radiate the Tian Shan, Kunlun, Karakorum, and Hindu Kush ranges. Many peaks over 20,000 feet.
- Parvata:** City near Chandrigarh in north India.
- Pataliputra:** See Patna.
- Patna (Pataliputra):** City in northeastern India on the Ganges River.
- Persia:** See Iran.
- Peshawar (Purushapura):** City situated near Khyber Pass, now capital of Northwest Frontier province in Pakistan.
- Prayaga:** See Allahabad.
- Punjab:** Region in Pakistan and northwest India occupying the valley of the Indus and its five tributaries.
- Qiemo:** See Cherchen.
- Rajagriha (Rajgir):** Capital of Magadha at the time of the Buddha. In Bihar, northeastern India.
- Rajgir:** Modern city on site of Rajagriha.
- Ruoqiang:** See Charkhlik.
- Samarkand (Sam-o-kan):** One of oldest cities in the world; ancient capital of Sogdiana. Now in Uzbekistan.
- Samatata:** Country in the delta of the Ganges River.
- Sankāśya (Kapitha):** Former Buddhist center on Ganges River, in Uttar Pradesh, northern India.
- Sarnath:** Site where Buddha preached his first sermon, 6 miles north of Varanasi, in India.
- Shache:** See Yarkand.
- Shahbaz Garhi:** Archaeological site in Northwest Frontier province of Pakistan, eight miles east of Mardan.
- Sialkot (Sakala):** City in northeastern Pakistan, sixty-seven miles northeast of Lahore.

- Sian:** See Xi'an.
- Sichuan (Szechwan):** Province in southwestern China. Chengdu is the capital.
- Simhala:** Xuanzang's term for Sinhala. See Sri Lanka.
- Sindhu (Sindh):** Region in southern Pakistan in lower Indus valley.
- South Kosala:** See Kosala.
- Sravasti:** Buddhist site in Sahet Mahet district, in Uttar Pradesh, near Nepal border.
- Sri Lanka (Simhala):** Island at tip of Indian subcontinent. Formerly called Ceylon.
- Srinagar:** Historical capital of Kashmir in India on Jhelum River.
- Srughna:** Country on the upper reaches of the Yamuna River.
- Swat:** Mountainous area ninety-five miles north of Peshawar in northwest corner of Pakistan.
- Syr Darya:** See Jaxartes.
- Szechwan:** See Sichuan.
- Tajikistan:** Formerly autonomous republic within Soviet Central Asia bordering on China and Afghanistan; now independent state. Capital is Dushanbe.
- Taklamakan (Takla Makan):** One of world's largest sand deserts, about 105,000 sq. miles. Bounded on three sides by Tian Shan, Pamir, and Kunlun Mountains, in Xinjiang China.
- Tamrallipti (Tamluk):** Ancient city 40 miles south of Calcutta, in India.
- Tarim:** Basin, or arid plain, dominating the Taklamakan Desert.
- Tashkent (Che-shih):** Capital of Uzbekistan, in former Soviet Central Asia, east of Syr Darya River.
- Tashkurghan:** The name of two different cities, one in northern Afghanistan, and the other 162 miles west of Kashgar.
- Taxila (Taksasila):** Famous archaeological site twenty miles northwest of Peshawar in Pakistan.
- Tengri Khan Mountain (23,620 feet)** on border between Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang.
- Termez:** Port on the Amu Daryan River, in Uzbekistan.
- Thailand (Siam):** Country in Southeast Asia on the gulf of Siam.
- Tian Shan (T'ien Shan):** Mountain range that branches east by northeast from the Pamirs for about 1,800 miles, north of the Taklamakan Desert.
- Tibet:** Region adjoining southwestern China on high plateau, north of Himalayas. Average altitude 16,000 feet.
- Tokharistan:** Ancient area in Central Asia occupied by Tokharians.
- Tokmak:** City on north side of Lake Issik Kul.
- Tunhuang:** See Dunhuang.
- Turfan (Turpan):** Oasis in West China, in east Xinjiang, in northeast part of Tarim Basin.
- Turkestan:** Area of Central Asia between Iran and Siberia, divided among independent states that were formerly in the USSR, China, and Afghanistan.

- Udyana (Uddiyana, Uddyana):** Country located in ancient times in the Swat Valley in northwestern Pakistan. (The king of Kausambi was Udayana, from whom the Udayana image of the Buddha takes its name.)
- Uzbekistan (Uzbek):** Independent state in west-central Asia, east of the Amu Darya, formerly part of the USSR.
- Vaisali:** City north of Patna in Bihar state in northeast India.
- Varanasi (Benares):** City on the Ganges River, in southeast Uttar Pradesh, India.
- Victoria (Sarikul Nahradda):** Great Dragon Lake in the Pamir Mountains.
- Wuwei (Liangzhou, Liang-chou):** Political and commercial center of Gansu, in Gansu province in western China.
- Xi'an (Sian):** Ancient Chinese capital city known in Tang dynasty as Chang'an, located on Wei River plain in Shanxi province. Served as eastern terminus of Silk Road.
- Xianjiang (Sinkiang):** Province in northwest China between Kunlun and Altai Mountains. Capital is Urumchi.
- Yarkand (Shache):** City in western China in southwest Xianjiang, at oasis on Yarkand River.
- Yumenguan:** See Jade Gate.
- Yungang (Yu-kang):** Buddhist cave site near Datong in north China.

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Harvard University Press, 1988). Rosenstone introduced me to the idea that there could be several voices in a historical narrative.

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Maps

Frontispiece: Xuanzang's journey to and from India

- 1.1 Itinerary of Xuanzang on the Silk Road in China (from Chang'an to Hami) (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)
- 2.1 Itinerary of Xuanzang on the northern Silk Road (from Hami to Samarkand) (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)
- 2.2 Archaeological sites at Turfan oasis (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)
- 3.1 Itinerary of Xuanzang in Afghanistan (from Samarkand to Jalalabad) (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)
- 4.1 Itinerary of Xuanzang in Gandharan Pakistan (from Jalalabad to Kashmir) (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)
- 5.1 Itinerary of Xuanzang through northern India (from Kashmir to Kausambi) (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)
- 6.1 Itinerary of Xuanzang in the Buddhist holy land (from Kausambi to Bodh Gaya) (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)
- 8.1 Itinerary of Xuanzang around the Indian continent (from Nalanda to Parvata) (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)
- 8.2 Archaeological Survey of India map of trade routes and sites of major rock-cut caves
- 9.1 Itinerary of Xuanzang from India to western China (from Nalanda to Jalandhara) (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)
- 9.2 Itinerary of Xuanzang from India to western China (Jalandhara to Kashgar) (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)

- 9.3 Itinerary of Xuanzang from India to western China (Kashgar to Loulan) (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)
- 10.1 Itinerary of Xuanzang from western China back home (from Loulan to Chang'an) (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)

Notes on Illustrations

CHAPTER ONE

Fig. 1.1 Portrait of the Emperor Taizong. Album of twenty-four Portraits of Chinese emperors, leaf j. Ch'ien Lung period: 1736-1795. Colors on silk. 60 × 21.8 × 27.8 cm; 24 × 8.75 × 11.13 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The brilliant Li Shih-min, who ruled from 623 to 649 C.E., was given the title Emperor Taizong (The Grand Ancestor) posthumously. A heroic warrior, he eliminated military opposition to the Tang dynasty and conquered Central Asia. He came to be thought of as an ideal Confucian ruler who combined exemplary civil government and military power. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1947. [48.81 lj])

Fig. 1.2 General and Horse. Relief from the tomb of the Emperor Taizong, Xi'an, China. 637 C.E. Grey limestone. 5.66 × 6.75 ft. University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The Emperor Taizong, was a great horseman. Six of his favorite horses are depicted on stone reliefs from the emperor's tomb: two in the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia, the others in the Shanxi Provincial Museum in Xi'an. (University of Pennsylvania Museum [Neg. # 23298])

Fig. 1.3 Traditional fourteenth century portrait of Xuanzang. Rubbing from the stele at the Temple of Flourishing Teaching, outside Xi'an. Presumed copy of a Song painting. 1935? Photo: Abe Dulberg.

The source of this alleged portrait of Xuanzang (602-664 C.E.) is a rubbing from a stele at his burial place, the Temple of Flourishing Teaching near Xi'an. In his right hand Xuanzang carries a fan, symbol of authority for Buddhist priests even now, and in his left, a single scroll. However, the sutras brought back from India would have been in the form of flat

oblong ola leaves, not the Chinese scrolls in this portrayal. It is a relatively late representation, presumably from a Song (Sung) painting. (Courtesy of Abe Dulberg, photographer)

Fig. 1.4. Wall painting and sculpture, with Bodhisattva as central figure. Cave #275, Dunhuang Caves, Gansu, China. Fifth century c.e. Lo Archive, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.

These paintings and sculpture on the north wall of Cave #275, help us to understand the fervor and sincerity of a pilgrim such as Xuanzang. Xuanzang often prayed to Bodhisattvas, or Maitreyas (Buddhas of the Future), beings who postpone their own salvation so that they may help others.

Fig. 1.5 Exterior of Dunhuang Caves, Gansu, China. Fourth–fourteenth century c.e. Photo: Paddy Booz.

Cave temples were first built in India in such places as Ajanta; the idea traveled to northwest China by way of Bamiyan, in Afghanistan. Dunhuang was founded in 366 c.e. by the monk Lo Tsun. Until the Yuan dynasty period (1271–1368), it was a center for Buddhist pilgrims. (Courtesy Paddy Booz, photographer)

Fig. 1.6 Scroll containing the *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, or *Prajnaparamitahridayasutra*, in Chinese. Found in Dunhuang Caves, Gansu, China. Ninth century. Ink on paper. 42 × 22 cm; 16.4 × 8.7 in. British Library, London.

A copy of the *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, usually called the *Heart Sutra*, translated by Xuanzang, was found in the Dunhuang Caves and is now in the British Library. This brief sutra can be written on a single sheet of paper, shown here in the diagrammatic form of a stupa or a pagoda.

CHAPTER TWO

Fig. 2.1 General view of Bezeklik monastery from the south. Xinjiang, China. Photo: S. Wriggins.

Bezeklik, which means “a decorated house” in Uighur, has sixty-seven (some say fifty-seven) caves, dating from the fourth century to the fourteenth. Most caves have barrel vaulting. The cells and chapels are decorated with sculpture and wall paintings in tempera executed on walls covered with plaster. (Copyright © Sally Hovey Wriggins, photographer)

Fig. 2.2 King and Queen of Kucha. Painted mural. Grotto of Maya, III Anlage, Kizil. Xinjiang, China. 600–650 c.e. Source: *L'Asie Centrale: Histoire et Civilisation* (Paris: l'Imprimerie Nationale, 1977), 32.

Authentic portraits of the king and queen of Kucha, dating from the first half of the seventh century, were among the frescoes in the Grotto of Maya at Kizil, near Kucha. The royal pair who greeted Xuanzang in 630 C.E. probably looked something like this. Despite the destruction of these portraits in Berlin during World War II, photographs still exist which reveal a man with light skin, and reddish brown hair. His beautiful queen is wearing a light green jacket that fits tightly at the waist and widens at the hips. Beneath her sleeves, in almost a layered look, are long undersleeves. Her wide skirt, with its delicate pattern of blue and brown flowers, looks as if it could be worn by a modern woman. (L'Imprimerie Nationale, 1977)

Fig. 2.3 An Indian goddess and celestial musician. Wall painting, Cave of Frescoed Floor, Kizil. Xianjiang, China. 600–800 C.E. W. 134.5 cm; 53 in. Museum of Indian Art, Berlin.

In this wall painting a goddess and a celestial musician stand against a background of falling flowers, with a vague suggestion of fruit and petals, a kind of abstract decoration that might evoke thoughts of Matisse. The goddess wears an elaborate crown with three jeweled disks from which hang serpentine ribbons. Long, intertwined scarves, a toque or necklace of metal, and various pendant necklaces decorate the body. The musician at the right has a dark complexion, perhaps to suggest someone of Indian rather than Iranian nationality. (Museum für Indische Kuntz, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin)

CHAPTER THREE

Fig. 3.1 Buddha and Attendant. Stone portrayal of Buddha and attendants from near Termez in Uzbekistan. Early first to third century C.E. H. 75 cm, W. 63 cm. Museum of History of the Peoples of Uzbekistan.

This stone portrayal of a seated Buddha and his disciples was discovered during the excavation of a temple of the Kushan period, located on the banks of the Amu-darya (Oxus River) near Saryi Termez. When the temple was destroyed in the third century, the stone fell to the floor with the relief side down, as a result of which the Buddha figure has been well preserved. It is important in tracing Buddhist art of the Kushan empire.

Fig. 3.2 A small reliquary in the shape of a stupa. From Manikkyala, Pakistan. First century C.E. Steatite. H. 21.5 cm; 8.4 in. British Museum, London.

This small model of a stupa has a molded base and a bell-shaped cylinder. There are four parasols on the *harmika*, the base of the shaft. Found

in a large stupa, this reliquary contained an even smaller crystal reliquary. In the same relic chamber was a coin of the Kushan King Kujula Kadphises, dating from the early first century C.E.

Fig. 3.3 The mountains and Buddhas of Bamiyan, Afghanistan. Photo: Lee Coldren.

Because the two colossal Buddhas in the valley of Bamiyan were more than a mile apart, one of the niches in which they stand appears in this long-distance shot. The entire cliff is honeycombed with vast complexes of cave chapels, assembly halls, sanctuaries, and monastic cells. Around the smaller Buddha is a soffit with a gigantic painting of a Sun God and his chariot, pulled through the sky by snow-white horses, and attended by winged angels. He is wearing a long coat (an example of Iranian style as it developed under the Sassanians) with a sword attached to his belt, and he carries a scepter. (Courtesy Lee Coldren, photographer)

Fig. 3.4 Ground plan of rock-hewn chapels at Bamiyan, which form a semicircle around the 175-foot high figure of the Buddha. Afghanistan. Source: Dietrich Seckel, *The Art of Buddhism*, trans. Anne E. Keep (New York: Crown, 1964), 140, Fig. 34.

Outlines of the feet of the 175-foot-high Buddha are shown here framed by a semicircle of caves and grottoes. In Cave V is a lantern roof in which the center is filled with square laid diagonally across the corner and diminishing in size toward the top. These lantern roofs were copied extensively by the builders of rock caves in Central Asia and China. (Weltbild Verlag)

Fig. 3.5 Carved glass vase showing the lighthouse of Alexandria. From Begram, Afghanistan. Fourth century (?) C.E. Carved glass. H. 18 cm; 7:08 in. Kabul Museum. Photograph, Musée Guimet, Paris. Photo: Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan.

This nautical treasure was part of the Begram hoard, collected in the palace of a Kushan ruler in Kapisa. On the vase is a representation of the Pharos (lighthouse) of Alexandria, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Standing on the lighthouse tower is Poseidon, Greek god of the sea, flanked by two tritons. On the reverse side a galley with a bank of oars, a merchant ship with a sail, and a small fishing boat are depicted. This flotilla is similar to those in harbor views occasionally found on Roman sarcophagi or in harbor scenes in Roman wall paintings. (Photo: DAFA)

Fig. 3.6 Fragment of the Dipankara Buddha. Sotorak Monastery, Afghanistan. Third century C.E. Schist relief fragment. 35 × 21 cm; 13.7 × 8.2 in. Musée Guimet, Paris. Cliché des Musées Nationaux, Paris.

The story of Sakyamuni in a former existence meeting Dipankara, a former Buddha, is illustrated on this fragment. The Buddha-to-be, in this version of the story, laid down his cloak and even knelt down and spread his long hair on the deerskin cloak for the greater comfort of the Dipankara Buddha. (Photo: RMN)

CHAPTER FOUR

Fig. 4.1 The Bimaran reliquary. From Bimaran stupa, Jalalabad, Afghanistan. Second-third century C.E. Gold repoussé decorated with jewels. H. 7 cm; 2.75 in. British Museum, London.

This tiny Bimaran reliquary, made of gold with rubies, is without a lid. The Buddha and the gods Indra and Brahma, framed by arcades formed with pointed arches, are shown twice, separated by a worshipper whose headdress, earrings and armlets suggest a Bodhisattva. The repetition of figures in arched niches, called *homme arcade*, is often found on Christian sarcophagi in Asia Minor. (Copyright British Museum)

Fig. 4.2 Reliquary of King Kanishka. Shah-ji-ki-Dheri, near Peshawar, Pakistan. First-second century C.E. Metal. H. 19.6 cm; 7.75 in. Original, Archaeological Museum, Peshawar, Pakistan; copy, British Museum, London.

This extraordinary piece was discovered in 1908 by D. B. Spooner. There is a dedication with the name of the maker, Agisela, perhaps a craftsman of Greek origin. On the lid the Buddha is seated on a lotus pedestal. He is worshipped by Brahma and Indra. The top of the lid is incised with a lotus design, and around the edges is a frieze of flying geese. On the body of the casket is a Kushan monarch, probably intended to be King Kanishka himself, flanked by sun and moon gods, which indicate Iranian influence. On the sides are a Buddha image and a royal figure worshipping him. The four scenes are held together by a garland supported by cherubs, a clear borrowing from the West.

Fig. 4.3 Gold coin with King Kanishka and the Buddha. From near Jalalabad, Afghanistan. First-second century C.E. Gold. British Museum, London.

The gold BODDO COIN, with its standing Buddha on one side and Kanishka on the other, is deservedly famous, for it is among the first representations of the Buddha in human form. The Buddha is clearly identified by the Greek legend BODDO. The right hand is raised in the "fear not" gesture and the left hand clasps the edge of his robe. The portrayal of

King Kanishka in his long-skirted coat and boots is exactly like the one on the Kanishka reliquary, other coins, and the sculpture of Kanishka at Mathura.

Fig. 4.4 Part of a frieze of the Tiger Jataka (tale of a previous incarnation of the Buddha). Cave #428, Dunhuang Caves, Gansu, China. c. 520–530 C.E. Lo Archive, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.

According to the story, three brothers who are out hunting see a starving tigress in a ravine. One brother (Mahasattva) sacrifices his body so that the tiger made feed her cubs. Finally Mahasattva appears as the perfect Buddha. By his wisdom and this self sacrifice, Sakyamuni acquires such good Karma that during his final incarnation becomes the Buddha.

Fig. 4.5 Sikri Stupa. Restored. H. approx. 5.1 m; 20 ft. Lahore Museum, Pakistan. Photo: Aallam Almakky.

The sixteen scenes depicted on the reconstructed Sikri stupa are (1) the Dipankara Buddha, (2) Buddha in Tushita Heaven, (3) the First Meditation, (4) the Conversion of Two Nagas, (5) Grass-cutter's present, (6) offering of the Four Bowls, (7) Indra and Brahma requesting the Buddha to preach, (8) Buddha meditating among his monks, (9) Buddha's sermon to the thirty-three gods, (10) Amrapali's present of the Mango grove, (11) Indra's visit to the Indrasala Cave, and (12) Conversion of Alkavari. On the harmika (shaft rising from the bell-shaped form) are (1) the offering of the honey bowl by monkey, (2) the birth of the Gautama Buddha, (3) the attack of Mara, (4) the Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha.

Fig. 4.6 Buddhist Trinity. From Sahri Bahlol area (?), Pakistan. 182 C.E., fifth year of the Kanishka II era. Gray schist. 62 cm × 60 cm; 24.2 × 23.4 in. Collection of Claude de Marteau, Brussels, Belgium.

