

# The Travel Records of Chinese Pilgrims Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing

SOURCES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS  
BETWEEN ANCIENT CHINA AND ANCIENT INDIA

By Tansen Sen

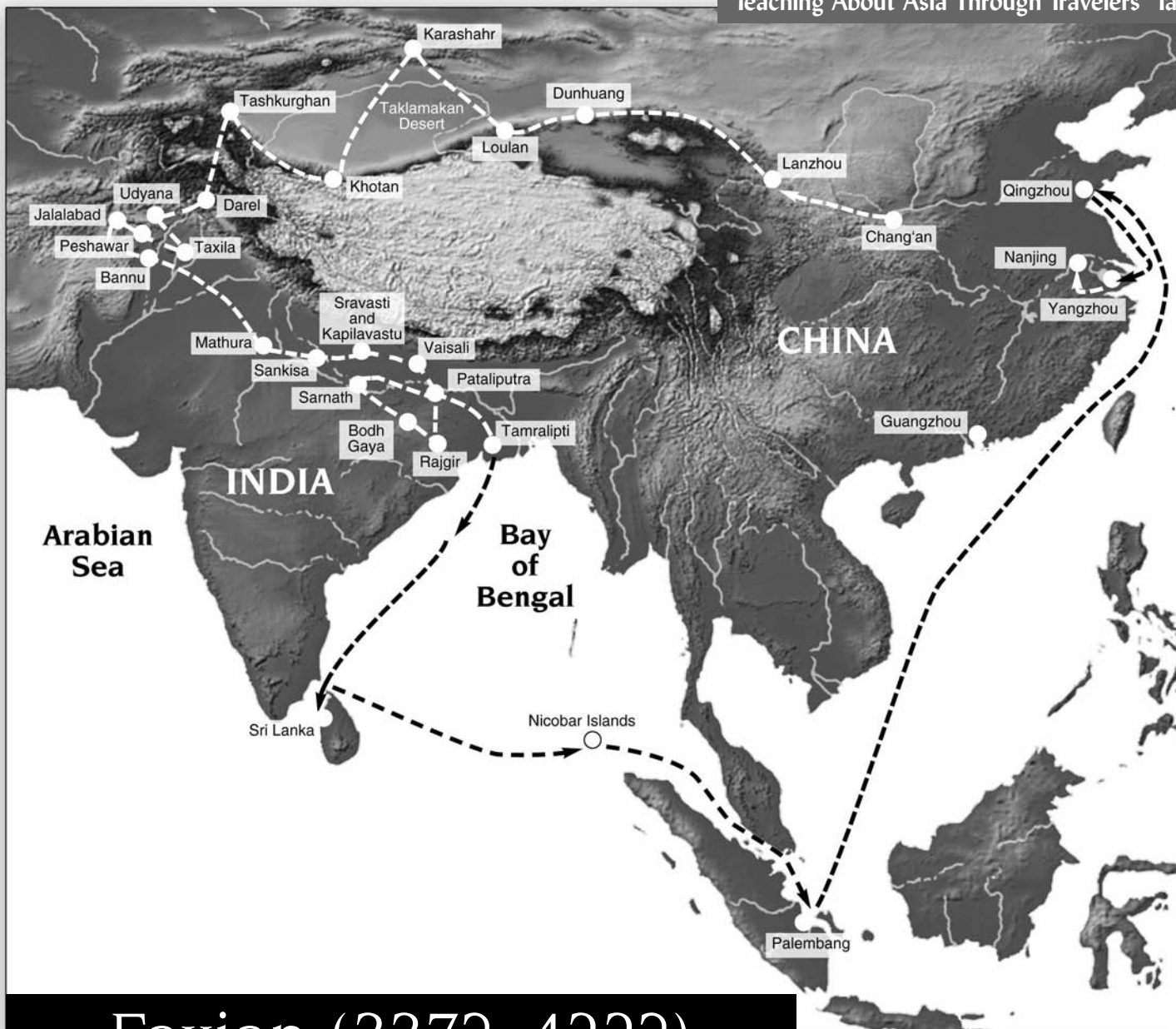


The statue of Xuanzang at the Great Wild Goose Pagoda in Xi'an, which was built to house the texts he brought back from India.  
Image source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Xuanzang\\_Da\\_Yan-Ta\\_statue.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Xuanzang_Da_Yan-Ta_statue.jpg)

The spread of Buddhist doctrines from India to China beginning sometime in the first century CE triggered a profusion of cross-cultural exchanges that had a profound impact on Asian and world history. The travels of Buddhist monks and pilgrims and the simultaneous circulation of religious texts and relics not only stimulated interactions between the Indian kingdoms and various regions of China, but also influenced people living in Central and Southeast Asia. Indeed, the transmission of Buddhist doctrines from India to China was a complex process that involved multiple societies and a diverse group of people, including missionaries, itinerant traders, artisans, and medical professionals.<sup>1</sup>

Chinese pilgrims played a key role in the exchanges between ancient India and ancient China. They introduced new texts and doctrines to the Chinese clergy, carried Buddhist paraphernalia for the performance of rituals and ceremonies, and provided detailed accounts of their spiritual journeys to India. Records of Indian society and its virtuous rulers, accounts of the flourishing monastic institutions, and stories about the magical and miraculous prowess of the Buddha and his disciples often accompanied the descriptions of the pilgrimage sites in their travel records. In fact, these travel records contributed to the development of a unique perception of India among members of the Chinese clergy. For some, India was a sacred, even Utopian, realm. Others saw India as a mystical land inhabited by “civilized” and sophisticated people. In the context of Chinese discourse on foreign peoples, who were often described as uncivilized and barbaric, these accounts significantly elevated the Chinese perception of Indian society.<sup>2</sup>

Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing were among hundreds of Chinese monks who made pilgrimages to India during the first millennium CE. The detailed accounts of their journeys make them more famous than others. These travel records are important historical resources for several reasons. First, they provide meticulous accounts of the nature of Buddhist doctrines, rituals, and monastic institutions in South, Central, and Southeast Asia. Second, they contain vital information about the social and political conditions in South Asia and kingdoms situated on the routes between China and India. Third, they offer remarkable insights into cross-cultural perceptions and interactions. Additionally, these accounts throw light on the arduous nature of long-distance travel, commercial exchanges, and the relationship between Buddhist pilgrims and itinerant merchants.<sup>3</sup>



## Faxian (337?–422?)

Faxian was one of the first and perhaps the oldest Chinese monk to travel to India. In 399, when he embarked on his trip from the ancient Chinese capital Chang'an (present-day Xi'an in Shaanxi province), Faxian was more than sixty years old. By the time he returned fourteen years later, the Chinese monk had trekked across the treacherous Taklamakan desert (in present-day Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China), visited the major Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India, traveled to Sri Lanka, and survived a precarious voyage along the sea route back to China (Map 1).<sup>4</sup>

The opening passage of Faxian's *A Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms* tells us that the procurement of texts related to monastic rules (i.e., *Vinaya*) was the main purpose of his trip to India. In addition to revealing the intent of his trip, the statement also underscores the need for this crucial Buddhist literature in contemporary China. In the third and fourth centuries, a number of important Buddhist texts, including the *Lotus Sutra*, had been translated into Chinese. Although a few *Vinaya* texts were available to Faxian, the growing Buddhist community in China was aware of the paucity of these texts essential for the establishment and proper functioning of monastic institutions.<sup>5</sup>

As he proceeded westward toward India, Faxian encountered the multiethnic societies of Central Asia. In Loulan, for example, he saw people who dressed like the Chinese but followed the customs of India. The local Buddhist clergy, according to him, read Indian books and practiced speaking Indian language. Faxian also describes the famous oasis city

Map 1. Faxian's Itinerary. See Map 2 on page 27 for additional details.

Map illustration by Willa Davis using *Cartesia Map Art* for the base map of Asia.

Faxian was about 77 years old when he reached the Chinese coast. His *A Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms* was the first eyewitness account of the Buddhist practices and pilgrimage sites in Central and South Asia written in Chinese.

of Khotan on the southern rim of the Taklamakan as an important Buddhist center in the region. "Throughout the country," he writes, "the houses of the people stand apart like (separate) stars, and each family has a small tope (i.e., pagoda) reared in front of its door. The smallest of these may be twenty cubits high, or rather more. They make (in monasteries) rooms for monks from all quarters, the use of which is given to traveling monks who may arrive, and are provided with whatever else they require."<sup>6</sup>



A modern-day rendition of the monk Faxian.  
Image source:  
[http://shipmuseum.sjtu.edu.cn/zhanx\\_imglist.asp?zxid=29](http://shipmuseum.sjtu.edu.cn/zhanx_imglist.asp?zxid=29)