This Gandharan relief sculpture contains a dated inscription of great importance in the history of Buddhist art. The image was dedicated in the year 5 C.E. by Buddhananda, who wished to honor his parents. It is the fifth known dated image from Gandhara, upon which the chronology of the entire school rests. The Buddha is seated on a lotus. His hands show one of the earliest appearances of the teaching *mudra* gesture in Gandharan sculpture. His audience is a divine one—the Buddha of the Future, or Maitreya, so important to Xuanzang, on his right, and Avalokitesvara (originally a male deity who became Guanyin, a female deity in China) on the left, identified by the Buddha image in his crown. In the background are the Indian gods Brahma and Indra. (Copyright © Claude de Marteau, Courtesy Claude de Marteau Collection)

CHAPTER FIVE

Fig. 5.1 Headless statue of Kanishka. From Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, India. c. 100 C.E. Red sandstone. H. 1.63 m; 64 in. Government Museum, Mathura.

Although representation of donors does occur in Gandharan reliefs, the portrait-statues of the standing Kanishka and his father in the Mathura Museum are the sole examples of human portrait sculpture from ancient India. Statuary was usually reserved for images of deities. King Kanishka's clothes—the padded boots, the long skirted, heavy tunic covering the body—were suitable for a cold climate and the nomadic life, not for Mathura, his southern capital.

Fig. 5.2 Seated Buddha. From Katra Mound, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, India. Second century C.E. Sikri sandstone. H. 69 cm; 27.25 in. Government Museum, Mathura.

This famous Buddha from Katra Mound is an archetypal Indian sage with legs crossed in yogic meditation. He is seated on a lion throne—the Buddha was called the “lion of the Sakyas”—under a Bo tree, with a round halo behind him. Two attendants, identified by some as Indra and Brahma, and two celestial beings complete this stele. The Buddha's right hand is held up and turned sideways in a gesture that will evolve into the “fear not” gesture. His left hand is held lightly on this thigh, emphasizing the sheer physical strength and exuberance of the torso.

Fig. 5.3 Buddha coming down the staircase from heaven. Burma. Early nineteenth century. Illustrated paper book in 70 folds with Burmese text. 48 × 19 cm; 18.8 × 7.4 in. British Library, London.

The story of the Historical Buddha leaving earth for the Heaven of the Thirty-Three Gods expounding the Four Noble Truths to his mother, followed by the drama of his glorious descent to earth, has stirred the imagination of artists in India, as well as in Tibet, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma. In this colorful Burmese book illustration we see Indra sheltering the Buddha with an elegant jeweled parasol, on the Buddha's right, and Brahma with a whisk, on his left.

Fig. 5.4 King Udayana presenting Buddha image to the Buddha. Pakistan. n.d. British Museum photograph from Peshawar Museum, Pakistan.

According to the legend of the Udayana image, during the time the Buddha was in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three Gods preaching to his mother, King Udayana of Kausambi became so distraught that he sent an

artist to heaven to create an exact image of him. When the Buddha returned to earth, King Udayana went to greet him and took the small sandalwood statue of a seated Buddha with him, as in this portrayal. (The Lo Archive, Princeton University)

CHAPTER SIX

Fig. 6.1 Queen Maya's Dream. From Tatht-ti-Bahi, Pakistan. Second century C.E. Schist. H. 20.5 cm; 8.11 in. British Museum, London.

Queen Maya, in a dream, saw the four divine kings anoint her with perfumes and clothed her in divine garments. Then a n elephant appeared and entered her right side. A young female guard watches over the sleeping queen.

Fig. 6.2 General view of Sarnath. Uttar Pradesh, India. Photo: S. Hixon.

Five miles from Benares is the Deer Park at Sarnath, where Sakyamuni preached his first sermon and converted his first five disciples. Ruins on this site date back to the time of Asoka in the third century C.E. The Dhamekh stupa, whose vast silhouette is visible in the center, stands out in a setting where most of the ruins are a little more than knee-high. (Courtesy of Sheila Hixon, photographer)

Fig. 6.3 Sarnath plan of excavations, Uttar Pradesh, India. 1980. Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, India.

The various monuments at Sarnath, excavated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, may be divided into four rows. Row 1 contains Monastery VII, Monastery V, and a modern Jain temple. Row 2 consists of the Dharmarajika stupa (Mauryan period), destroyed in 1794, as well as the Dhamekh stupa, which was originally Mauryan and later was restored during the Gupta period. Row 3 contains the Apsidal chapel, the Asoka pillar, the main shrine, with a courtyard consisting of a large number of cells, miniature stupas, and subsidiary buildings. Row 4 consists of Monastery II, a *vihara* (temple) of the twelfth century, and Monasteries III and IV.

Fig. 6.4 Lion capital, Asoka Column. From Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, India. c. third century B.C.E. Polished Chunar sandstone. H. 213 cm; 84 in. Sarnath Museum. Photo: American Institute of Indian Studies.

The cream-colored Asoka pillar from which this capital was taken, was originally about 50 feet high. The edict engraved near the base makes a plea for unity within the monastic community. These highly polished pillars were crowned with animals, recalling pillars of the Persian Empire of Darius and Xerxes. Above the bell-shaped base are an elephant, a bull, a

horse, and a lion, separated from one another by wheels. Above these are four much larger lions. Not only is the lion the symbol of divine power and regal authority, but it was also the symbol of the Sakyas, the Buddha's clan. The pillar was originally crowned with a large *chakra*, or wheel of truth, some of whose spokes are in the Sarnath Museum. (Courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies. Photographed by permission of Archaeological Survey of India)

Fig. 6.5 Buddha Preaching the First Sermon. From Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, India. 475 C.E. Chunar standstone. H. 1.57 m; 63 in. Sarnath Museum. Photo: American Institute of Indian Studies.

This justly famous Gupta Buddha is represented in a yoga posture with his feet turned up. His hands are in the Turning the Wheel of the Law pose. On the plinth below are the Buddha's earliest followers. Between them is the wheel, the symbol of preaching, and two deer, to suggest the Deer Park setting. Behind the head is a large halo, the Sun Wheel, with its center at the point between the Buddha's eyebrows, indicating the universal characteristic of the deity. On either side, as in a Renaissance painting, are two flying angels. The face of the Buddha is a perfect oval. The eyebrows follow the tensile curve of an Indian bow. The eyes are lotiform.. This eloquent image combines a circle and a triangle in perfect symmetry; both countenance and form convey the Mahayana paradox of great calm and great energy. (Courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies. Photographed by permission of Archaeological Survey of India)

Fig. 6.6 Site Plan of Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India. Source: Alistair Shearer, *The Traveler's Key to Northern India* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 440, fig. B.

The site plan of Bodh Gaya shows where the Buddha remained for seven weeks after the great enlightenment, while he enjoyed the bliss of nirvana and contemplated whether he should teach mankind. The Buddha spent the first week under the Bo tree, a pipal tree (*Ficus religiosa*). The second week he was so absorbed in bliss that he spent the time gazing at the Bo tree, transfixed, *unblinking*, commemorated by the Unblinking Shrine. The Jeweled Walk commemorates the place where, for the third week, he walked back and forth. The fourth week he meditated northwest of the Bo tree; the Rainbow Shrine is presumed to mark the spot. The fifth week is associated with the Goatherd's tree, where Sujata offered him milk rice. The site of the sixth week of meditation is marked by the broken Asoka column, near the Muchalinda lake. Here Mara tried to disturb him. The serpent King Muchalinda rose out of the lake and spread his seven hoods over the Master's head to protect him from a storm. The seventh week is associated with

a Rajata tree, where he made his first converts. Although a site is indicated on the site plan, the tree's location has not been verified. (Copyright © Alis-tair Shearer. Reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.)

Fig. 6.7 Mahabodhi temple and Bo tree at Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India. Fifth or sixth century C.E.; restored many times since then. Photo: American Institute of Indian Studies.

The Mahabodhi temple, the largest of the surviving early Buddhist temples and the first to be described by a historical person, Xuanzang, is pre-eminent among world religious monuments because of the antiquity of its associated event—the enlightenment of the Buddha in 530–520 B.C.E. A shrine next to the Bo tree was erected on the site by King Asoka when he visited Bodh Gaya c. third century B.C.E. The foundations of the present structure are linked to the Kushan dynasty. This 160 foot high temple stands on a platform 125 feet tall.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Fig. 7.1 Survey plan of excavated remains at Nalanda. Early twentieth century. Archaeological Survey of India.

The Nalanda Monastery flourished from c. 450 to 1100 C.E. Gupta period (320–480 C.E.) monasteries were laid out in the traditional pattern of the early Kushan age—a large square courtyard flanked on all sides by a running verandah, with the monk's cells at the back. All the remains bear indications of having been rebuilt again and again without any major deviation from the original plan. Site 1, depicted here, indicates as many as nine occupational levels.

Fig. 7.2 Fragment of hand holding a book. From Nalanda Monastery, Bihar, India. Stone. n.d. H. 8.5 in. Nalanda Museum. Photo: Archaeological Survey of India.

This fragment of a beautiful hand holding a book comes from Nalanda Monastery. Copyists seem to have been employed there to reproduce manuscripts either on durable parchment or on palm leaves.

Fig. 7.3 Overall view of Nalanda Monastery from Stupa 3. Bihar, India. Photo: S. Wriggins.

In Xuanzang's time, along with the large preaching halls, there seem to have been six or seven courtyards flanked on all sides by a running veranda, with the monks' cells behind it. The cells were more spacious than those usually found in monastic ruins, and there was an adjacent cell, perhaps for the keeping of manuscripts. A few of these courtyards and their

verandas, with remains of supporting pillars, can still be seen. (Copyright © Sally Hovey Wriggins, photographer)

Fig. 7.4 View of Stupa 3, the remains of the great temple. Nalanda Monastery, Bihar, India. Greatly restored in the seventh century. Photo: Archaeological Survey of India.

Stupa 3 dominates the site of Nalanda today just as it must have done during the seventh century when it was enlarged and beautifully embellished. Its final form is said to be the result of seven successive stages of building. One of the four corner towers can be seen here. The arrangement of a central stupa with a tower at each of the four corners recalls that of the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhi Gaya,

Fig. 7.5 Site map of old and new Rajgir, Bihar, India. 1975. Archaeological Survey of India.

Rajagriha, governed by King Bimbisara (c. 544–493 B.C.E.), was an important center of Buddhism. It was the site of the miracle of the taming of the mad elephant Nalagiri. The site plan shows the Bimbisara Road on Chhatha Hill and Vulture Peak (Gridhrakuta) where the Buddha loved to preach. It also shows Venuvana, the site of the Bamboo Grove, and Saptarni Cave, presumed to be the site of the First Buddhist Council.

Fig. 7.6 Taming of the elephant Nalagiri. Cadigahr, India. c. second or third century C.E. Blue schist. Chadigahr Museum. Photo: American Institute of Indian Studies.

The encounter with the mad elephant at Rajagriha epitomizes the Buddha's protracted rivalry with his jealous cousin Devadatta, who released the elephant in an attempt to kill the Buddha. The elephant, here depicted as about the size of a large dog, suddenly became calm upon seeing the Buddha.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Fig. 8.1 Temple of the Tooth, Kandy, Sri Lanka. Building begun sixteenth century, later additions. Photo: H. Wriggins.

The roof was regilded in the twentieth century, for it is still revered as a place of great sanctity and power. The present temple was constructed mainly during the reign of the Kandy kings, 1687–1707 and 1741–1782. The octagonal tower seen in the photographs houses an important collection of *ola*, or palm leaf manuscripts. The tooth relic is kept in a large gold, bell-shaped stupa, inside of which are six smaller stupas, the sacred tooth being in the innermost one. (Courtesy Howard Wriggins, photographer)

Fig. 8.2 Ajanta Cave #1, interior shrine door and Buddha. Ajanta, Maharashtra, India. c. late fifth century C.E. Archives of Asian Art, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Photo: Water Spink.

The Ajanta Caves were hollowed out of a 250-foot perpendicular cliff. The site contains both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhist temples and monasteries from the mid-second century B.C.E. to the late fifth century C.E. The colossal image of the Buddha in Cave 1 is seated in a preaching attitude. At the top corners of his halo are two flying figures holding garlands. On the base, deer and a wheel in profile, recalling the wheel of the Buddha's first sermon, are worshipped by his first disciples. (Photo by Walter Spink, Archives of Asian Art, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)

Fig. 8.3 Exterior view and entrance to sanctuary of rock-cut cave at Bhaja. Maharashtra, India. c. late second–early first century B.C.E. Photo: Roy Craven.

The earliest cave settlement in the Western Ghats is that of Bhaja. The entrance to the open *chaitra* (sanctuary) hall has a projecting vault that is framed by high towers, balconies, and dormer windows going along with two-story monks' cells. The large hall consists of a nave separated by rows of columns from smaller aisles. A semicircular apse contains the principal symbol of worship—a bell-shaped stupa. (Photo by Roy C. Craven)

Fig. 8.4 The Bodhisattva of the Blue Lotus. Wall painting from Cave #1, Ajanta. Maharashtra, India. Second half of the fifth century C.E. Archives of Asian Art, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Photo: Walter Spink.

The most famous surviving Buddhist paintings in India are in Ajanta Cave #1. On the left-hand wall is a large figure of a Bodhisattva with a blue lotus in a landscape teeming with smaller forms, loving couples, dwarflike creatures, apes, peacocks and so on. The parts of the face and body are drawn with reference to certain ideal forms that are presumed to create the imagined superior and eternal aspects of a god. The face has the perfect oval of an egg, the brows curve as an Indian bow, the eyes are lotiform, the body is "like a lion." Most beautiful of all, the hand suggests the pliant growth of the lotus flower it holds. (Photo by Walter Spink, Archives of Asian Art, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)

CHAPTER NINE

Fig. 9.1 View of the Pamirs. Afghanistan. Morden Clark Expedition of the Museum of Natural History, 1926. New York.

The name of the Pamir mountain chain derives from the Persian “pamir” or “at the foot of the peaks.” The chain contains high, bleak plateaus and many mountains over 20,000 feet, and gives travelers, including Aurel Stein and Marco Polo, the feeling of “being in the highest place in the world.” (Neg./Trans.No.2a 17278. Morden Clark Expedition. Courtesy of the Department of Library Services, American Museum of Natural History)

Fig. 9.2 Tangitar Gorge, in the Pamirs between Tashkurghan and Kashgar. Source: Aurel Stein, *Serendia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 1:Plate 29.

Stein surmised that Xuanzang lost his elephant in the Tangitar gorge below Tar Bashi. “For over two miles it [the gorge] leads in the streambed itself between high frowning rocks, cliffs overhanging in a few places, which in case of a sudden rush of flood water would leave escape impossible.” “Tangitar,” i.e. “the narrow gorge,” is the winter route. Kirghiz riding yaks are in the foreground. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 1: Plate 29. (By permission of the British Library)

Fig. 9.3 Mauri-tim stupa outside Kashgar. Photo: S. Wriggins.

In the ancient village of Hanoi, which had been a thriving Buddhist settlement in Tang times, the Mauri-tim stupa, built of large sun-dried bricks, was 38 feet high at the time Aurel Stein saw it. A small shaft 21 feet by 8 inches square, which runs vertically through the center of the stupa dome and drum, was originally designed to hold a relic deposit. (Copyright © Sally Hovey Wriggins, photographer)

Fig. 9.4 Silk Princess. c. fifth or sixth century C.E. Dandan Oiluq, Khotan. Detail wooden votive table. 19 × 11.7 cm; 7.5 × 4.6 in. British Museum, London.

The votive tablet showing the Silk Princess’s headdress was found in the ruins of a Buddhist monastery 75 miles northeast of Khotan. The princess, according to the legend, had brought the secrets of silk-making from China to Khotan. An attendant figure points with an accusing finger to the princess’s headdress. The divine personage on the right has four arms and has two of the attributes of the Iranian Bodhisattva, a cup and a knife with a short triangular blade.

Fig. 9.5 Nagini, or water spirit, and statue of Vaisravana. c. fifth or sixth century C.E. Dandan Oiluq. Source: C. F. Andrews, *Wall Painting from Ancient Shrines in Central Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), Plate 32.

An unusual painting discovered by Stein at the site of Dandan Oiluq, near Rawak, of a voluptuous woman, accompanied by a small boy, standing in a lotus tank. It has been suggested that the woman is a water spirit, or

Nagini, and that the picture refers to the legend recounted by Xuanzang of a nobleman who sacrificed his life by marrying a Nagini. This is probably the farthest eastward extension of the nude female, a subject that had never appealed to the Chinese or Japanese, except in casual sketches or illustrations for pornographic literature. Visible also is a stucco image of Vaisravana dressed in scale armor with a demon under his feet.

CHAPTER TEN

Fig. 10.1 Xuanzang returning from India. Cave #103, Dunhuang Caves. Gansu, China. Wall painting. 713–762 C.E. Lo Archive, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.

The wall painting depicts a mahout, an elephant driver, walking in front of a huge white elephant, and a man on a horse, with two attendants. It represents Xuanzang's caravan before the loss of the elephant given to him by King Harsha. In another part of the frieze (not illustrated in Fig. 10.1), Xuanzang is by the side of a waterfall by a pool and is shown clasping his hands in gratitude for a safe journey.

Fig. 10.2 Itinerant monk. Dunhuang Caves. Gansu, China. Ninth century C.E. Painting on silk. Musée Guimet, Paris.

The air of mystery in this ninth-century silk banner is palpable. The pilgrim's staff is topped by a dragon head. He carries suspended on a stick a little pot that might carry incense or serve for cooking. On the pilgrim's back are numerous little gourds of medicine and many vials hanging from a modern-looking frame pack. The tiger is a symbol of the west or the beasts in the desert. (Photo: RMN)

Fig. 10.3 Photograph of Paul Pelliot in Cave #17, Dunhuang Caves. Gansu, China. Pelliot Archives, Musée Guimet, Paris.

Paul Pelliot, who knew Chinese (which Stein did not), was photographed among the thousands of manuscripts and paintings on silk and paper found in Cave #17 at Dunhuang. The manuscripts are in Chinese, Uighur, Sogdian, Tibetan and Sanskrit. The 50,000 items include religious texts, documents on history, customs, literature, mathematics, medicine, and economics. By the light of a single candle, Pelliot studied a thousand documents a day and selected the most valuable, which are housed in the Musée Guimet, Paris. (Archives Pelliot)

Fig. 10.4 Sakyamuni Buddha. North India. Late sixth century C.E. Bronze. H. 41.5 cm; 19.4 in. Asia House Gallery, New York. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller III. Photo: Lynton Gardiner.

This large bronze Buddha standing with his right hand raised in the “fear not” gesture is regarded as one of the finest surviving bronzes of the Gupta dynasty (c. 320–480 C.E.). If, as has been speculated, some of the images Xuanzang brought back looked like this one, they probably exerted considerable artistic influence because of the eminence of Xuanzang. (Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection: photograph by Lynton Gardiner)

Fig. 10.5 Return of Xuanzang with the Buddhist Scriptures. Dunhuang Caves. Gansu, China. Silk scroll. Fujita Art Museum, Osaka, Japan.

Xuanzang arrived in Chang’an laden with hundreds of precious relics, statues and books. On this silk scroll from Dunhuang, horses carrying these books are led into the temple, followed by men bearing gifts. The street is lined with priests and officials and at the right are people prostrating themselves with reverence

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Fig. 11.1 The Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Xi’an, China. 652 C.E. Restored in 1580. H. 73 m; 190 ft. Photo: Dr. Glen Dudbridge.

The Big Wild Goose Pagoda was built in 652 C.E. by the Emperor Gaozong for Xuanzang after his pilgrimage to India. The 240-foot-high renovated pagoda has seven stories. On the south side are two monuments inscribed with prefaces to Xuanzang’s translations provided by the Emperor Taizong and the Emperor Gaozong. (Courtesy Dr. Glen Dudbridge, photographer)

Fig. 11.2 Frontispiece of the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutra. Kofukuji Temple, Nara, Japan. Japanese woodblock edition of *Mahaprajnaparamita-sutra*. 1 folding vol. Ink on a mixture of *gampi* and mulberry paper. 29 × 9.6 cm; 11.4 × 3.8 in. British Library, London.

From the Nara period on, the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutra was thought to possess the power of protecting Japan from natural and human disasters. Each *maki* (volume) of this edition, bearing a handwritten date of Eitoku 3 (1383 C.E.), has a large frontispiece depicting Xuanzang meeting the Buddha to receive the *Tripitaka*. The Buddha is surrounded by deities, and he commands them to protect Xuanzang on his return from India to China.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Fig. 12.1 Udayana Image of Sakyamuni. Tenth century C.E. Bronze. Seiryōji Temple, Kyoto, Japan.

advantages to the dynasty and to the state. See also Kenneth Ch'en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 140 ff. See also Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism Under the T'ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 26 ff., which describes the great changes in the Emperor's attitude toward Buddhism and how Xuanzang became his spiritual mentor in the last year of his life.

5. The dates of the monk's birth, departure, and death have been subject to endless controversy. See Ch'ien, Mei-Chin, *The Eminent Monk Hsuan-Tsang: His Contribution to Buddhist Scripture Translations and the Propagation of Buddhism* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 2002), 20. See also Anthony Yu, "The Real Tripitaka Revisited: International Religion and National Politics" (paper presented to ASIAN/network Exchange, April 20-22, 2000, Cleveland, Ohio) (<http://www.asianetwork.org/exchange/winter-ane.html>, accessed 6/19/2002).

6. Wright and Twitchett, 14. "But its intellectual vitality had waned and in only a few circles were Confucian ideas seriously discussed. A violent age, an age of military domination made an inhospitable climate for Confucian studies."

7. S. Beal, trans., *The Life of Hieun Tsiang*, trans. from the Chinese of Shaman Hwui Li (1911; 2nd ed., Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1973), 3.

8. Beal, *Life*, 4.

9. Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (Oxford, 1951; reprint, New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 125. "The two key words which occur on almost each page of Mahayana writings are the words Bodhisattva and emptiness."

10. This time of disorder is confirmed by the following quote: "More than two hundred rebel organizations were involved in the fighting at the end of the Sui and during the early T'ang, although only about ten of these had any chance of establishing a stable regime and conquering the empire." Twitchett and Fairbank, 3:160.

11. Li Yongshi, trans., *The Life of Hsuan-tsang*, by Hui-li (Peking: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959), 8.

12. As reported by Dr. Hans Bielenstein in a lecture at the East Asian Institute at Columbia University. See also A. Wright, "Changan," in *Cities of Destiny*, ed. A. Toynbee (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), 143. "The outer walls of the city ran . . . 5.92 miles east and west and 5.27 miles north and south."

13. Peter Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road* (London: John Murray, 1980), 28: "In the year 742 its population was close on two million (according to the census of 754, China had a total population of fifty-two million, and contained some twenty-five cities with over half a million inhabitants). Chang-an . . . had grown into a metropolis measuring six miles by five. . . . Foreigners were welcome, and some five thousand of them lived there."

14. Beal, *Life*, 10.

15. There were other sources of confusion. Early Buddhist monks used Daoist language or concepts to make their doctrine more accessible. Indian abstractions such as “perfection” became translated into Chinese as simply “round.” Indian terms such as “dharma” (Buddhist teaching or doctrine) or “bodhi” (enlightenment) and “yoga” were at times rendered into Chinese as “dao” (the way), a word familiar to Daoists as “the way” or principle of universal life. See Jerry Bentley, *Old World Encounters: Cross-cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-modern Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

16. Boulton, 84. “The sophisticated ideas of Asanga and Vasubandhu came into vogue in China during the sixth century C.E. *The Samparigraha Sastra* (Collection of Mahayana Writings) had been translated by Buddhāsanta in 531 and again by Paramārtha, in 653. Ch’ang-chieh, Hsuan-tsang’s brother, was well known for preaching this work. Hsuan-tsang also heard several famous Buddhist scholars lecture on it when he was at Ch’eng-du [Chengdu] (in Sechuan). During this period, Hsuan-tsang also read Vasubandhu’s lengthy *Abhidharma Kosa Sastra* (Treatise on the Treasury of Buddhist Philosophy) and later lectured on it. His profound comprehension of the inner significance of these texts never failed to astonish his teachers.”

17. Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books, containing the Diamond Sutra and the Heart Sutra* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1980), 68. Conze used the phrase “So one should view what is conditioned” in the last line, which is very jarring to Western ears. Because he also said, “The characteristics of all conditioned things or of all the elements of *Samsara* (the world of birth and death) should be considered like the stars, a fault of vision,” I have taken the liberty of changing the last line.

18. Conze, *Buddhism*, 168.

19. Zhu Qi (Chu Chi; also Zhu Xie, Chu Hsieh), *Xuan Zang Xiyouji* (Xuanzang’s Journey to the West) (Hong Kong: Chan Chin Ta-yuan Shutien, 1957). This Chinese source, which is in the form of a novel, says that Xuanzang met an Indian scholar from Nalanda Monastery, the most famous Buddhist institution in the medieval world. This man said that there was a scholar there who understood the very doctrine that Xuanzang wished to study at Nalanda in India.

20. See Beal, *Life*; also see Li Yongshi, 12.

21. Li Yongshi, 270.

22. Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952), 17.

23. See Beal, *Life*, 17 and Li Yongshi, 18.

24. Beal, *Life*, 18.

25. Beal, *Life*, 18.

26. Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 103. Usually this sutra, called the Hridaya mantra, is not used for personal safety in the way Xuanzang used it. “The wondrous effect of the Hridaya lies in that it opens the mind to Enlightenment.” See also Jan Nattier, “The Heart Sutra: A Chinese Apocryphal Text?” *Journal of*

the International Association of Buddhist Studies 15, no. 2 (1992): 209. In the novel *Journey to the West*, the donor of the sutra acquired an identity as "Crow's Nest Chan, Master of Pagoda Mountain."

27. See Beal, *Life*, 17 and Li Yongshi, 18.

28. Stein, "Desert Crossing," 15-25.

29. J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) and Esther Harding, *Journey into Self* (London: Longmans Green, 1956).

30. Waley, 130.

CHAPTER TWO

1. In the east the Tian Shan range divides Xinjiang into two great basins, the Tarim basin to the south and the Dzungâria basin to the north. At the western end of the mountains the Tian Shan range follows the boundary of China with the former Soviet Union.

2. When Xuanzang began his account of the western regions in 646 C.E., Turfan was no longer an independent kingdom. Since it was already part of the Tang empire he began his narrative with the oasis of Karashahr. One has to rely on his biographer Huili for the record of his travels up to this point.

3. See S. Beal, trans., *The Life of Hieun Tsiang*, trans. from the Chinese of Shaman Hwui Li (1911; 2nd ed., Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1973), 26; and Li Yongshi, trans., *The Life of Hsuan-Tsang*, by Huili (Peking: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959), 27.

4. Beal, *Life*, 30.

5. René Grousset, *In the Footsteps of the Buddha*, trans. Mariette Leon (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 50.

6. Li Yongshi, 34. The Heavenly Ladder is a reference to the Buddha's descending from heaven after preaching to his mother and is supposed to have taken place at Sankasya. The Bodhi (or Bo) tree is the tree under which the Buddha attained Enlightenment.

7. T. Watters, trans., On Yuan Chwang's [Xuanzang's] Travels in India (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1961), 1:48.

8. The complexity of the background of these Indo-European people who are usually known as Tokharian is suggested by Barber's research on mummies.

It so happens that the people who did most to spread Buddhism into the Tarim Basin, lived in northern India, having recently migrated from Bactria. Before that, Greek historians tell us, this same group of people had moved into Bactria from Fergana in the second century B.C. The Greeks became acquainted with this whole area in 329 B.C. while following Alexander the Great to India and back. Thus in a short time these wanderers had moved from Fergana to Bactria to northern India (today northern Pakistan) where they eventually converted to Buddhism. These

are known to Greek history as the *Tukhari* and to Sanskrit documents as *Takara*.

See Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *The Mummies of Urumchi* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 117.

9. Watters, 1:58, 59.

10. Grousset, *Footsteps*, 54.

11. Watters, 1:62.

12. Beal, *Life*, 41.

13. S. Beal, trans., *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, by Hiuen Tsiang [Xuanzang] (1884; reprint, Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1969), 1:26.

14. Beal, *Life*, 41.

15. Beal, *Life*, 41.

16. Irene Frank and David Brownstone, *The Silk Road: A History* (New York: Facts on File, 1986), 176. "Hsuan-tsang's [Xuanzang's] view of this great nomadic assembly has a special interest for us in retrospect, because, following the pattern of steppe empires, the Turks were about to lose the always-fragile unity of the steppe peoples, fragmenting into several main branches that would make their name in the world." A few months after Xuanzang's departure the Great Khan was killed by an assassin. After his death the ten tribes of the Western Turks were greatly weakened and divided into two khanates.

17. R. Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, trans. Naomi Walford (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 94.

18. B. A. Litvinsky, *Outline History of Buddhism in Central Asia*, Papers of UNESCO Conference on History, Archeology and Culture in Central Asia (Calcutta, Kushan Studies in the USSR, 1970), 102. Many Buddhist sites revealing quantities of Buddhist sculpture, paintings, and documents point to the presence of Buddhist along with Zoroastrian and Manichaeian beliefs. In the early Middle Ages Buddhism was widespread in both Semirechye and Fergana, judging by the archaeological material. See also D. Snellgrove, ed., *The Image of the Buddha* (London: Serendia, 1978), 195.

19. Hans Bidder, *Carpets from Eastern Turkestan* (Accookeek, Md.: Washington International Associates, 1979), 18. To be sure this is negative evidence, but Xuanzang's attention to detail is such that what he omits is sometimes as important as what he includes.

20. Beal, *Records*, 1:32

21. J. Flecker, *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* (London: Max Goshen, 1913), 7.

CHAPTER THREE

1. The ancient city where Xuanzang stayed lay further to the south than the present-day Samarkand, close to the Zarafshan River, where the excavations

and cemetery of Afrosiab are now located. The pilgrim estimated its circumference to be twenty *li* or five to seven miles.

2. Yasushi Inoue, *Journey Beyond Samarkand* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1971), 63. It seems reasonable to suppose that the Sui chronicles were based on reports made by Wei Chieh (Wei Jie), who says, "The people have deep-set eyes, high noses, and full beards. They are good at business and the city is always filled with foreign traders."

3. S. Beal, trans., *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, by Hiuen Tsiang [Xuanzang] (1884; reprint, Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1969), 1:36.

4. S. Gaulier, R. Jera-Bezard, and M. Maillard, *Buddhism in Afghanistan and Central Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 1:2. The number of monks is of considerable interest, for according to Chinese sources the first great translators of the Chinese canon came from Bactria and Sogdiana (in modern Russia). See Litvinsky, *Outline*, 64 ff.

5. B. A. Litvinsky, *Outline History of Buddhism in Central Asia*, Papers of UNESCO Conference on History, Archeology and Culture in Central Asia (Calcutta, Kushan Studies in the USSR, 1970), 73, 77, 111. Kara-Tepe, a Buddhist cave monastery, has been excavated in the northwest corner of Old Termez. The distinctive feature of this first-to-third-century C.E. monastic complex is that it was made up of caves hewn out of rock, an Indian characteristic quite exceptional in this area. Eight miles upstream from Termez is the astonishing site of Airtam, which was formerly a Buddhist settlement. The exquisitely carved limestone friezes showing male and female musicians is now in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Finally, the reports of Xuanzang and a later pilgrim, Huichao (Hui-ch'ao), describing the spread of Buddhism in this area between Samarkand and Balkh, were brilliantly confirmed by the diggings at Zang-Tepe, thirty kilometers from Termez. See also Litvinsky, *History of Civilization in Central Asia* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996), 2:173 ff. See also J. Auboyer, *Buddha: A Pictorial History of his Life and Legacy*, trans. Nelly Marans (New York: Crossroads, 1983), 254.

6. The feeling of its ancient battlements is well described by the famous twentieth-century traveler R. Byron in *The Road to Oxiana* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), 28: "After Akcha the colour of the landscape changed from lead to aluminium, pallid and deathly, as if the sun had been sucking away its gaiety for thousands and thousands of years; for this now was the plain of Balkh, and Balkh they say is the oldest city in the world."

7. B. Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1953), 77. "The dates of Kanishka's reign have been the subject of considerable dispute among scholars. Although the years A.D. 78 and 128 have been suggested for the beginning of his reign, the most recent evidence seems to point to the year 144 as the date of his accession." For an authoritative discussion see also S. J. Czuma, *Kushan Sculpture: Images from Early India* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1985), 40.

See also "New findings in Ancient Afghanistan: The Rabatak documents discovered from the Northern Hindu Kush" (paper presented by Nicholas Sims-Williams at the Ancient Oriental Museum in Ikebukuo, Tokyo). This new research may have a bearing on the oft-debated issue of the date of King Kanishka. (<http://www.gengo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~hkum/bactrian.html>, accessed 1/3/2002).

8. H. Bechert and R. Gombrich, *The World of Buddhism* (New York: Facts on File, 1984), 102. In addition to the economic and religious factors mentioned, Nancy Dupree felt that the possibility of flooding in the area was important.

9. T. Watters, trans., *On Yuan Chwang's [Xuanzang's] Travels in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1961), 1:112.

10. Watters, 1:102; and Frank and Brownstone, 135.

11. I. Majumurias, *Holy Places in Nepal and India* (Bangkok: Teccress Service, 1989), 71.

12. D. Seckel, *The Art of Buddhism*, trans. Anne Keep (New York: Crown, 1964), 182.

13. Watters, 1:108.

14. Watters, 1:115.

15. Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952), 25. The sect was the Lokottara (Transcendental) School, which "came near to the Great Vehicle in that they did not accept the world ordinarily presented to our senses as real. . . . But there are transcendental realities, such as those achieved in the phases of consciousness called the Destruction of sorrow (nirodna) and the Road (Marga) that leads to that destruction." See also S. Huntington and J. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India* (New York: Weatherhill, 1985), 206. The Huntingtons thought that the cult of the Gigantic Buddhas might relate to Vairocana, the Buddha in whom the totality of the universe is personified.

16. Watters, 1:118.

17. In her impressive monograph on the kingdom of Bamiyan Deborah Klimburg-Salter has suggested that their patron may have been none other than the Great Khan of the Western Turks, who was so hospitable to Xuanzang. See Deborah Klimburg-Salter, *The Kingdom of Bamiyan: Buddhist Art and Culture in the Hindu Kush* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale; Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo-Oriente, 1989), 91.

18. B. Rowland, *Evolution of the Buddha Image* (New York: Asia Society, 1976), 10.

19. Afghanistan became known as the land of the Buddhas. There are hundreds of web sites on Bamiyan and numerous articles have appeared about the push to rebuild the Bamiyan statues as well as computer-engendered models of Bamiyan and efforts to accumulate computer data and images of Bamiyan. Large-scale models of the Bamiyan Buddhas were constructed in Washington, D.C. for the Silk Road Festival of Yo Yo Ma in June 2002. Earlier, Lance Morrow in

“Whose Art in Heaven?,” *Time* magazine online (<http://www.TIME.com>), March 8, 2000, quoted Xuanzang’s comments on the Bamiyan Buddhas.

20. See Tim McGirk, “What Lies Beneath?,” *Time*, 10 November 2002; and “The Hunt for Bamiyan’s Third Buddha,” *BBC News*, 6 September 2002 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/south_asia/2239423.stm), accessed 11/13/2002.

21. Nancy Dupree, *An Historical Guide to Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghan Tourist Organization, 1977), 116.

22. Beal, *Records*, 1:55. See also Waley, 105.

23. D. Stadtner, “Shahi Sculpture Revisited,” *Orientalism* 30, no. 8 (October 1999): 68–74. “Substance was given to Xuanzang’s descriptions (especially that there were 1,000 Hindus in the area) only after the French teams began excavation in Afghanistan in the 1920’s. Nonetheless, we can certainly conclude that after over a thousand years, that the evocative descriptions of the ancient northwest by Xuanzang are coming to life.”

24. The destruction of the Kabul Museum occurred over a period of time. Nancy Dupree estimated that about 70 percent of its collections had been looted. Many valuable pieces may be in the hands of Pakistani dealers and art dealers in London and New York. The fragile lighthouse of Alexandria may have been preserved.

25. B. Rowland, *Art in Afghanistan: Objects from the Kabul Museum* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1971), 24. “In Gandhara the translation of Buddhist iconography into ready-made foreign patterns is essentially the same process that took place in the formation of Early Christian art, so it is not surprising in the earliest Gandhara Buddhas to find Sakyamuna with the head of a Greek Apollo, and arrayed in a pallium or toga. In exactly the same way, the earliest representations of Christ show him with the head of a Greek sun god, and dressed in the garb of a teacher of the ancient world.”

26. Watters, 1:124. Some versions indicate that there were several hostages and not just one. The Chinese hostage was apparently the son of a ruler of one of the Chinese dependencies.

27. S. Beal, trans., *The Life of Hieun Tsiang*, trans. from the Chinese of Shaman Hwui Li (1911; 2nd ed., Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1973), 55; and Beal, *Records*, 1:59.

28. See Ainslee Embree, ed., *Encyclopedia of Ancient History* (New York: Scribners, 1988), 56.

29. Beal, *Records*, 1:90.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. A. Foucher, “Notes sur l’itinéraire de Hiuan-Tang en Afghanistan,” *Etudes asiatiques pour le 25 anniversaire de l’Ecole Française d’Extrême Orient* (Paris: 1925), 274. H. Wiggins translated the notes for my use.

2. T. Watters, trans., *On Yuan Chwang’s [Xuanzang’s] Travels in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1961), 1:140.

3. See Watters, 1:131-78 for his general description of India.

4. Barthélemy-Saint-Hilaire, J. *Hiouen Tshang in India*, trans. Laura Ensor (Calcutta: Susil Gupta, 1952), 62. "The peculiar talent of exposition of Chinese authors, is a very curious phenomenon in the 7th century of our era. At this epoch, no one in Europe would have been capable of writing such books, and it is well to call attention again to this singular quality of Chinese writers, which has hitherto generally been ignored."

5. The grotto was located by A. Foucher, who followed the pilgrim mile by mile through both Afghanistan and Pakistan. For an unusual interpretation of this legend, see Malcolm David Eckel's *To See the Buddha* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 61. "With all of the different personalities of the story, including the Naga, the living Buddha, the Buddha's form, Hsuan-tsang and the Buddhas of the Future, the passage elaborates the contrast of presence and absence in an almost endless series of permutations. The Naga fears the absence of the Buddha, so he is given a reflection of the form that reminds him of the Buddha's presence. When the form itself has begun to disappear, a visitor like Hsuan-tsang has to engage in acts of religious discipline to make the form of the past Buddha become present. Finally, all of the events anticipate a story that will be played again and again in the future as more Buddhist travelers and Buddhas come and go."

6. See S. Beal, trans., *The Life of Hieun Tsiang*, trans. from the Chinese of Shaman Hwui Li. (1911; 2nd ed., Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1973), 60; and Li Yongshi, trans., *The Life of Hsuan-tsang*, by Hui-li (Peking: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959), 60. See also H. Giles, *The Travels of Fa-hsien (399-414 A.D.)* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 18. Faxian, who had been there more than two centuries earlier, reported that it was like the Buddha's actual self with his golden complexion, his thirty-two greater and eighty lesser characteristic marks, all brightly visible. He also said that the kings of various countries had sent skilled artists to sketch it, but they had not been able to do so.