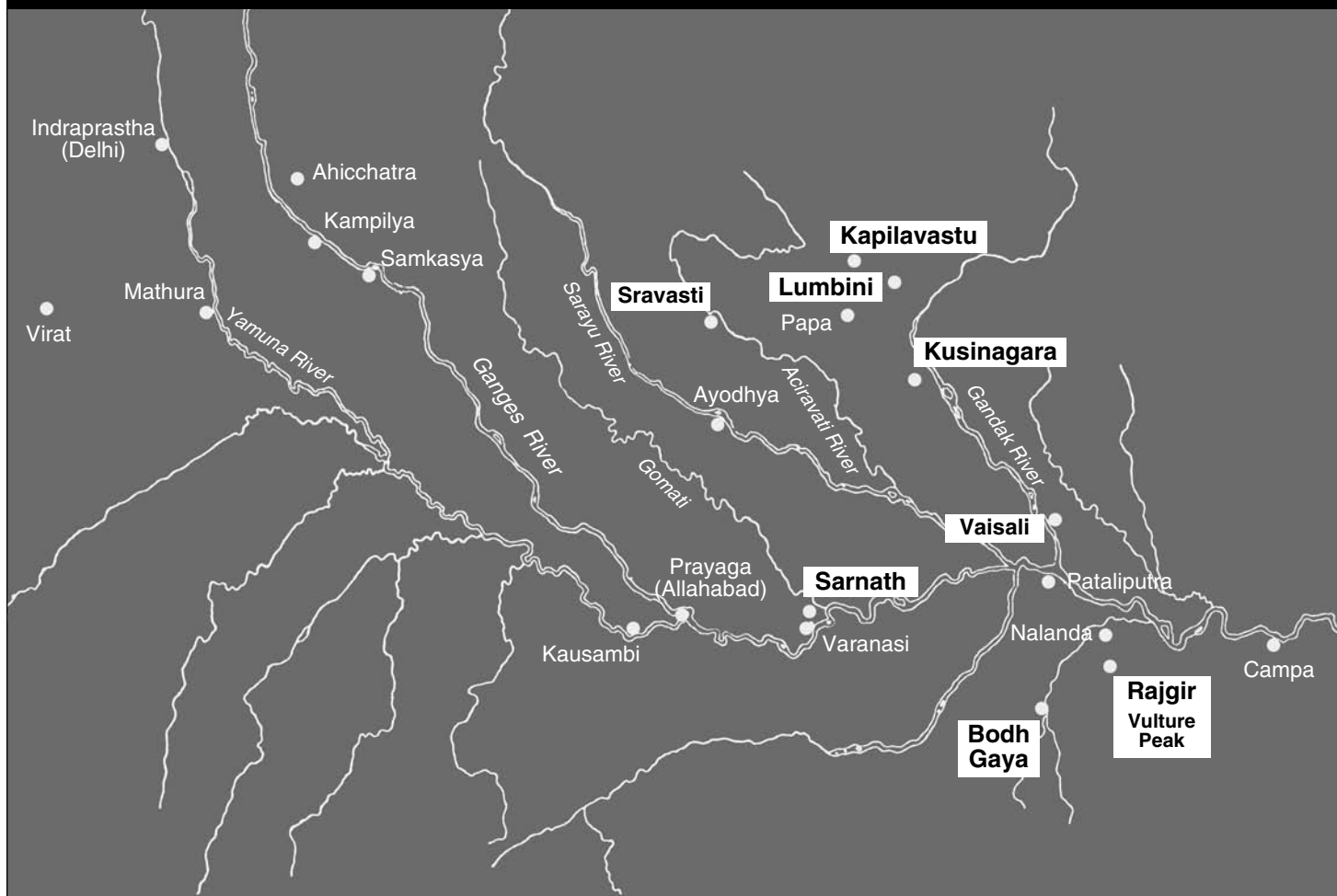
It quickly becomes clear from Faxian's travel record that he wanted to highlight Buddhist practices at the sites he visited. Thus, his account includes the description of local Buddhist monasteries, the approximate number of Buddhist monks in the region, the teachings and rituals practiced by them, and the Buddhist legends associated with some of these sites. Near the city of Taxila (in the present-day northwestern region of Pakistan), for instance, he points out that this was the site where the Buddha, during one of his previous lives, had offered his body to a starving tigress. He describes the conception of the Buddha at Kapilavastu, his birth in a garden in Lumbini, and the attainment of nirvana at Kuśinagara (see Map 2).

The veneration of the relics of the Buddha in Central and South Asia is also detailed throughout the narrative. In Peshawar, for instance, the Chinese monk witnessed the rituals associated with the worship of the Buddha's alms-bowl. Then in Sri Lanka, he describes the elaborate ceremony overseen by the local ruler to venerate the Buddha's tooth. These records of relic veneration contributed to the development of similar ceremonies in China. They also triggered a demand for the bodily remains and other objects associated with the life of Śākyamuni Buddha. In fact, the demand for Buddhist relics and ritual items in China resulted in the formation of a unique network through which Buddhist doctrines and ritual items circulated between South and East Asia. This network also fostered a relationship of mutual benefit for Buddhist monks and itinerant traders. While Buddhist monks often hitchhiked on merchant caravans or ships, long-distance traders profited from the creation of new demands for commodities associated with Buddhist rituals. Furthermore, Buddhist monasteries provided accommodation and health care to the long-distance traders, many of whom reciprocated by giving donations to the monastic communities.<sup>7</sup>

Sometime in 408 or 409, Faxian reportedly traveled on a mercantile ship from the port of Tamralipti, in eastern India, to Sri Lanka. After about two years' stay at the island, Faxian again boarded a seagoing vessel to return to China through Southeast Asia. Faxian's narrative of his voyage on the mercantile vessels, albeit marked by near-catastrophic experiences due to the ravages of the sea, demonstrates the above-mentioned relationship between Buddhist monks and itinerant traders as well as the existence of maritime trading channels linking the coastal regions of India and China. It is also evident from Faxian's account that maritime travel between southern Asia and China was perilous and the navigational techniques extremely rudimentary.