7. Alexander C. Soper, "Aspects of Light Symbolism in Gandharan Sculpture," *Artibus Asiae* 12, no. 3 (1949): 281. Soper says that "true likeness in ideal perfection existed only in three replicas which the Buddha was said to have granted during his lifetime—the sandalwood image made for King Udyana [note: usual spelling is Udayana], the golden image made for King Prasenajit, and the shadow. Of these, the first two, in spite of miraculous circumstances, might still be imagined as the work of human hands in common materials. The shadow alone was an essential part of the Buddha's person, not imitated" (281). See also Soper's *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China* (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae, 1959), 141, and Appendix, "The Best Known Buddha Images," 259.

8. More than 1,000 stupas have been identified by the French and Japanese, and the former Afghan Institute of Archeology at nearby Hadda, one of the most exciting being the excavations at Tap-i-Shotor uncovered since 1965.

Hellenistic figures were adapted. Zeus became Sarka (Indra) and Apollo was transformed into a Buddha. The Greek Heracles became Vajrapani, the thunder-bearer.

9. S. Beal, trans., *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, by Hiuen Tsiang [Xuanzang] (1884; reprint, Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1969), 1:91.

10. The boundaries of Gandhara are variously defined according to the period and subject of reference. Usually Gandhara refers to eastern Afghanistan and Pakistan.

11. Watters, 1:203.

12. D. Seckel, *The Art of Buddhism*, trans. Anne Keep (New York: Crown, 1964), 31. He modifies this judgment somewhat on page 116.

13. Beal, *Life*, 63, and H. Goetz, *The Art of India* (Baden-Baden, 1959; reprint, New York: Greystone Press, 1964), 80 ff. Another pilgrim, Songyun (Sung-yun), who visited the site in 620 C.E., makes the height of the main building to be 400 feet; above this he saw an iron pillar 300 feet high supporting thirteen tiers of gilt disks, so that the total height comes to 700 feet. Goetz says that the whole monument was 638 feet tall, almost three times the height of the famous Qutb-Minar in New Delhi. The site in modern times seems to be buried under the modern city of Peshawar.

14. See S. J. Czuma, *Kushan Sculpture: Images from Early India* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1985), 26 ff., for a detailed discussion of the Buddha Image and Kushan chronology.

15. The gift of the Buddha's head, one of the most popular of the Buddhist legends, is portrayed in Miran on the Southern Silk Road; at the Dunhuang Caves in China; in many places in India, especially at Bharut; as well as in Tibet and present-day Pakistan and Thailand. See also M. C. Joshi and Radha Banerjee, "Some Aspects of Jataka Painting in Indian and Chinese (Central Asian) Art," in *Across the Himalayan Gap*, ed. Tan Chung (New Delhi: Gayan Publishing House, 1998), for an insightful discussion of Jataka art and its diffusion (<http://ignca.nic.in/>, accessed 11/11/02).

16. Beal, *Records*, 1:113. See also V. Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art* (New Delhi: Munisham Manharlal, 1997), 62. Dehejia reports that Richard Gombrich indicates that the story of Prince Vassantara continues to be narrated as an oral epic in Sri Lanka. And Stanley Tambiah, in his studies of Thai monastic traditions, speaks of the recitation of the Vessantara *jataka* as a prelude to a four-day Buddhist festival.

17. Nancy Dupree, *Gandhara: An Instant Guide to Pakistan's Heritage* (Karachi: Pakistan Tourism Development Corp., n.d.).

18. Geoffrey Ashe, *The Landscape of King Arthur* (New York: Henry Holt, 1987), 25.

19. Watters, 1:226.

20. Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952),

29. "The strongly emotional side of his religion and his devout cult of the

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is constantly apparent throughout his career." See also Christine Guth Kanda, "The Silk Route and the Diamond Path," *Orientalist* 14, no. 5 (May 1983): 29-36. Also Pratapaditita Pal, *The Light of Asia: Buddha Sakyamuni in Asian Art* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1984), 256. The cult of the Healing Buddha gained special popularity in China after the translation of the *Bhaishajyagurusutra* (Healing Buddha sutra) by Xuanzang.

21. A. Foucher, *Notes on the Ancient Geography of Gandhara*, trans. H. Hargraves (Calcutta: Superintendent Hindu and Buddhist Monuments, Northern Circle, Government Printing Office, 1952), 39.

22. Giles, 9. Faxian described the territory vividly: "... the side of the mountain being like a stone wall ten thousand feet in height. On nearing the edge, the eye becomes confused; and wishing to advance, the foot finds no resting place."

23. J. Mirsky, *Sir Aurel Stein* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1977), 358. Stein, in one of his expeditions to Upper Swat, reported that the site of the Great Maitreya was still worshipped in "a Muhammadan guise."

24. Watters, 1:239.

25. Seckel, 143.

26. See S. Huntington and J. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India* (New York: Weatherhill, 1985), 123, for a different interpretation of this early period in the development of Buddhist art.

27. D. Snellgrove, ed., *The Image of the Buddha* (London: Serendia, 1978), 46.

28. Snellgrove, 75: "The Christian gospels were compiled from earlier traditional materials and produced in Greek for Greek-speaking converts, who perhaps similarly wanted to know more of the person of this Christ Jesus, to whose teachings they had turned. . . . Similarly, the foreign converts of the far north-west of the Indian subcontinent would pose the question: 'What is a Buddha?'"

29. Beal, *Life*, 67.

30. Jean Fairley, *The Lion River: The Indus* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), 134.

31. In 1996 the British Museum announced that it was the proud possessor of what are believed to be the oldest Buddhist manuscripts ever discovered, texts dating from the first or the beginning of the second century C.E. While the exact provenance is unknown, they are believed to have come from Hadda in Afghanistan. "Although the Jaulian manuscript reflects a late phase of Gandharan Buddhism in which the Kharosthi script and Gandharan language had been or at least were being supplanted by Brahmi and Sanskrit, we are still, broadly speaking, within the same cultural tradition whose earlier phase is represented by the British Library manuscripts." See Richard Salomon, *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls from Gandhara: The British Library Kharosthi Fragments* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 77 ff.

32. Watters, 1:240.
33. J. Murray, *Handbook for Travellers in India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon* (London: John Murray, 1955).
34. Isobel Shaw, *An Illustrated Guide to Pakistan* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Guidebook Co., 1988), 126.
35. Watters, 1:250.
36. D. Klimburg-Salter, *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes* (Los Angeles: UCLA Art Council, 1982), 37.
37. A. Stein thought he recognized in the modern inhabitants the same characteristics that Xuanzang described. The pilgrim's brief sketch of Kashmir, Stein says, is the earliest ethnographic account of the region.
38. Beal, *Life*, 70.
39. Watters, 1:270.
40. Nancy Elizabeth Boulton, *Early Chinese Buddhist Travel Records as a Literary Genre* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), 366. Apparently there are few details about it from later books. Buddhist schools differ in the Councils they recognized. Only the first two are recognized by all schools. See Bechert and Gombrich, 78.
41. Waley, 33.
42. Waley, 32.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. See S. Beal, trans., *The Life of Hieun Tsiang*, trans. from the Chinese of Shaman Hwui Li. (1911; 2nd ed., Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1973), 73; and Li Yongshi, trans., *The Life of Hsuan-tsang*, by Hui-li (Peking: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959), 73.

2. Beal, *Life*, 74.

3. Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952), 36.

4. E. Conze, *Buddhist Scriptures* (1959; reprint Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1984), 148.

5. Conze, *Buddhist Scriptures*, 150. Karma: The Buddha took over the doctrines of *Karma* and *Samsara* or Rebirth, which "were already present in India before his birth. Karma simply means deeds. A man's karma is the sum of his past and present actions which determine his future destiny. . . . Good deeds are rewarded and bad deeds punished either in present or future lives." See also Nancy Elizabeth Boulton, *Early Chinese Buddhist Travel Records as a Literary Genre* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), 448. A living being continues in the cycle of existence in which a being can be reborn as a deity, man, animal, hungry ghost or denizen of hell. The goal of religion is to escape this cycle of rebirth.

6. T. Watters, trans., *On Yuan Chwang's [Xuanzang's] Travels in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1961), 1:301.

7. Liu Xinru, *Ancient India and Ancient China* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988). These larger bowls replaced the begging bowls of individual monks for donations during the Kushan period. The donations might have been money or valuable items.

8. R. C. Sharma, *Buddhist Art of Mathura* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1984), 47. Sharma believes that Xuanzang's account of Mathura may be the result of hearsay and tradition rather than first-hand observation.

9. S. Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries in India* (1962; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), 24. See also Bechert and Gombrich, 81.

10. Watters, 1:319.

11. See Beal, *Life*, 78. "So the common folk, men and women, are always congregating on the banks of the river. But this is merely the heretical belief of the district, and is not true."

12. Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* (1989), abridged edition (Delhi: Oxford Indian Paperback, 1993), 453.

13. Gopal, 453.

14. Pratapaditia Pal, *The Light of Asia: Buddha Sakyamuni in Asian Art* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1984), 47 ff., has an interesting discussion of why the Eight Miracles came to be associated with certain places. See also J. Huntington, "Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism," *Orientalism* 16, no. 11 (November 1985): 46. The Scripture that is most often cited is the *Mahāparinibbana-sutta*, vv 16-22: "There are four places, Ananda, which the believing man should visit with feelings of reverence and awe. What are the four? The place at which . . . the Tathagata was born . . . the place at which . . . the Tathagata attained enlightenment, the place at which the Tathagata set up the Aryan kingdom . . . the place at which the Tathagata passed away."

15. J. Huntington, "Sowing the Seeds," 48. This is the first of a five-part series of articles in *Orientalism*, "Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism." Part 1 discusses Asoka's archetypal pilgrimage, Lumbini and Kapilavastu, and Bodh Gaya and its environs (16, no. 11 [Nov. 1985]: 46-62); Part 2, Varanasi and Sarnath (17, no. 2 [Feb. 1986]: 28-44); Part 3, Sravasti and the Jetavana Monastery and Sankasya (17, no. 3 [March 1986]: 32-47); Part 4, Vaisali and Rajagriha (17, no. 7 [July 1986]: 28-41); and Part 5, Kusinagara, the Division of Relics and the Eight *Mahāstupas*, Asoka's division of relics, an alternative site for Kapilavastu and the *Piprahwa Reliquary inscription* (17, no. 9 [Sept. 1986]: 46-59).

16. Watters, 1:334.

17. In 1892 Alexander Cunningham identified the elephant capital as he followed in Xuanzang's footsteps in reconstructing his *The Ancient Geography of India* (1871; reprint, Delhi: Varnasi, Indological Book House, 1979). Cunningham was the first head of the Archeological Survey of India in 1861. The English translation of Faxian in 1836 and Xuanzang in 1858 opened whole new vistas for Indian archeology, providing the possibility of finding

lost buildings, Buddhist sites, and, what Cunningham was proudest of doing, identifying the most famous cities in medieval India. See also Sourindranath Roy, *The Story of Indian Archaeology 1784-1947* (Delhi: Indian Archaeological Survey, 1961), 38. "In describing the ancient geography of India . . . the Elder Pliny, for the sake of clearness, follows the footsteps of Alexander the Great. For a similar reason I would follow in the footsteps of the Chinese pilgrim Hwen-Thsang." See also A. Imam, *Sir Alexander Cunningham and the Beginnings of Indian Archaeology* (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1966), 213. Cunningham learned India by walking it. For the *Ancient Geography of India* he chose the Buddhist period because of the favorable opportunities for local investigation which he had enjoyed during his long and distinguished Indian career. To this Indian experience he added his knowledge of Burma. Thus the representation of clay seals found at Sravasti depicting bells hanging from stupas reminded him of still nights in Rangoon when the air was filled with the pleasing tinkling of bells from innumerable pagodas.

18. S. R. Goyal, *Harsha and Buddhism* (Meerut, India: Kusumanjali Prakashan, 1986). The thesis of this book is that Xuanzang's account of King Harsha's relation to Buddhism is misleading, that he never adopted Buddhism "as his personal religion," and that King Harsha remained devoted to Lord Siva, although he was extremely tolerant in his religious outlook. The author criticizes Xuanzang for his "egotism and religious prejudices," completely overlooking the fact that it was his biographer who eulogizes Xuanzang. The pilgrim is usually regarded as being unusually modest.

19. S. Beal, trans., *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, by Hiuen Tsiang [Xuanzang] (1884; reprint, Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1969), 1:210.

20. Watters, 1:343.

21. D. Devahuti, *Harsha: A Political Study* (1970; reprint, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 179. King Harsha was also a poet and dramatist. One of his plays, the *Naga-ananda*, was set to music and performed as an opera. It was later taken to China and then to Japan, where it survives today as the world's oldest opera still being performed.

22. Waley, 38. "To begin with, the sort of Mahayana texts he was interested in were to a considerable extent polemics against the Hinayana, and it was essential to understand the doctrines they were attacking."

23. René Grousset, *In the Footsteps of the Buddha*, trans. Mariette Leon (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 131. This incident is reported in Beal, *Records*, 228, a little less romantically. "The disciple of Asanga was reposing outside the open window (of *Vasubandhu*) when in the after part of the night he began to recite the *Dasabhumi Sutra*. Vasubandhu, having heard it, understood its meaning and was deeply grieved that this profound and excellent doctrine had not come to his ears in times past and he laid the blame on his tongue as the origin of his sin of calumniating [*The Great Vehicle*]—'and so,' said he, 'I will cut it out.'"

24. Grousset, *In the Footsteps*, 301.

25. Grousset, *In the Footsteps*, 301. This effort to offer some insight into the Idealist school owes a great deal to Grousset's chapter on "The Flight of Mahayana Buddhism," and to Conze's *Essence and Development of Buddhism and Buddhist Scriptures*.

26. D. Ikeda, *The Flower of Chinese Buddhism*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Weatherhill, 1986), 125.

27. I am indebted to Malcolm David Eckel's *To See the Buddha* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 136: "Focusing on the role of visualization and visual experience in Hsuan-tsang's travels opens a host of possibilities for the interpretation of Hsuan-tsang's writing and the intellectual interpretation they represent. The challenge of Hsuan-tsang's story is to look at the notion of seeing and through it discern Hsuan-tsang's understanding of the act of understanding itself." See also Alan Sponberg, "Meditation in Fahsiang Buddhism," in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 15-43.

28. Watters, 1:368.

29. B. Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1953), 143.

30. Alexander Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China* (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae, 1959), xiii.

31. Waley, 127.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Cf. *Mahaparibanna-sutta*, *The Sutra of Glorious Decease*, verses 16-22. J. Huntington, "Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism" (part 1), *Orientations* 16, no. 11 (November 1985): 46. See also Nancy Elizabeth Boulton, *Early Chinese Buddhist Travel Records as a Literary Genre* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), 85. It may be that Xuanzang was reading the later Mahayana version of the Great Decease, the *Mahaparinirvana-sutra*, not the earlier Pali text. It is certain that he was passionate in his devotion to Buddhism at an early age.

2. See D. Snellgrove, ed., *The Image of the Buddha* (London: Serendia, 1978). The four stages of the Buddha's progress: birth, enlightenment, teaching, and final nirvana; and the four special miracles all became important places of pilgrimage. "It is quite possible that a deliberate collection of the stories and legends connected with these places provided the first incentive toward the production of a full-scale biography of Sakyamuni" (45). See A. Foucher, *The Life of the Buddha According to Ancient Texts and Monuments of India*, trans. S. Boas (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1963). See also Malcolm David Eckel, *To See the Buddha* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), especially pages 53-72, for a rich discussion of Xuanzang's experience as a pilgrim.

3. The holy land of the Buddha includes southern Nepal, the provinces of Uttar Pradesh, and southern Bihar.

4. T. Watters, trans., *On Yuan Chwang's [Xuanzang's] Travels in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1961), 1:384. This scene is portrayed on reliefs in many places such as Bharut, Amaravati, and Bodh Gaya.

5. J. Auboyer, *Buddha: A Pictorial History of his Life and Legacy*, trans. Nelly Marans (New York: Crossroads, 1983), 153 ff., has a description of the miracle at Sravasti and says that Xuanzang went to where it was supposed to have happened and listened to the story of the miracle with tears in his eyes. See also Pratapaditia Pal, *The Light of Asia: Buddha Sakyamuni in Asian Art* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1984), 48. Of the secondary miracles, the miracle of Sravasti is the most complex. "Not only are there diverse textual traditions describing the event; it appears that the Buddha actually performed several miracles on this one occasion. He is said to have grown instantly an enormous tree from a mango stone, to have walked in the air in various attitudes, while alternately emitting flames and waves from the upper and lower parts of his body, and finally to have multiplied images of himself in all directions thereby confounding the heretics and preaching the Law. It is generally the multiplication and the teaching that are emphasized in artistic representations." See also A. Foucher, *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art*, trans. A. Thomas and F. W. Thomas (London: H. Milford, 1917), 183. "We are so accustomed to utilizing the archeological information of the Chinese pilgrims in India, that we no longer think of being grateful to them for it; in order to measure the value of their help, we have to be once without it. That is the case in this occasion: Fa-hsien [Faxian] and Hiuan-tsang [Xuanzang], so explicit as regards the three other episodes, scarcely mention the one which interests us here" [i.e., Sravasti].

6. J. Huntington, "Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism" (Part 3), *Orientalism* 17, no. 3 (March 1986): 41.

7. Scholars are still debating the exact site of Kaplavastu. Xuanzang seems to have visited Tilurakot and Faxian, Piprahwa.

8. S. Beal, trans., *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, by Hiuen Tsiang [Xuanzang] (1884; reprint, Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1969), 2:24.

9. Xuanzang's description of Lumbini is quoted extensively in D. Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments* (1971; reprint, Calcutta: Sahitja Samsad, 1980), 58.

10. Beal, *Records*, 2:24.

11. Beal, *Records*, 2:25.

12. Watters, 2:44.

13. The usual account is of twin Sal trees, not four, as in Xuanzang's record.

14. J. Huntington, "Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism" (part 5), *Orientalism* 17, no. 9 (Sept. 1986):

50. In connection with the Mauryan pillar commemorating nirvana reported by Xuanzang, Huntington says that it had "yet to be definitely identified at the site." He thought that it was possible that the remains could be under the surviving plinth of the temple, "but so far as this author is aware, no effort has been made to determine this."

15. Beal, *Records*, 2:7.

16. Watters, 2:42.

17. Watters, 2:47.

18. J. Huntington, "Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism" (part 2), *Orientalism* 17, no. 2 (Feb. 1986): 35.

19. A. Shearer, *The Traveler's Key to Northern India* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 429. Unfortunately the stupa was pulled down in 1794 by Jagat Singh, the prime minister of the Maharaja of Benares, but there were several excavations in the area (1904-1907), which unearthed both the famous Bala image and the Teaching Buddha. Public opinion was so enraged by the destruction of the stupa and tossing some of its relics in the river that when it was discovered, a new interest in Sarnath developed. See also D. C. Ahir, *Buddhist Shrines in India* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corp., 1986), 23.

20. Shearer, 432 ff. The purpose of Indian art is to serve as a springboard from which the mind can ascend from the concrete world to the abstract realm of the spirit. By a series of diagrams Shearer shows the image as *Centered Energy*, *Potential Energy*, *Manifest Energy*, *Impersonal Energy*, and *Pure Energy*. These configurations resembling mandalas show that what began as a piece of figurative form of the highest quality has dissolved into pure form of the diamond thunderbolt (*Vajra*), a comprehensive symbol of the *Dharma* much beloved of Mahayanist iconographers. See also H. Zimmer's profound discussion of the spiritual message of sacred images. Zimmer contrasts the roving eye of normal vision with seeing a picture in its totality and keeping it all in focus, which relates to Indian ways of seeing images. H. Zimmer, *Artistic Form and Yoga in the Sacred Images of India*, trans. Chapple and Lawson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 197.

21. Ahir, 23. See also F. L. Woodward, ed. and trans., *Some Sayings of the Buddha according to the Pali canon* (1925; reprint, London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 7, for a more complete rendering of the First Sermon.

22. Boulton, 314.

23. Pal, *Light of Asia*, 48: "Curiously the miracle of the Monkey Giving an Offering of Honey to the Buddha is not given in any of the known biographical texts; it is, however, briefly described in the *Dhammapada Commentary* and by Xuanzang. Between these two sources, the story states that once a monkey offered honey to the Buddha and thereafter danced with joy, in his ecstasy fell into a well and died. It is curious that such an incident should have taken place in an urban environment; this seems to reveal the rather contrived association of the episode with the important city of Vaisali. Furthermore one

would have expected an incident of this nature to have occurred during the Enlightenment Cycle when the Buddha would have need of nourishment.”

24. Watters, 2:75.

25. E. J. Thomas, *The History of Buddhist Thought* (1933; reprint Sante Fe, N.M.: Sun Publishing Co., 1981), 33. This council is not mentioned outside of Sri Lankan chronicles, which claim it sent missions throughout historic India and beyond. See also W. Zwalf, *Buddhist Art and Faith* (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1985), 78, for a general discussion of Buddhist Councils.

26. Watters, 2:113. This description is also cited in Mitra's *Buddhist Monuments*, 62, for as the author says it is largely applicable even to the present remains.

27. Usually the text indicates that there was only one maiden.

28. Shearer, 439.

29. D. K. Barua, *Bodhi Gaya Temple: Its History* (Bihar: Bodhi Gaya Temple Management Co., 1981), 40.

30. S. Beal, trans., *The Life of Hieun Tsiang*, trans. from the Chinese of Shaman Hwui Li. (1911; 2nd ed., Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1973), 104, and Watters, 2:115.

31. Beal, *Life*, 105. See also Li Yongshi, trans., *The Life of Hsuan-tsang*, by Hui-li (Peking: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959), 102. Xuanzang concluded his wailing with “I can only have reached this place during the Image Period—How heavy my evil deeds must have been!” Buddhism is supposed to exist for three periods, i.e., the Right Dharma period for five hundred years, the Resemblance period of one thousand years, and the final Period of three thousand years. Image in this case refers to the Image Period, or what D. Ikeda calls the Middle Period of the Law. See also D. Ikeda, *The Flower of Chinese Buddhism*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Weatherhill, 1986), 130.

32. See Eckel, 58 ff. The key element in Xuanzang's experience, and the one that seems to have triggered his response, was the sense of absence. Xuanzang had an acute sense that the Buddha he longed to see was not there. See Chapter 7 for a sophisticated discussion of “The Buddha as a place where an Absence is present.” See also T. H. Barrett, “Exploratory Observations on Some Weeping Pilgrims,” in *The Buddhist Forum: Seminar Papers, 1987–88*, ed. T. Skorupski (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1990), 1:99–110. Barrett traces the sense of grief in this passage to a combination of facts in the intellectual and cultural world of seventh century China. Like many of the lyric poets of the Tang dynasty, Xuanzang approached the tree of Buddha's enlightenment with a sense of melancholy about the inevitable loss of the splendor of the past, and his sense of melancholy was deepened by a Buddhist sense of karmic unworthiness. Instead of visiting the site of the Buddha's enlightenment when the Buddha was present to explain its meaning, Xuanzang was condemned to arrive centuries later when the signs of the Buddha's enlightenment were already beginning to decay or disappear.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Shoshin Kuwayama, "How Xuanzang Learned about Nalanda," in *Tang China and Beyond*, ed. Antonio Forte (Kyoto: Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Scuola di Studi sull'Asia Orientale, 1988), 1. "Young Xuanzang learned of the trends in Buddhism which the Indian Paramartha (449-560 C.E.) had brought with him to south China in the middle of the sixth century." And this influence led him to try to go to Nalanda instead of Valabhi.

2. C. S. Upasak, *Nalanda, Past and Present* (Bihar: Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, 1977), 13. Indian sources including Upasak affirm that Tibetans were there at the time of Xuanzang, though modern scholars think that they came later. Today the Nalanda tradition is being revived. An institute of postgraduate Pali and Buddhist studies, established at Nalanda in 1951, has a fine library of Buddhist literature in Pali, Sanskrit, and other languages. In 1957 the Chinese government, in a gesture of friendship between China and India, provided a Xuanzang Memorial Hall to commemorate the stay of the Chinese monk at Nalanda. It has not yet been furnished.

3. There is little agreement on the duration of Xuanzang's stay at Nalanda. Vincent Smith ("The Itinerary of Yuan-Chwang," in T. Watters, trans., *On Yuan Chwang's [Xuanzang's] Travels in India* [Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1961], 2:329) said that he was at Nalanda in 637 C.E., stayed for a while and then returned, and then studied for fifteen months. Counting his subsequent visit at the end of 642 C.E., his total residence amounted to about two years. That seems very likely in view of his subsequent travels in India. He was in the south of India in 639, and in Nasik in 642 C.E. Waley, Barthélemy-Saint-Hilaire, and others indicated that he was there for five years.

4. See Watters, 1:173. Had he not been coached so carefully as indicated in this story, we might think he was carrying out the Chinese practice of kowtowing on his hands and knees, and not an Indian usage. But Xuanzang was familiar with Indian forms of salutation. He enumerated the nine degrees of etiquette in showing respect, in his survey of India: (1) greeting with a kind inquiry; (2) reverentially bowing the head; (3) raising hands to the head with an inclination of the body; (4) bowing with the hands folded on the breast; (5) bending a knee; (6) bowing down on both knees; (7) going down on the ground with hands and knees; (8) bowing down with knees, elbows and forehead to the ground; (9) prostrating oneself to the earth. The performance of these nine acts from the lowest to the highest is only one act of reverence.

5. S. Beal, trans., *The Life of Hieun Tsiang*, trans. from the Chinese of Shaman Hwui Li. (1911; 2nd ed., Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1973), 107; Li Yongshi, trans., *The Life of Hsuan-tsang*, by Hui-li (Peking: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959), 103. Xuanzang had been traveling now from 629 to 637 C.E., a full eight years.

6. Watters, 2:109.

7. Beal, *Life*, 111.

8. The Archeological Survey of India lists eleven monastic sites and five temples. Xuanzang mentions eight lecture halls, but it isn't clear what precisely the grounds included. "It is not possible to identify with any certainty any of the structures mentioned by Hieun-tsang or others like the Dharmaganja Library, the stupas of Sariputra or Buddha; Sakraditya's monastery, the Vihara of Harsha with its colossal bronze statue of the Buddha, or the Bala-ditya temple." Upasak, 67.

9. F. Asher, *The Art of Eastern India, 300 to 800* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 67.

10. Upasak, 39. "If the last two strokes were already sounded, the inmates did not eat, and if anybody transgressed it, he was expelled in accordance with the rules." No explanation for this strict rule is given.

11. L. M. Joshi, *Studies in the Buddhist Culture of India During the Seventh and Eighth Centuries* (1967; 2nd ed., Delhi: Mōtilal Banarsidass, 1971), 105.

12. Latika Lahiri, trans., *Chinese Monks in India*, by Yijing [I Ching] (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 56.

13. S. Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries in India* (1962; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), 340. Dutt thought the figure of above 10,000 monks was a gross exaggeration, "for I Tsing [Yijing] who came to Nalanda only about three decades after Hsuan-tsang puts the numbers upwards of 3,000 in his Record and 3,500 in his Memoirs." See also Beal, *Life*, 112.

14. Watters, 1:162. In his general discussion of India, Xuanzang said:

Wherever there is a community of brethren it makes [its own] rules of gradation. The Brother who expounds orally one treatise . . . in the Buddhist Canon is exempted from serving under the Prior; he who expounds two is invested with the outfit of a Superior; he who expounds three has Brethren deputed to assist him; he who expounds four has lay servants assigned to him; he who expounds five rides an elephant; he who expounds six rides an elephant and has a surrounding retinue. Where spiritual attainments are high, the distinctions conferred are extraordinary.

15. S. Beal, trans., *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, by Hieun Tsiang [Xuanzang] (1884; reprint, Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1969), 2:150.

16. Beal, *Records*, 2:153.

17. Beal, *Records*, 2:153.

18. Edwin Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1992), 75.

19. Li Yongshi, 112. Ananda was excluded at first from this council because he was not free from "binding ties." Apparently Ananda tended to fall in love. He was finally allowed to participate because of a legendary miracle that Xuanzang describes very well. This incident is mentioned in Kogen

Mizuno, *Buddhist Sutras: Origin, Development and Transmission*, multiple trans. (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing, 1982), 19.

20. D. Devahuti, *Harsha: A Political Study* (1970; reprint, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 284. Devahuti provides the first critical study of the correspondence between Indian monks and Xuanzang, in both the Chinese and the Uigur-Turkish versions.

21. What is perhaps of greater interest is that Xuanzang mentioned Panini, whose analytical study of grammar was founded in the fourth century B.C.E. in India. Xuanzang noted that Panini's work was "the one [which is] at present used in India" (Beal, *Life*, 122). Just as Xuanzang was interested in Indian logic, he may have wanted to introduce the complex inflections of the Sanskrit language to the Chinese as well in order to point out the sophistication of Indian grammar. See also J. Norman, *The Chinese* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 152: "As we have seen, China has a very rich tradition in phonological study; the study of grammar on the other hand, is a rather recent development. Ma Jianzhong (1845-1900) was the first person to write a systematic grammar of Chinese."

22. Anthony Yu, "The Real Tripitaka Revisited: International Religion and National Politics" (paper presented to ASIAN/network Exchange, April 20-22, 2000, Cleveland, Ohio), 7. Yu has commented that "Sanskrit as the most authoritative classical literary language of India has had such a profound and far-reaching impact on China that its full effect has yet to be adequately studied and understood. . . . The encounter with Indian writing and speech produced an undertaking of translations such that in sheer volume, scope and magnitude the civilized world had never seen hitherto. Apart from the thousands of titles that form the body of Buddhist scriptures, the Chinese canon also contains important volumes on lexicography, the science of translation, grammar and linguistics that lamentably too few Chinese scholars have studied. It was estimated by Liang Quichao, the reformer and modern scholar, that Indian languages, directly and indirectly, had helped to enlarge the Chinese vocabulary by at least 35,000 words, surpassing the thirty-some-thousand words that Shakespeare bequeathed to the English language" (<http://www.asianetwork.org/exchange/2000winter-ane.html>, accessed 6/19/02).

23. Dan Lusthaus, "Xuanzang [Hsuan-tsang]" (<http://www.human.toyogakuen-u.ac.jp/~acmuller/yogacara/thinkers/xuanzang-bio-uni.htm>, accessed 10/31/2002).

24. Beal, *Records*, 2:170.

25. K. L. Hazra, *Buddhism in India as Described by the Chinese Pilgrims* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983).

26. See Jan Nattier, "The Heart Sutra: A Chinese Apocryphal Text?" *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 15, no. 2 (1992).

27. Li Yongshi, 155.

28. Li Yongshi, 165

29. Devahuti, 283. She includes a second letter from Xuanzang which contains some new material both on the use of cotton and a reference to the *Rig Veda*. It also shows a less generous Xuanzang, who deplores the fact that one of the Indian monks, with whom he had engaged in debate at Kanauj, continues to hold to his Hinayana beliefs when he could so easily save himself and become a Mahayana Buddhist.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Li Yongshi, trans., *The Life of Hsuan-tsang*, by Hui-li (Peking: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959), 121.

2. D. Ikeda, *The Flower of Chinese Buddhism*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Weatherhill, 1986), 134. See also Arthur F. Wright and D. Twitchett, *Perspectives on the T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 296.

3. D. T. Suzuki, *On Indian Mahayana Buddhism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 101.

4. See J. Schwartzberg, ed., *A Historical Atlas of South Asia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 184. "Despite the fullness of his descriptions, the reconstruction of his itineraries is not free from controversy. . . . Hence his route like other Chinese pilgrims on our map is at best an approximation."

5. According to Robert Thurman, there is a tradition in Indian philosophy of knowing your opponent's philosophy and being able to elaborate it as convincingly as you can. This technique means that you push your own doubt to its strongest point and this enables you to give a more powerful argument for your own beliefs (lecture, Department of Religion, Columbia University, March 1989).

6. In the twentieth century the Sunderabends with their dense jungle at the delta of the Ganges River in Bangladesh is still the home of the famed Bengal tigers.

7. T. Watters, trans., *On Yuan Chwang's [Xuanzang's] Travels in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1961), 2:185.

8. Watters, 2:193. See also "Ashokan stupa discovered in Orissa" (<http://www.rediff.com/news/2000/may/27/ashok.htm>, accessed 1/15/03).

9. S. Beal, trans., *The Life of Hieun Tsiang*, trans. from the Chinese of Shaman Hwui Li. (1911; 2nd ed., Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1973), 134.

10. Watters, 2:185.

11. D. Seckel, *The Art of Buddhism*, trans. Anne Keep (New York: Crown, 1964), 39.

It now became possible to render without hesitation the things of this world, and even the Buddha; but this had to be done in such a way that it did not set out to be a valid definition of a true reality, but only something temporary and makeshift, a mere reflection of ultimately valid truth—in other words, of the indefinable, invisible and unrepresentable

“Void” which at the same time means both “yes” and “no”, “neither” and “nor”, and whose apparently negative character actually implied the supreme positive. This development of Mahayanist philosophy—one of the most important for Buddhist art in general—was thus accomplished as early as the second century.

12. P. Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundation* (London: Routledge, 1989), 56: “Modern scholars favor the theory that there were at least two Nagarjunas, distinguishing between the philosopher Nagarjuna, who was probably from the southern or Andhra regions . . . and a later Nagarjuna who was a Tantric alchemist and a yogin. In addition, it is possible that works have been attributed by the Buddhist tradition to Nagarjuna simply because of his doctrinal importance, so that the name Nagarjuna now refers to a composite being of myth rather than a historical figure.”

13. Watters, 2:207, has a long footnote about this so-called Pigeon Monastery, which may be the Black Bee Mountain. Beal, in the Introduction to the *Life* (xxi), suggests that after the Buddhists had established themselves in this monastery, the Brahmins, by a strategy, took possession of it and changed its name. Cunningham also discusses the cave and its possible origin (Alexander Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India* [1871; reprint, Delhi: Varnasi, Indological Book House, 1979], 440 ff.).

14. S. Beal, trans., *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, by Hiuen Tsiang [Xuanzang] (1884; reprint, Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1969), 2:215.

15. J. Harle, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent* (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1986), 45. “More than this,” as Dr. Harle has pointed out, “the concept of the cave with its elemental, uncreated (*svayambhu*) nature strikes one of the fundamental chords of Indian spirituality.”

16. Zhu Qi (Chu Ch’i), *Xuanzang Xiyouji* (Xuanzang’s Journey to the West) (Hong Kong: Chan Chin Ta-yuan Shutien, 1957). The novel was the only safe commemoration that could be made in the political climate of the time. “In Chu Chi’s little book . . . there is some interest just in his conception of how to tell the tale for Chinese at a point of time in their history [1956] when scholars, tradition, history, and the sense of cultural values all were being battered about. That Chu Chi cast his book in the form and borrowing the tone of the traditional Chinese adventure novel, must have had a layer of meaning for him in that situation that is not immediately apparent” (Frederick W. Mote to Sally Hovey Wriggins, November 30, 1983).

17. René Grousset, *In the Footsteps of the Buddha*, trans. Mariette Leon (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 178. “It is really the Calukyan state of Vengipura that is mentioned by Hsuan-tsang under the name of the Andhra kingdom. The south-east of ancient Andhra, with Bezvada and Amaravati, towns situated on the two banks of the lower Krishna, formed in the seventh century the separate kingdom of Dhanakataka.”

18. Xuanzang mentioned two rock-cut monasteries which cannot be construed as the great Amaravati stupa standing in the middle of the plain. And yet his biographer says, "And so becoming bound together in mind they all went in company to pay reverence to the sacred traces of the region." It is plausible that he saw Amaravati, but there is no real evidence that he did.

19. Wei Tat, trans., *Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun* (The Doctrine of Mere Consciousness) (Hong Kong: Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun Publication Committee, 1973). This is an English translation of *Thirty Verses* and Xuanzang's commentary.

20. Li Yongshi, 142.

21. Beal, *Records*, 2:256.

22. Watters, 2:239. It is interesting that Mitra regards Xuanzang's description of Ajanta as being particularly vivid; see D. Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments* (1971; reprint, Calcutta: Sahitja Samsad, 1980), 150. This description is included in the Archeological Survey of India's pamphlet on Ajanta. Vincent Smith regards Xuanzang's description as "brief and indistinct" but believes that he seems to have gone there (*The Oxford History of India* [1958; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967]). Although Xuanzang does give numbers for the region of Maharashtra, Dr. Walter Spink, the well-known authority on Ajanta, speculates that since he doesn't list the number of monks at Ajanta, or mention that the cave was deserted (which it may have been at the time), he may not have visited Ajanta (personal letter to Sally Hovey Wriggins, 16 October 1990).

23. Beal, *Records*, 2:278.

24. Xuanzang reported that the country had no male children, and a neighboring king sent men every year to cohabit with the women. Whatever male children were born were not reared there.

25. Xuanzang may have gone around northern India, back to Ujain, and then returned to the west coast. He then explored the delta region of the Indus River in present-day Pakistan. He traveled through Sindh and reported that the government held sway over four outlying provinces. It is difficult, according to Jean Fairley, who wrote about the Indus River, to identify the places he mentioned except for Multan (see Jean Fairley, *The Lion River: The Indus* [London: Allen Lane, 1975], 233).

26. Beal, *Records*, 2:274.

27. Xuanzang used the term *Five Indias* inconsistently. Sometimes he applied it to King Harsha's exploits in northern India. He also applied it to the whole continent. Other Chinese travelers observed that India had five main divisions; north, east, west, central, and south. Apparently they followed the notion then prevalent in India.

28. Cunningham, 197, has confirmed Xuanzang's impression that the Sun Temple was not only widely known at the time but later it was called the Golden Temple by the Arabs.

29. B. Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1953), 61.

30. Fairley, 182.

31. D. Snellgrove, ed., *The Image of the Buddha* (London: Serendia, 1978), 86. "The greatest change in the history of Buddhist thought was occasioned by the general shift in Indian philosophical and cosmic theory, noticeable from about the beginning of the Christian era, perhaps about five hundred years after Sakyamuni's Final Nirvana. All Indian religious and philosophical schools were affected by it, and it could be argued that Buddhists initiated it. Its most famous representative is Nagarjuna, certainly an historical person who probably lived about the first century A.D. although the accounts of his life appear to be entirely legendary."

32. Beal, *Life*, 154.

33. Suzuki, 101.

34. Dan Lusthaus speculates that not only did Xuanzang have an unusual relationship with Jayasena, whom he calls Prasenajit, but that the hermit may have had a greater influence on Xuanzang than anyone else, including Silabhadra (*Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shi lun* [London: Routledge, Curzon Press, 2002], 408 ff.).

35. Smith, 183: "It is impossible to say exactly what happened in most of the provinces for a considerable time after his disappearance from the scene. . . . The partial unity of Indian history vanished with Harsha and is not restored in any considerable measure until the closing years of the twelfth century."

36. For a different interpretation from a specialist in Yogacara Buddhism, consult Dan Lusthaus, who believes that Waley creates a pseudo problem where there is none and that the *Heart Sutra* and Yogacara are compatible.

37. Li Yongshi, 161.

38. Li Yongshi, 163.

39. R. Murphy, *A History of Asia* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 77.

40. Li Yongshi, 163. Yin and Yang refer to the active masculine principle and the passive feminine principle in Chinese cosmology.

41. Beal, *Life*, 169.

CHAPTER NINE

1. Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952), 60. See also B. Rowland, *Evolution of the Buddha Image* (New York: Asia Society, 1976); 8. "The *Dharmakaya* is the Buddha logos, an invisible force permeating the universe as the spiritual essence of the ultimate and absolute Buddha; the *Sambhogakaya* or Body of Bliss is that transfigured Body of Splendor which the eternal Buddha reveals only to Bodhisattvas; and the *Nirmanakaya* is the noumenal earthly shape in which the cosmic Buddha reveals himself as an illusion for the benefit of mortals." See also Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (Oxford, 1951; reprint, New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 38: "Wherever the word Buddha is used in the Buddhist tradition, one has this three-fold aspect of the Buddha in view. To the Christian and agnostic historian, only

the human Buddha is real, and the spiritual and magical are nothing to him but fictions. The perspective of the believer is quite different. The Buddha-nature of the Buddha's 'glorious body' stands out most clearly, and the Buddha's human body and historical experience appear like a few rags thrown over this spiritual glory."

2. D. Devahuti, *Harsha: A Political Study* (1970; reprint, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 180: "King Harsha was always bestowing gifts on the pious and the learned. The 'Life' records an offer by him of the revenue of eighty large towns to a versatile scholar named Jayasena and to Xuanzang a present of 10,000 gold pieces, three times as much silver and other things."

3. Li Yongshi, trans., *The Life of Hsuan-tsang*, by Hui-li (Peking: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959), 170.

4. Li Yongshi, 170. See Devahuti, *Harsha*, 248-251, for a discussion of the likelihood of King Harsha initiating diplomatic relations with China. See also Tansen Sen, "In Search of Longevity and Good Karma: Chinese Diplomatic Missions to India in the Seventh Century," *Journal of World History* 12, no. 1 (spring 2002): 2 ff.

5. Dr. Sen points out that "there is great confusion about the sequence of events. A few scholars such as Devahuti believe that King Harsha sent the embassy to China before he met Xuanzang. Others, in contrast, put the date of their meeting before Harsha dispatched his envoys. This confusion has arisen primarily from the difficulty of dating not only the meeting between Harsha and Xuanzang, but also the time of the Chinese monk's departure from China. . . . An earlier date of departure would place the meeting between Harsha and Xuanzang in 640, a year before the Indian embassy reached China" (236).

6. Beal, trans., *The Life of Hieun Tsiang*, trans. from the Chinese of Shaman Hwui Li (1911; 2nd ed., Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1973), 175. For a more complete discussion see his *Buddhist Diplomacy and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations: 600-1400* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003).

7. Nancy Elizabeth Boulton, *Early Chinese Buddhist Travel Records as a Literary Genre* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), 97: "He had a fine and sonorous voice and always spoke distinctly and elegantly so that his listeners never felt tired in his presence." See also Beal, *Life*, 177, and Li Yongshi, 172.

8. D. T. Suzuki, *On Indian Mahayana Buddhism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 101.

9. Devahuti, *Harsha*, 282. Letter of Xuanzang to Prajnandeva, dated second month 654 C.E. The staging of public debates on Buddhist doctrine and philosophy is still practiced by Buddhist monks in Tibet: The participants lunge forward, clap their hands loudly, and are very aggressive as they try to break down the weakness of their opponents. (This was corroborated by Robert Thurman in a lecture in the Religion Department, Columbia University, March 1989.)

10. Beal, *Life*, 188.

11. J. Mirsky, *The Great Chinese Travelers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 105.

12. This well-known happening, which filled him with such anguish, is echoed in the Ming novel *Journey to the West* and is part of temple lore even now in China. In Kunming there are fish drums in a Buddhist temple, so called because one may fill their mouths with paper money "to pay for new scriptures to replace those lost by the Buddhist pilgrim in the river." See also Waley, 71. "Rare treasures and Buddha relics, we are told have the same effect. A similar disaster befell Sir George Scott Robertson, some 200 miles higher up on the Indus in 1890. Owing to the swamping of a boat, he lost 'all my toys and books, journals and diaries for three years besides a quantity of small valuables.'" See also Beal, *Life*, 191, and Li Yongshi, 187.

13. S. Beal, trans., *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, by Hwuen Tsiang [Xuanzang] (1884; reprint, Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1969), 2:286.

14. Sir Henry Yule, "Essay on the Geography of the Valley of the Oxus," in *Journey to the Source of the Oxus*, by J. Wood (1872; reprint, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1976), xxvii. "When the Chinese pilgrim, Hwen Thsang, passed through the Oxus valley on his way to India in 630, and on his return in 644, he found the former empire of the Haiathalah [White Huns] broken into a great number of small states, of which he enumerates 27, all acknowledging the supremacy of the Turkish Khakan [Khan]. . . . In studying the brief but tolerably precise notes of Hwen Thsang it is not a little remarkable how many of the political divisions, and even of the names are substantially identical with those which still exist. In fact this is the case with so large a proportion of these states, that we feel, in reading this part of Hwen Thsang's memoirs, that we have already opened the chapter of modern geography."

15. Waley, 73. He describes a spectacular headdress worn by the women, a wooden horn with two branches in front, one above the other; the upper branch represented the woman's father-in-law and the lower her mother-in-law. When both of the parents were dead, the horn headdress could be laid aside, when either in-law died, they removed a branch.

16. G. E. Wheeler, preface to Wood, xii: "When proceeding along these a foot-passenger, in the words of a Russian writer, feels himself as precariously poised as a tear on an eyelash."

17. A. Stein, *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 268. Stein, whose heroes were the Chinese pilgrim and the Venetian explorer, also visited Lake Victoria in 1913. He found the qualities of the lake to be just as Xuanzang had described them. What the Khirghiz told him about the shore swarming with aquatic birds in spring and autumn proved to be true and agreed with Xuanzang's account.

18. Waley, 74.

19. A. Stein, *Ancient Khotan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 1:31.
20. T. Watters, trans., *On Yuan Chwang's [Xuanzang's] Travels in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1961), 2:286.
21. A. Stein, *Ruins of Desert Cathay* (London, 1912; reprint, New York: Dover, 1987), 1:93: "[I] felt not a little pleased to think that here, at the very first point where I had touched his Central-Asian route, archeological evidence on the spot confirmed afresh the often-proved trustworthiness of my Chinese Patron Saint."
22. H. W. Tilman, *The Seven Mountain Travel Book* (London, Seattle: Diadem Books, 1983), 620, quotes Xuanzang's description of the Chickiklik plateau at some length.
23. Watters, 2:289.
24. René Grousset, *In the Footsteps of the Buddha*, trans. Mariette Leon (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 23.
25. Watters, 2:293.
26. Watters, 2:295.
27. Watters, 2:29; and *Encyclopedia Britannica* 2002 ed., s.v. "silk." The essentials of silk making were taken from Khotan to Byzantium secretly.
28. D. Klimburg-Salter, *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes* (Los Angeles: UCLA Art Council, 1982), 89. See also Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, 1:154, which has an extensive discussion of the Indian element in Khotan.
29. D. Snellgrove, ed., *The Image of the Buddha* (London: Serendia, 1978), 204. Snellgrove repeats the story of the Buddha flying to Pima as illustrating the importance of reproductions of the so-called Famous Images: three hundred *li* east of Khotan is a figure of the Buddha in a standing position, made of sandalwood. The figure is about 20 feet high. It works many miracles and reflects constantly a bright light. Those who have any disease, according to the part affected, cover the corresponding place on the statue with gold-leaf, and forthwith they are healed. People who address prayers to it with a sincere heart mostly obtain their wishes. This is what the natives say: This image in old days when the Buddha was alive, was made by Udayana, king of Kausambi. When Buddha left the world it mounted of its own accord into the air and came to the north of this kingdom.
30. B. Rowland, *The Art of Central Asia* (New York: Crown, 1974), 127. See also J. Williams, "Iconography of Khotanese Painting," *East and West* 23 (1973): 109-64.
31. Stein, *On Central Asian Tracks*, 56.
32. Waley, 76. Waley explains that the *Abhidharma*, the one with the unmanageably long name, *Mahayana-abhidharmasamucaya-vyakha*, the Chinese abbreviate to two syllables, *Tui-fa* (i.e. *Abhidharma*) (70).
33. Beal, *Records*, 2:325.
34. A. C. Moule and Paul Pelliot, eds., *Marco Polo: The Description of the World* (London: Routledge, 1938), 150.

35. J. Bonavia, *Illustrated Guide to the Silk Route* (London: Collins, 1988), 92.

36. Stein, *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, 517. At Miran, Stein unearthed a Buddhist stupa with frescoes of youthful angels and a frieze telling the familiar story of King Visvantara, the Indian king who gave away all his possessions. Xuanzang had first encountered this story fourteen years earlier on his outward journey.

37. Watters, 2:305.

CHAPTER TEN

1. S. Beal, trans., *The Life of Hieun Tsiang*, trans. from the Chinese of Shaman Hwui Li (1911; 2nd ed., Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1973), 209.

2. Tansen Sen, "In Search of Longevity and Good Karma: Chinese Diplomatic Missions to India in the Seventh Century," *Journal of World History* 12, no. 1 (spring 2002): 11.

3. Li Yongshi, trans., *The Life of Hsuan-tsang*, by Hui-li (Peking: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959), 204.

4. A. DeSilva, *The Art of Chinese Landscape Painting in the Caves of Tun-huang* (New York: Crown, 1964), 136. Some art historians think this represents an illustration to the parable of the Conjured-up City from the *Lotus Sutra*. See T. Akiyama and S. Matsubara, *Arts of China: Buddhist Cave Temples, New Researches*, trans. A. Soper (1969; reprint, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1972), 72.

5. See V. Mair and J. P. Mallory, *The Tarim Mummies* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 83. "The popular depiction of Xuanzang with a portable library on his back, is actually modeled on portraits of Caucasoid monks of East Central Asia." See also Dorothy Wong, "The Making of a Saint: Images of Xuanzang in East Asia," *Early Medieval China* 8 (spring 2002): 1-39.

6. Yasushi Inoue (1907-1991) was intrigued by the fact that the priceless documents and paintings of Cave #17 at Dunhuang had been sealed up for nine centuries until their discovery by Aurel Stein. He spun a wonderful story about how this had happened. See *Tun-huang*, trans. Jean Oda May (New York: Kodansha International, 1978).

7. See R. Whitfield and A. Farrar, *Caves of the Thousand Buddhas: Chinese Art from the Silk Route* (New York: Braziller, 1990). See also *Newsletter of the International Dunhuang Project*, which was established in 1994 for research activities and international conferences. This organization has compiled a database of scholars working on any aspect of Dunhuang or other Silk Road manuscripts and artifacts.

8. Li Yongshi, 207 ff.

9. Nancy Elizabeth Boulton, *Early Chinese Buddhist Travel Records as a Literary Genre* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), 202. I have followed Boulton and Li Yongshi more closely than Beal.

10. Pratapaditya Pal, *The Ideal Image: The Gupta Sculptural Tradition and Its Influence* (New York: Asia Society, in association with Weatherhill, 1978), 49. See also his *Light of Asia*, 171.

11. "They also received the scriptures which the Master had obtained in the western countries, namely 224 books of Mahayana sutras; 192 books of Mahayana sastra; 15 books of the *Tripitaka* of the Sammatiya School; 22 books of the *Tripitaka* of the Mahisasaka School; 17 books of the *Tripitaka* of the Kasyapiya School; 42 books of the *Tripitaka* of the Dharmagupta School; 67 books of the *Tripitaka* of the Sarvastivadin School; 36 books concerning the *Hetuvaidya Sastra* and 13 books concerning the *Sabdavidya Sastra*; making a total number of 657 books, bound in 520 cases and loaded on 20 horses" (Li Yongshi, 208).

12. Li Yongshi, 210.

13. Li Yongshi, 211.

14. Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952), 83. See also Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism Under the T'ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 24 ff.

15. Li Yongshi, 213.

16. Li Yongshi, 214.

17. T. Watters, trans., *On Yuan Chwang's [Xuanzang's] Travels in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1961), 1:154.

18. J. Barthélemy-Saint-Hilaire, *Hiouen Thsang in India*, trans. Laura Ensor (Calcutta: Susil Gupta, 1952), 52: "We must therefore conclude that in the seventh century after Christ, at the time when the Chinese pilgrim traveled over India, there were to be found in Sanskrit literature works which described more or less faithfully the history, statistics and geography of the country; none of them have come down to us. . . . Sometimes he calls them *Ancient Descriptions*, sometimes *Historical Memoirs*, sometimes *Collection of Annals and Royal Edicts*; at other times, *Secular Histories*, or simply *Indian Books* on such and such a country, or *Memoirs of India*." See Li Rongxi, *Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996). In this new translation the phrase "In the National Record" is often used, but it is not quite clear what this refers to exactly.

19. R. Murphy, *A History of Asia* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 64. "Han writers set a high standard for historical scholarship that many Western scholars feel was not equaled elsewhere until the eighteenth century in the West." See also F. W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (New York: Knopf, 1971), 50 ff.

20. Joseph Needham, "Time and Knowledge in China and the West," in *The Grand Titration: Science and Society in East and West* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1969), 218-298.

21. Devahuti, who has written a political biography of King Harsha, notes that "it was natural for the Chinese pilgrim to try to establish the importance

of 'filial piety' in Indian society because it was one of the highest virtues according to the Chinese way of life" (D. Devahuti, *Harsha: A Political Study* [1970; reprint, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983], 5).

22. Devahuti, 8: "The criticism often leveled against Xuanzang [Hsuan-tsang] that he gives a biased picture of his Indian patron—not only because of the latter's munificence towards him, but also because of Harsha's marked inclination towards Buddhism—rests rather on presumption than on positive evidence. Although Xuanzang is enthusiastic when writing about his co-religionists and lacks zeal when describing Hindu or Hinayana kings, he repeatedly gives evidence of his sense of balance." She cites his treatment of Pulakesin II, King Harsha's great rival.

23. Modern historian Ainslee Embree wonders if Xuanzang found India so pleasant because it was a Buddhist country and he was trying to convince both himself and the people of China how advantageous it would be if they too were Buddhists. What aroused Embree's suspicion about his reliability was that when Xuanzang was traveling around northeast India, he said he found the climate so warm and agreeable. See A. Embree, *Imagining India: Essays on Indian History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 49.

Other historians, such as Percival Spear and Vincent Smith, were grateful for the vivid records of the pious Faxian and Xuanzang. Spear expresses his gratitude that they put "flesh and blood" on the bare bones of dates, dynastic names, and official inscriptions which are the historian's stock in trade for this early period. See P. Spear, *India* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 80. See also Vincent Smith, the scholar who traced Xuanzang's journey to and from China in great detail, research that caused him to write in the *Oxford History of India*, "The memory of the Master of the Law is still as fresh in Buddhist lands as it was 1200 years ago." He also remarked that "it is impossible to overestimate the debt which the history of India owes to Hieun Tsang" (182). In the same work, Smith cites Xuanzang as a source in such varied instances as the organization of the Indian army in general, and King Harsha's army in particular; the existence of Brahmin rajas; conditions in Assam; and kingdoms in the Deccan and in the south.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. See Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shi lun* (London: Routledge, Curzon Press, 2002), for an annotated list of Xuanzang's translations and the date and place in which he made them. Lusthaus also provides English titles and explanations; see his Appendix Four.

2. "Chinese is uninflected, logographic, and (in its written form) largely monosyllabic. Indian languages are highly inflected, alphabetical, polysyllabic. Chinese has no systematized grammar; Indian languages, particularly Sanskrit,

have a formal and highly systematized grammatical system.” Arthur Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (1959; reprint, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 33.

3. Kogen Mizuno, *Buddhist Sutras: Origin, Development and Transmission*, multiple trans. (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing, 1982), 100.

4. See Ch'en Mei-Chin, *The Eminent Chinese Monk Hsuan-Tsang: His Contribution to Buddhist Scripture Translation and to the Propagation of Buddhism in China* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 2002), for a good description of these stages of development. See also Richard C. Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 54. Also see Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (1959; reprint, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 77.

5. Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952), 93.

6. Li Rongxi, *A Biography of the Tripitaka Master of the Great Ci'en Monastery of the Great Tang Dynasty* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1995), 214.

7. Li Rongxi, *Biography*, 214.

8. Tansen Sen indicates that bringing a longevity doctor was one of the tasks of the Third Tang Mission to Middle India. See *Buddhist Diplomacy and Trade: Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations 600-1400* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 33.

9. Li Yongshi, trans., *The Life of Hsuan-tsang*, by Hui-li (Peking: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959), 231.

10. Ainslee T. Embree, ed., *Encyclopedia of Asian History* (New York: C. Scribner and Sons, 1988), 4:65.

11. Li Rongxi, *Biography*, 222.

12. D. Twitchett and J. Fairbank, *Sui and T'ang China, 589-906* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 3: pt. 1, 264: “[Gaozong] did real and lasting damage to Buddhism in 664 (after the death of Xuanzang) when he discontinued the vast translation project, which was far from complete. Kao-tsung [Gaozong] gradually turned his attention away from Buddhism and began to show a growing devotion to Taoism, which seems to have dated from about 660.”

13. Waley, 122.

14. Dorothy Wong indicates that the emperor's prefaces were often engraved on stele. This public recognition was an important part of Xuanzang's legacy for they ensured that the Chinese elite would esteem him as well as a kind of sage or Chinese patriarch. This role was in sharp contrast to his role as a folk hero admired by the lower classes (see Afterword: “Literary Heritage”). Honoring Xuanzang in this way was to equate his accomplishments with those of a Chinese sage even though his achievements were Buddhist, not Confucian. See Dorothy Wong, “The Making of a Saint: Images of Xuanzang in East Asia,” *Early Medieval China* 8 (spring 2002): 6.

15. Kahar Barat, ed. and trans., *The Uyghur-Turkic Biography of the Seventh-Century Chinese Pilgrim Xuanzang* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indian Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 2000), 30. The text has a synoptic format in which each page is divided into four columns; the first and third columns provide the line-by-line translation and transcription of the Uyghur text, the second column provides the Chinese text with an English translation of the Uyghur text, while the fourth column presents the reader with a facsimile of the Uyghur original. This format means that the English translation is not always smooth, but it does give a certain freshness which seems valuable to me. The Old Uyghur (Old Turkic) translation of Xuanzang's biography antedates the earliest Chinese manuscript by about a century.

16. Li Rongxi, *Biography*, 182.

17. Michael Ondaatje, *Anil's Ghost* (New York: Knopf, 2000), 305 ff.

18. Xuanzang translated the *Easy Essay on Logic* (*Nyamukkhaya*) in 647 and in 649, *The Difficult Treatise* (*Nyayaprasava*), and his disciples wrote a commentary on it. In 655 a layman named Lu Ts'ai wrote a sharply worded critique. In the end, this controversy pointed up the question of whether laymen have the right to expound on Buddhist texts. See Waley, 107 ff.

19. Li Rongxi, *Biography*, 291.

20. K. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 216; and Arthur F. Wright and D. Twitchett, *Perspectives on the T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 251.

21. Nancy Elizabeth Boulton, *Early Chinese Buddhist Travel Records as a Literary Genre* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), 277.

22. Li Rongxi, *Biography*, 296 ff.

23. See Waley, 118, in which he calls this part of his story "Tripitaka converts a bird."

24. Barat, 112.

25. Barat, 148.

26. Waley, 122.

27. D. Devahuti, *The Unknown Hsuan-Tsang* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 107.

28. Barat, 194.

29. Barat, 204. This quotation is rather rough, but it is the only account by Xuanzang that mentions his western journey, his translation activities, and his good works.

30. Boulton, 125.

31. Li Yongshi, 268.

32. Waley, 129.

33. Li Yongshi, 267.

34. Boulton, 125.

On his death Xuanzang did not expect that he would enter nirvana and become a Buddha himself. Only in the first centuries after the death of

Sakyamuni Buddha did monks aspire directly to attain nirvana. Buddhists believe that their religion is impermanent, like all things and destined to decline and disappear from the world. Monks living a thousand years after the Buddha accepted that they were in the age of decline and therefore felt they could not hope to become a Buddha in one lifetime. Hsuan-tsang believed that he would be reborn in the Tushita Heaven of the Future Maitreya. Boulton speculates that, after spending an untold age in Tushita Heaven, Hsuan-tsang then expected to be reborn on earth one more time before his final enlightenment. Maitreya's followers say that in the time of the Future Buddha the earth will be a fruitful paradise; men who, owing to their good karma, are born during this time will obtain nirvana through the influence of Maitreya's teaching.

35. Devahuti, *Unknown Hsuan-Tsang*, 114.

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. Alexander Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India* (1871; reprint, Delhi: Varnasi, Indological Book House, 1979), viii.

2. See A. Foucher, *The Life of the Buddha According to Ancient Texts and Monuments of India*, trans. S. Boas (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1963), 216.

3. Jeannette Mirsky, *Sir Aurel Stein* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 16.

4. Mirsky, *Sir Aurel Stein*, 94.

5. Dietrich Seckel, *The Art of Buddhism*, trans. Anne E. Keep (New York: Crown, 1964), 63.

6. B. Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1953), 99.

7. D. Snellgrove, ed., *The Image of the Buddha* (London: Serendia, 1978), 105. "The testimony of Hsuan-tsang is important, for not only does he confute the easy way in which Buddhist art is often labeled Hinayanist when it appears relatively simple and Mahayanist when the decoration and symbolism appear more complex, usually with complete disregard of what may be known of the Buddhism of the area from other sources, it also confirms the flourishing state, at least in some districts, of the Gandharan style, even after the Hun invasions."

8. Arcangela Santoro, "A Note on the Problem of Relationships Between Literary Narrative, Visual Narrative and Oral Narrative in Gandharan art," in *Papers in Honour of Francine Tissot*, ed. Elizabeth Errington and Osmund Boppearachchi, vol. 6 of *Silk Road Art and Archeology* (Kamakura, Japan: Journal of the Institute of Silk Road Studies, 1999/2000), 61-75.

9. H. Bechert and R. Gombrich, *The World of Buddhism* (New York: Facts on File, 1984), 84: "The nearest thing we have to a census of monks and mon-

asteries in ancient India is the record compiled by Xuanzang between 630 and 644 C.E. He listed them by area. India for him included Sri Lanka, what is now Bangladesh, much of what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan, and a bit of modern Nepal. If we exclude Sri Lanka (with 20,000 monks) his totals come to about 115,000 Hinayana and 120,000 Mahayana monks, however about half of the latter also studying Hinayana. The Hinayana had about 22,000 monasteries and the Mahayana about 2,500." See also E. Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism* (Louvain-La-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste de Université Catholique, 1988), 539-545, for a detailed and informative discussion of sects.

10. An additional study has been made by S. Sinberg, "Introduction to the Data Base on Yuan Chwang's Travels in India: Its Material Culture/Religious Affiliations" (New York, 1984). In a preliminary paper she gave the total number of monasteries listed by Xuanzang in her statistical study as 6,150, which were divided into four categories: 480 Hinayana institutions; 1,820 monasteries; 850 structures ascribed to both "Vehicles"; and over 3,000 edifices simply termed "Buddhist." Outside India, along the northern route from China to India, Xuanzang designated 260 monasteries as Hinayana and approximately 100 as Mahayana, and 50 were non-designated. On his journey back to China along the southern route, the opposite situation occurred. Mahayana institutions numbered over 300, Hinayana about 220, and approximately 25 were non-designated.

11. Seckel, 157. In another version the Udayana image was brought to Kucha in Central Asia, and it was taken from there to China. See Pratapaditya Pal, *The Light of Asia: Buddha Sakyamuni in Asian Art* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, 1984), 171.

12. P. Swann, *Chinese Monumental Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1963), 109. The historian René Grousset also saw a new plasticity in Tang art, especially in the grottos of T'ien-lung-shan (Tianlongshan) in Shansi (Shanxi) province; he attributed these changes to the example of the Indian Gupta models brought back by pilgrims such as Xuanzang. See Grousset, *The Rise and Splendour of the Chinese Empire*, trans. A. Watson-Gandy and T. Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), 142; and Pratapaditya Pal, *The Ideal Image: The Gupta Sculptural Tradition and Its Influence* (New York: Asia Society/John Weatherhill, 1978), 49 ff. Pal was content to say, "One would imagine that such images brought back by so eminent a teacher would have exerted considerable artistic influence." See also B. Rowland, *The Evolution of the Buddha Image* (New York: Asia Society, 1976), 24: "Of great import to the transmission of Indian types to China are the itemized lists of actual replicas of famous Indian statues collected by those visitors to the Western Countries; for example, Hsuan-tsang had copied the famous sandalwood image of King Udayana and other famous icons."

13. Anthony C. Yu, trans., *Journey to the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 1:111; also Glen Dudbridge, *The Hsi-yu-Chi; A Study of the Antecedents of the Sixteenth Century Chinese Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1970), 164 ff, and V. Mair, "Suen Wukung = Hanuman? The Progress of a Scholarly Debate," Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Sinology (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1989), 659-752.

14. *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been compared to the typical hero's journey by Esther Harding in her *Journey into Self*. The pilgrim's journey has been interpreted in terms of the Jungian concepts of growth and integration of the psyche. Similarly *Journey to the West* has been thought of as a manual of Buddhist, Daoist, or Confucian self-cultivation. See A. Plaks, *Four Masterpieces of the Ming Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), for a sophisticated analysis of its themes.

15. See Mark Saltzman, *The Laughing Sutra* (New York: Random House, 1991) and Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Tripmaster Monkey* (New York: Knopf, 1989).

16. The question of an authentic portrait of Xuanzang is complicated. Until the discovery of this representation in 1990 in Yulin, various portraits had been thought to be the Chinese pilgrim or the prototype of a Chinese pilgrim. See Victor Mair, "The Origins of an Iconographical Form of the Pilgrim Hsuan-tsang," *Tang Studies* 4 (1986): 29-41, which shows that the pilgrim sometimes thought to be Xuanzang may be an itinerant monk or a "transformation performer" (a traveling storyteller specializing in "transformation texts").

17. See Dorothy Wong, "The Making of a Saint: Images of Xuanzang in East Asia," *Early Medieval China* 8 (spring 2002): 1-39. This splendid article is the result of wide-ranging research. It covers material on Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan, and even Mongolian literary and artistic images of Xuanzang. She identifies four separate traditions in which he was regarded as a saint: (1) orthodox literary tradition; (2) founder worship tradition in Japan; (3) religious icon tradition in China, Japan, and Tibet; and (4) folkloric tradition of China. Each honored him in a different role. These were, respectively, as a great religious teacher and translator; as the founder of a Buddhist cult; as a pious pilgrim and transmitter of the faith; and as a witness to and recipient of spiritual help. See 4 ff.

18. Kogen Mizuno, *Buddhist Sutras: Origin, Development, Transmission*, multiple translators (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing, 1982), 77, and Daisaku Ikeda, *The Flower of Chinese Buddhism*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Weatherhill, 1986), 17, list Pu'kung rather than Amoghavajra.

19. See Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shi lun* (London: Routledge, Curzon Press, 2002), 554. "A survey of Hsuan-tsang's prolific translations demonstrates that he was anything but a narrow sectarian. His translations run the gamut of Buddhist literature: sutras and sastras of interest to Yogacara; Madhamaka texts; Pure Land texts; Sarvastivadin Abhidharma works; Tantric texts; a Hindu Vaiseka text; works on logic and epistemology; Abhidharma texts; Dharani texts; Avadana texts; Mahayana sutras," etc. ". . . His works are spread through the *Taisho* edition of the Chinese Buddhist Canon, which is

organized according to literary or sectarian type, demonstrating that he contributed to every genre. Some of his translations, such as the *Heart Sutra* and the *Diamond Sutra*, have remained at the center of East Asian Buddhist study and devotion.”

20. S. Wriggins, “Ikuo Hirayama: Artist and Advocate,” *Orientalism* 32, no. 8 (October, 2001): 88.

21. Arthur F. Wright and D. Twitchett, *Perspectives on the T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 296, where Stanley Weinstein considers some of the limitations of this school.

22. Pal, *Light of Asia*, 256. See also R. Birnbaum, *The Healing Buddha* (Boulder: Shambala, 1979), 59. “Though popular before the seventh century it was by virtue of Hsuan-tsang’s excellent translation that the sutra was truly disseminated through East Asia.”

23. Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952), 31. See also John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 124.

24. Charles Wright, “Body and Soul” (excerpt), *The New Yorker*, 8 April 2002, 70. The poem is inscribed, “For Coleman Hawkins.”

25. *Beyond the Himalayas* was a major co-production between Global Arts Productions, the Youth Exploring Society of India, and Doordarshan, India’s national TV network. The two camera film crews were attached to the 1994 Central Asia Cultural Expedition organized by Major H. P. S. Aluwalia with the help of Academia Sinica and Mr. Deng Pufeng, president of the Disabled Federation of China and son of Deng Xiaoping, the former CCP Chairman. The expedition sought to revive contact and initiate academic exchanges between India, China, and the new Islamic republics of Central Asia.

26. JWM productions produced *The Treasure Seekers* for National Geographic. This was a thirteen-part series, one of which, “China’s Frozen Desert,” featured Aurel Stein and Xuanzang. It came out just as National Geographic was launching its new channel in February 2001.

27. Rajeshwari Ghose, ed., *In the Footsteps of the Buddha: An Iconic Journey from China to India* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1998); Annette Juliano and Judith A. Lerner, ed., *Monks and Merchants: Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. in association with the Asia Society, 2001); Elizabeth Ten Grotenhuis, *Along the Silk Road* (Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2002). In Japan there has been great interest in the Silk Road as evidenced by a Silk Road Exposition in Nara: *The Grand Exhibition of Silk Road Civilizations. The Route of Buddhist Art, The Oasis and Steppe Routes, The Sea Route* (3 vols.) (Nara, Japan: National Museum, 1988); *The Grand Exhibition of Silkroad Buddhist Art* (Tokyo: Yomuimuri sha), which was also shown in Paris under the title “Serende Terre de Bouddha: Dix siècles d’art sur la Route de la Soie” in 1996; and finally, *The Silk Road and the World of Xuanzang* (Osaka: Asahi Shimbun, 1999) which was shown in three museums in Japan.

28. J. Otto Siebold, cartoon, *The New Yorker*, 15 July 2002, 63. In the same issue Calvin Tomkins comments that “J. Otto Seibold came up with an interesting concept that links the ancient culture of Afghanistan with the vertical geometry of New York” (“After the Towers: Nine Artists Imagine a Memorial,” 62).

29. Tansen Sen’s new book on Chinese-Indian relations (*Buddhist Diplomacy and Trade: Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations 600–1400* [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003]) has some useful insights on Xuanzang and King Harsha. Malcolm David Eckel gives a fresh understanding of what it meant to be a Buddhist in actual practice and provides new insights into trying to reconstruct the Buddhist experience, as opposed to Buddhism in theory or its doctrines. In his *To See the Buddha: A Philosopher’s Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), he focuses on Xuanzang’s experience, especially in chapters three and seven. Daniel Lusthaus is an authority on Yogacara Buddhism and has written extensively about it.

30. Numata is a Japanese research and development center producing the complete English translation of the *Taisho* edition of the Buddhist canon. That edition contains most of the key Chinese and Japanese works, Sutras, Treatises, Commentaries, Catalogues, etc., literally thousands of texts, some of them short, some extraordinarily long such as Xuanzang’s *Prabnaparamita Sutra*. They have also translated Xuanzang’s biography and his *Record of the Western Regions*.

31. Marianna McJimsey, “Opening a Window,” a talk given at the ninth annual ASIANetwork Conference held in Cleveland, Ohio, April 20–22, 2000 (<http://asianetwork.org/exchange/2000winter-ane.html>, accessed 6/19/02). See also her article “The ASIANetwork: A Consortium of Liberal Arts Colleges to promote Asian Studies,” *Education About Asia* 1, no. 1 (February 1996): 48–51.

32. Only Ibn Battuta traveled more widely than Xuanzang. See Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325–1354*, ed. and trans. H. A. R. Gibb (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1929).

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THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT, CENTRAL ASIA, CHINA, AND ASIA

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Index

- Abhidharma*, 130, 179
Adzhina-tepe monastery, 40
Afghanistan, 25, 34, 40, 42, 49–50,
81, 89, 170, 215, 225
Aidinkol Lake, 23(fig.)
Ajanta, 143, 147(fig.), 147–148,
148(map), 149
Aksu oasis, 30
Alexander the Great, 42, 49, 56, 71,
212
Almsgiving, 164
Amaravati, stupa at, 144
Amoghavajra, 219
Ananda, 104, 130
Ancient Geography of India
(Cunningham), 212
Andarab, 167–168
Andhra, 144
Angkor Wat, 186
Angulimala stupa, 100
Anil's Ghost (Ondaatje), 202
Animals, 63, 89. *See also* Camels;
Horses; Monkey
Archaeological sites, 23(fig.), 33, 38,
49, 59, 80, 83, 103, 108(fig.),
141
archaeological legacy, 212–214
Art(s), 9, 43, 50–51, 59(fig.), 88, 94,
100, 142, 183, 186, 224
art historians, 82, 214–217
Gandharan art, 65, 69–70,
70(fig.), 82, 115, 213
See also Paintings; Statues
Asanga, 10, 76, 90, 91, 131, 139,
154
Ascetics, 53, 106, 111, 115, 154
Ascharya Monastery, 28–29
ASIANetwork, 226
Asoka (King), 38, 43–44, 57, 65, 71,
72–73, 89, 103, 105, 108, 116,
145
Assam, 140. *See also* Kumara (King
of Assam)
Assassinations, 4, 5, 164
Avalokiteshvara, 116, 138
“Awakening of Faith in the
Mahayana,” 133–134
Ayodhya, 90, 131
Badakhshan, 169, 215
Baedeker of South Asia, 72
Balkh, 41–45
Bamboo Grove, 130
Bamiyan, 42, 165. *See also under*
Statues
Bana, 161
Bandha, 12–13
Bangladesh, 140
Barula Gorge, 73
Begram treasure, 49, 50, 51
Bengal, 140
Berkeley (Bishop), 10
Bernstein, Richard, 223
Beyond the Himalayas, 224
Bezeklik Monastery and caves, 24,
24(fig.)

- Bhaja, 148(map), 149, 149(fig.)
 Bhallar stupa, 72
 Bihar, 112, 123(fig.)
 Bimbisara (King), 126, 128–129, 130
 Black Mountains, 48
 Blind people, 73
 Bloor, Robert, 224
 BODDO coin, 62, 63(fig.)
 Bodh Gaya, 85, 98, 112, 113–118, 124
 Bodhisattva of the Blue Lotus (painting), 150, 150(fig.)
 Bodhisattvas, 7, 8(fig.), 15, 18, 68, 69, 104, 112, 121, 122, 134, 138, 144, 147, 153
 Bo tree, 98, 113–118, 204
 Brahma, 85, 87, 111, 163
 Brahmins, 57, 140, 154, 155, 164, 165
 Buddhism, 2, 9, 10, 33, 40, 57, 65, 81, 160
 Buddha (historical), 40(fig.), 42, 44, 52, 57–58, 61, 63, 69–70, 94, 103, 118, 128, 130, 151, 189(fig.), 196, 214, 215, 223. *See also* Statues
 Buddha's shadow. *See* Shadow Cave
 Buddhist Canon, 76, 130, 133, 206(fig.), 226
 Buddhist Councils, 75, 112, 113, 130
 Cult of the Healing Buddha, 222
 death of Buddha, 104–106
 Dipankara Buddha, 38, 51–52, 52(fig.), 57
 early images of Buddha, 69–70, 70(fig.), 82–83
 Five Commandments and Ten Virtues, 42
 Hinayana, 26, 30, 41, 45, 46, 80, 83, 89–90, 113, 133, 134, 139, 140, 142, 144, 150, 154, 162, 173, 178, 190, 214, 215
 Madhyamika school, 141–142
 Mahayana, 7, 30, 46, 49, 52, 72, 74, 79, 85, 90, 113, 133, 134, 139, 141, 144, 161, 162, 163, 171, 174, 176, 178, 190, 206, 214, 215
 parents of Buddha, 101, 102
 Prajna school, 154
 Realist school, 75, 89, 173
 Tantric, 125, 176
 in United States, 225
 Yogacara school, 10–11, 79, 90–91, 92, 122, 131, 144, 219
 Bukhara, 42
 Calukya dynasty, 146
 Caravans, 38, 42, 183
 Carpets, 34, 173
 Caste, 53, 57
 Cave of a Thousand Buddhas, 183
 Cave of Three Immortals, 173
 Central Asia, 4, 27, 34, 40, 161
 Chandragupta, 83
 Chang'an, 2, 7, 8–9, 30, 38, 88, 186, 198, 200, 201, 206
 Chanting, 126
 Chao-hu-li monasteries, 28–29
 Chengdu, 7
 Cherchen, 179, 183
 Che-shih, 34
 China, 142, 143, 145, 155–156, 165, 180, 193, 222
 growth of Buddhism in, 196
 Chinabhukti, 79
 Chonen, 216
 Christianity, 9, 20, 65, 69, 87
 Civil wars, 7, 145
 Clothing, 25, 32, 42, 45, 53, 56–57, 115, 163, 165, 197–198
 Commercialism, 59
 Confucianism, 5, 6, 154, 156, 191, 196, 197, 218
 Constantine (Emperor), 43

- Criminals, 100
 Cunningham, Sir Alexander,
 212–213
- Daoism, 184, 196, 197, 203, 218
 Dark night of the soul, 18
 Deaths, 31, 106, 111, 146, 203. *See*
also Murders
- Debates, 30, 52–53, 76, 88, 112,
 126, 132, 134, 154, 160, 1
 163–165, 226
- Deer Park Monastery, 106–111
Description of Greece (Pausanias),
 213
- Desert of Red Sands, 34, 53
 Deserts, 34, 53. *See also* Taklamakan
 Desert
- Destruction of Heresy, The*
 (Xuanzang), 154, 162
- Devadatta, 128
 Dhanakataka, 144
 Dharmapala, 131, 139, 144, 145
 Dharmarajika Stupa, 108
 Dharmasimha, 41
 Dialectics, 11
Diamond Sutra, 10, 186, 219
 Diamond Throne, 117–118
 Dignaga, 131, 139, 144, 147
 Dragons, 32, 58, 68, 71, 74, 104,
 106
- Dreams, 11, 16, 74, 90, 91, 102,
 121, 122, 153, 207, 208
- Dunhuang caves, 8(fig.), 14, 15(fig.),
 64(fig.), 64, 112, 169, 180,
 183–186, 184(fig.), 187(fig.),
 190, 190(fig.), 213–214, 216
 International Dunhuang Project,
 224
- Eckel, David, 82, 225
Education About Asia, 226
Electronic Bazaar from the Silk
Road to the eRoad, The
 (Bloor), 224
- Elephants, 57, 64, 74, 85, 88,
 93, 101, 102, 104,
 126–128, 129(fig.), 130,
 146, 163, 165, 171, 172(fig.),
 184(fig.)
- Emptiness, 7, 92, 142
 Enlightenment, 111, 209, 222. *See*
also Bo Tree
- Europe, 25, 53
- Faxian, 9, 68, 83, 101, 113, 129,
 140, 143, 145, 204, 214
- Flecker, James, 35
 Food, 33, 115, 124, 125, 179
 Fortune-tellers, 13, 155–156
 Foucher, Alfred, 67–68, 213
 Four Noble Truths, 111, 118
 Frazer, Sir James, 213
 Frescoes, 28, 29(fig.). *See also*
 Paintings
- Fuhrer, Alois, 103
- Gaia Monastery, 73
 Gandharan region, 34, 42, 60,
 68–69, 82, 221
- Ganges River, 80, 84–85, 87, 90, 91,
 92, 106, 139, 140, 160
- Gansu province, 12
 Gaochang, 22
 Gaozong (Emperor), 196, 200, 201,
 202, 203, 205
- Gashun Gobi (River of Sand),
 14–15
- Gauhati, 160
 Ghorband River valley, 48
 Glass vase, 49, 50(fig.)
Golden Journey to Samarkand, The
 (Flecker), 35
- Gopala, 58
 Great Dragon Lake, 169
 Great Khan of the Western Turks,
 3, 25, 31, 32–34, 38, 191
- Guachou, 12
 Guptas, 83, 94, 217

- Hackin, Joseph, 49
 Hadda, 42, 60
 Haggiag, Michael, 224
 Hami oasis, 14, 17, 20–21
 Han dynasty, 193
 Hanoi (near Kashgar), 173, 174(fig.)
 Harsha (King), 3, 5, 6, 48, 57, 76, 87,
 88–89, 124, 126, 146, 154,
 155, 160–163, 165, 182, 191
 death of, 153
*Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom
 Sutra*, 16(fig.)
Heart Sutra, 15, 134, 199, 209,
 219
 Heavenly Ladder, 85–87
 Herodotus, 178
 Hinduism, 42, 43, 49, 53, 76, 80, 83,
 106, 140, 146, 154, 160, 162,
 163, 165
 Hindu Kush range, 45, 53, 56, 167,
 170
 Hirayama, Ikuo, 220
 Hongfu Monastery, 198
 Horses, 12, 13, 16, 17, 25, 31, 45,
 182, 190
 Huili, 17, 18, 21–22, 38, 78, 107,
 126, 131–132, 148, 180, 192,
 195. *See also* Xuanzang,
 biographers of
 Hund, 167, 177
 Huns, 177. *See also* White Huns
 Hushkara Monastery, 74
 Ibn Battutah, 227
 Idealism (metaphysical), 10, 62, 75,
 79, 90–91, 133, 139, 140, 145,
 152, 154, 220, 222
 Illusion, 10
 India, 9, 38, 41, 48, 50, 53, 56, 76,
 83, 85, 99, 107, 129, 139–140,
 193, 203, 215, 217
 early entirely Indian
 representations of Buddha,
 82–83, 82(fig.)
 northern India, 78, 80, 87, 88, 93,
 151, 166, 176
 official state papers of, 192
 Tang embassies in, 162
 Indra, 85, 87, 105, 111, 115, 116,
 163
 Indus River, 68, 71
 scriptures lost in, 166–167, 177
 Internet, 223, 226
 Iran, 9, 25. *See also* Persia
 Islam, 9, 83, 160
 Issyk Kul Lake, 31, 32
 Jade Flower Palace, 206
 Jade Gate, 12, 13, 17–18
 Jains, 53, 76, 83, 155, 163, 165
 Jalalabad, 53, 57–59, 93
 Jalandhara, 79, 166
 Japan, 83, 142, 145, 216–217, 219
 Hosso sect in, 220
 Japan Broadcasting Company
 (NHK), 223–224
 Jataka tales, 63, 64(fig.), 64–65
 Jaulian Monastery, 71–72
 Jayasena, 152, 153
 Jesus Christ, 69, 103, 116
 Jetavana Monastery, 99–100
 Jhelum River, 73–74
 Jiaohe, 23
Journal of World History, 226
Journey to the West, 23, 153, 218,
 219, 227
 Kabul Museum, 49
 Kalidasa, 150
 Kancipuram, 144
 Kanishka (King), 38, 50, 51, 61,
 62(fig.), 75, 76, 80, 81–82,
 82(fig.), 213, 214
 Kanyakubja, 87–88, 89, 163
 Kapilavastu, 101, 103
 Kapisa, 48, 49–52, 60, 72
 king of, 49, 52, 166, 167
 Kapota Monastery, 138

- Karashahr, 26
 Kashgar, 169, 173
 Kashgaria, 9
 Kashmir, 60, 72, 73–76, 167
 Kasyapa, 105, 130
 Kathiawar Peninsula, 151
 Kausambi, 92–93, 216
 Kawak Pass, 167
 Khotan oasis, 169, 173–178, 182,
 183
 Khyber Pass, 60
 Kingston, Maxine Hong, 218
 Kizil caves, 28, 29(fig.), 30
 Koh-i-baba range, 45
 Koh-i-Pahlawan (Hill of Treasures),
 51
 Krishna (god), 83
 Kucha, 26–30
 king of, 26–27, 27(fig.)
 Kulu valley, 80
 Kumara (King of Assam), 155, 157,
 160, 163, 165, 196
 Kumarajiva, 30, 171, 196, 219
 Kunala, 72–73, 176
 Kunduz, 40–41, 168, 177
 Kunlun Mountains, 173
 Kushans, 50, 82, 83
 Kusinagara, 85, 98
 Kyrgyzstan, 25, 32

 Lake Victoria, 169
 Land of One Thousand Springs, The,
 34
 Langham, 56–57
 Languages, 9, 38, 56. *See also*
 Sanskrit
Lankavatara Sutra, 152
 Laotzu, 293
 Le Coq, Albert von, 24, 30
 Legends, 61, 64, 87, 91, 101,
 105–106, 112, 115, 128, 143,
 144, 145, 171, 176, 204, 215,
 216
 Buddha Legend, 99, 116
 Letters, 25, 33, 34, 40, 131, 135,
 164, 165, 182, 202–203, 204
 Liangzhou, 12
 Lion capital, 107, 109(fig.)
 Li Rongxi, 202, 226
 Little Forest Monastery, 205
 Li Yongshi, 211
Lotus of the True Law, The, 30
Lotus Sutra, 128, 130, 188
 Loulan, 180
 Lumbini, 85, 98, 99, 103
 Luoyang, 6–7, 9, 88, 190, 205
 Lusthaus, Dan, 132, 153, 219, 225
 Luther, Martin, 154

 McJimsey, Marianna, 226
 Madhyantika, 68
 Magadha, 112, 124, 126
 Magic, 15, 64, 67, 100, 133
 Mahabodhi temple, 114(fig.),
 115–116, 117(fig.), 117, 124
 Mahendra, 145
 Maiden's Castle, 171
 Maitreya Bodhisattva, 68, 91, 92,
 116, 138, 209–210
 Malva, 150
 Manichaeism, 9
 Manjusri, 112, 144, 153
 Mara, 14, 116–117
 Marco Polo, 169, 170, 179
 Marriages, 5, 144, 177
 Marshall, Sir John, 72
 Masson, Charles, 59
Master of Lapis Lazuli Radiance
 Tathagatha, 222
 Mathura, 68–69, 80–84
 Matipura, 84
 Matteson, Stefanie, 223
 Mauri-tim stupa, 173, 174(fig.)
 Maya (Queen), 101, 102, 102(fig.),
 103
 Meditation, 10, 67, 82(fig.), 83, 92,
 103, 115, 116, 118, 126, 205,
 209

- Middle Way, Doctrine of, 106, 111, 115
- Miracles, 17, 44, 52, 65, 85, 92, 94, 98, 100, 128, 129(fig.), 143
- Mirages, 14, 91
- Miran, 180
- Mirsky, Jeannette, 213–214
- Missionaries, 9, 61
- Monasteries, 6–7, 9, 20, 26, 28, 38, 41, 42, 46, 49, 56, 60, 67, 68, 72, 74, 80, 84, 88, 89, 90, 99, 140, 144, 146, 150, 167, 169, 173, 174, 175, 215. *See also individual monasteries*
- Monastery of Great Happiness, 186, 188
- Monastery of Great Maternal Love, 198, 199, 200
- Monastery of Hostages, 51, 81
- Mongolia, 4
- Monkey, 217, 218–219
- Monkey* (Waley), 218
- Monk of the Single Horn, 65
- Monks, 6–7, 8, 9, 26, 28, 41, 46, 49, 65, 67, 72, 74, 80, 83–84, 88, 89, 100, 106, 118, 120, 125, 126, 130, 133, 144, 145, 150, 155, 163, 165, 169, 173, 174, 183, 185(fig.), 186, 215
licensing of, 198
in translation team, 195, 202
tried in civil vs. religious courts, 203
- Monuments, 72–73
- Mote, Frederick W., 221
- Multan, 151, 152
- Murder on the Silk Road* (Matteson), 223
- Murders, 41, 45, 88, 128, 203. *See also Assassinations*
- Music, 28, 53, 105, 161–162, 179, 198, 210, 224
- Mysticism, 91, 122
- Nagarahara, 188
- Nagarjuna, 139, 141–143, 144, 154
- Nagini, 178(fig.)
- Nairanjana River, 115
- Nalanda Monastery, 57, 89, 107, 119(fig.), 120–134, 123(fig.), 125(fig.), 131–134, 152–155, 214
curriculum at, 133
Stupa 3 at, 124, 125(fig.)
- Nasik, 146, 149
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, 84–85, 90
- Nepal, 101
- New Logic, 76, 79, 131, 222
- New Monastery, 44
- New Yorker*, 223, 225
- Nirvana, 44, 105, 111
- Noble Eightfold Path, 111, 118
- Not-Self doctrine, 79
- Numata Buddhist Center for Research and Translation, 225–226
- Oases, 4, 38, 173. *See also individual oases*
- Ondaatje, Michael, 202
- On the Harmony of True Principles or the Non-Difference Between Madhyamika and Yogacara* (Xuanzang), 153–154
- Orissa, 134, 140, 141, 154
- Oxus River, 38, 39, 40, 168, 169, 170
- Pabhakarmitras, 33
- Pagodas, 44, 61, 200–201, 201(fig.)
- Paintings, 47–48, 51, 64, 93, 112, 143, 148, 150, 150(fig.), 177, 178(fig.), 184(fig.), 186, 190, 190(fig.), 216. *See also Frescoes*
- Pakistan, 25, 34, 60, 81
- Pamir mountains, 39, 169, 170, 171(fig.), 171–172, 222
- Panofsky, Erwin, 215

- Paramartha, 178, 196, 219
 Parsva, 75
 Parthians, 9, 43
 Parvata, 152
 Pataliputra, 112, 113
 Pausanias, 213
 Pelliot, Paul, 186, 187(fig.)
Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, 142,
 199, 206–207, 206(fig.)
 Persia, 25, 38, 139, 151. *See also* Iran
 Peshawar, 60, 131
 Philosophers, 139, 203
 Pigeon Monastery, 143
 Pilgrimage sites, 85, 98, 100, 112,
 126, 214
 Po-ni, 88
 Prajnakara, 45
 Prasenajit (King), 58, 99, 100
 Pratapaditaya Pal, 189
 Prayaga, 164
 Pu Guang, 210
 Pulakesin II (King), 146
 Punjab, 78, 79, 80
 Pure Land Monastery, 7
 Pushpagiri Monastery, 141

 Qi dynasty, 6
 Qoltag Mountains, 26, 60
Questions of Milinda, 79

 Rain Retreats, 51, 79, 83, 101, 144
 Rajagriha, 126–128, 127(fig.)
Ramayana, 217
 Rat King, 177
Record of the Western Regions
 (Xuanzang), 161–162, 192,
 196, 223, 226
 Refuge in the Triple Gem, 204–205
 Reincarnation, 63, 68
 Relics/reliquary, 43(fig.), 44, 59,
 59(fig.), 61–62, 62(fig.),
 105–106, 153, 188, 221
 Robbers, 14, 26, 30, 45, 58, 60, 78,
 104, 166, 171

 Rome, 8, 38, 49, 50
 Rowland, B., 214

 Sage (Kashmiri), 74–75
 Sal Grove, 104
 Salzman, Mark, 218
 Samarkand, 34–35, 38–39, 42, 50
 Sambhoga, 112–113
 Sankasya, 85, 87, 93, 100, 112,
 188
 Sanskrit, 9, 76, 91, 131–132, 133,
 150, 161, 183, 196
 difficulty translating, 195
 Sarnath, 83, 85, 98, 106–111,
 107–108(figs.), 188, 189, 214
 Seckel, Dietrich, 214
 Sen, Tansen, 225
 Shadow Cave, 58, 93, 188
 Shahbaz Garhi, 64
 Shahr-i-Sabz, 39
 Shanshan, 183
 Shotorak Monastery, 51
 Sikri stupa, 65, 66(fig.)
 Silabhadra, 120–122, 131, 133,
 134–135, 139, 144, 156, 222
 Silk culture, 175–176, 176(fig.)
 Silk Road, 9, 38, 43, 49, 183, 212,
 215, 223–225
 convergence of
 Northern/Southern, 14, 169
 Festivals, 224
 Northern, 3, 4, 20, 28
 Southern, 3, 4, 22, 173
 Simhala, 139, 140, 145
 Sirkap, 73
 Sirsukh, 72
 Snow, 29, 31, 45, 48, 167, 169
 Sogdians/Sogdian language, 9, 38,
 42–43, 173
 South Kosala, 141–144
 Spooner, D. P., 61
 Sravasti, 99–103, 112
 Sri Lanka, 129. *See also* Simhala
 Srughna, 83

- Statues, 28, 46(fig.), 47(fig.), 68, 83, 93, 109, 110(fig.), 138, 143, 147, 180, 188
 at Bamiyan, 38, 45–48, 51, 214, 215, 223, 225
 of Buddha with fear-not gesture, 189(fig.)
 of King Kanishka, 81–82, 82(fig.)
 Udayana statue, 177
- Stein, Aurel, 17, 171, 177, 180, 184–186, 213–214, 222, 224
- Stupa of the Five Ascetics, 115
 Stupa of the Monkey's Gift, 112
- Stupas, 23, 29, 38, 42–45, 57, 59, 60, 61, 72, 73, 87, 100, 102, 105, 112, 115, 116, 124, 126, 128–129, 144, 172, 173, 174(fig.), 213, 214
 four great stupas, 63–64
 Subashi old city, 29
 Sudatta, 99, 100
 Suddhodana (King), 101, 102, 103
 Sui dynasty, 6, 7, 21
 Sun God, 151–152, 161, 164, 171
Sutra of the Eleven-Faced Avalokitesvara, 67
Sutra of the Glorious Decease, 98
 Swann, Peter C. 217
 Swat River/valley, 67, 68
- Taizong (Emperor), 2(fig.), 2–3, 11, 26, 27, 32, 162, 182–183, 186, 190–193, 198, 201, 202, 203
 and Buddhism, 2, 197, 199
 compared with Xuanzang, 5
 conquests of, 4–5
 death of, 199–200
 and King of Samarkand, 39
 summer residence of, 197
- Tajikistan, 25, 40, 170, 222
 Takada Koin, 220, 221(fig.)
 Taklamakan Desert, 12, 13–17, 20, 53, 169, 170, 179–180
 Taliban, 48, 225
- Tamerlane, 39
 Tamralipti, 140
 Tang empire, 2, 7, 21, 28, 112, 162, 173, 217. *See also* Taizong (Emperor)
 Tangitar Gorge, 171, 172(fig.)
 Tardu (Prince), 40–41
 Tarzi, Zemulia, 48
 Tashkent, 34
 Tashkurghan, 171, 222
 Taxila, 71–73, 166, 176
 Temple of the Tooth, 141, 142(fig.), 145
- Termez, 39–40, 42
Thirty Verses (Vasubandhu), 79, 144–145, 220–221
Three Persons of the Buddha, The (Xuanzang), 160
 Tian Shan Mountains, 20, 23(fig.), 23, 29, 31–32, 53, 170, 203
 Tibet, 5, 142, 225
 Time, concepts of, 193
 Tokharian language/music, 9, 28
 Tokmak, 32
To See the Buddha (Eckel), 92
 Traders/merchants, 38, 42, 43, 87, 115, 151, 177
 Translations, 9, 10, 43, 76, 139, 171, 178. *See also under* Xuanzang
 Trapusa and Bhallika, 42
Treasury of Buddhist Philosophy (Vasubandhu), 62, 74, 178
Treatise on Logic (Dignaga), 144
Treatise on the Harmony of Teaching (Xuanzang), 133
Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice, The (Asanga), 10, 91, 120–122, 131, 134, 145, 152, 178, 197, 221–222
 translating, 195, 197
Tripitaka, 130. *See also* Buddhism, Buddhist Canon
 “Triumph of the Prince of Chin (Qin)”, 161–162

- Turfan, 9, 23(fig.)
king of, 18, 21–22, 25, 40
- Turkestan, 14
- Turks, 3, 4, 14, 21, 25, 27, 30, 31,
39. *See also* Great Khan of the
Western Turks
- Turning the Wheel of the Law, 107,
109, 110(fig.), 111, 188
- Tushita Heaven, 91, 92, 138, 209
- Udayana (King), 58, 93, 94(fig.), 99,
177, 188, 189, 216–217
- Ultimate Journey* (Bernstein), 223
- Upali, 130
- Uzbekistan, 25, 34, 222
- Vairocana, 176
- Vaisali, 112–113, 188, 213
- Vaisravana deva, 44, 176
- Varanasi, 106
- Vasubandhu, 10, 62, 74, 75, 76, 79,
90–91, 131, 139, 144, 154,
178
- Vedas, 53
- Vimalakirti legend/sutra, 112, 156
- Vinitaprabha, 79
- Visvantara (Prince), 64, 65, 165, 180
- Vulture Peak, 128–130, 188
- Waley, Arthur, 18, 89, 179, 202, 204,
206, 218, 222
- Wang (Abbot), 184–186
- Water, 15, 16–17, 73, 100, 104, 105,
179
from the mountains, 20, 23(fig.),
60
water tanks, 73, 104, 112, 115
- Way and Its Power, The*, 196
- Western Brightness Monastery, 206
- White Huns, 42, 60, 169
- Wild Goose Pagoda, 200–201,
201(fig.)
- Wisdom Sutras*, 139, 153, 164
- Wolves, 24
- Woods, John, 169
- World Axis, 44
- World history, 223, 226–227
- World King, 70
- Wright, Charles, 223
- Wu Cheng'en, 218
- Xuanzang, 4(fig.), 138–139
biographers of, 6, 7–8, 14, 74,
118, 130, 146, 167, 211, 217.
See also Huili
brother of, 6, 7–8
and Buddha nature, 138
burial place of, 4(fig.)
collection of books, 190
collection of images of Buddha,
58, 87, 93, 94, 109, 111, 113,
130, 155, 188, 200
compared with Taizong, 5
death of, 95, 198, 207, 208–210
described, 11–12
doubts about Buddhist
translations/teachings, 10
earliest legendary depiction of,
220(fig.)
equanimity of, 78
and hero's quest, 17–18
interview with Taizong, 190–193
itinerary from India to western
China, 168(map), 175(map)
literary heritage of, 217–219
and monks who had traveled
westward, 9, 41
ordination as monk, 8
and pirates' sacrifice attempt,
91–92
protection for, 25–26
recital of accomplishments,
208–209, 211
translation legacy of, 219–222
translations of, 16(fig.), 30, 91,
112, 133, 190, 193, 195, 197,
199–200, 201, 202, 203, 205,
206–207, 209, 219–222

Yamuna River, 80, 83, 92, 93
Yarkand River, 170
Yijing, 125, 140
Yo-Yo Ma, 224
Yu, Anthony, 218

Yuhua Gong, 197
Yulin, 219, 220(fig.)
Zhiyan, 9
Zoroastrianism, 9, 38, 39

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