Faxian was about 77 years old when he reached the Chinese coast. His *A Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms* was the first eyewitness account of the Buddhist practices and pilgrimage sites in Central and South Asia written in Chinese. It was no doubt immensely popular

## THE GANGES RIVER BASIN



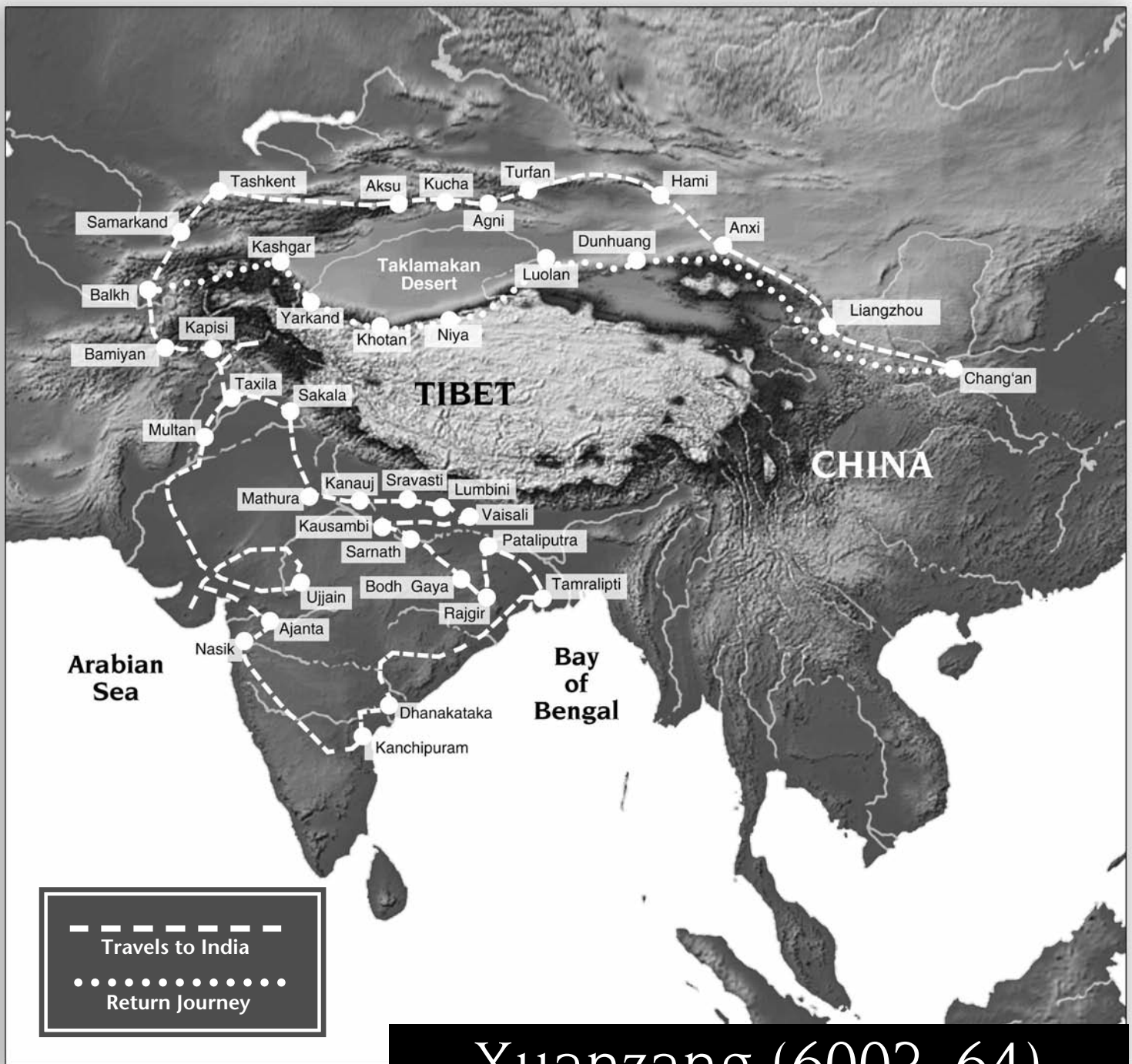
Map 2. The Ganges basin and the Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India. Illustration by Willa Davis.

among the contemporary Chinese clergy, many of whom considered India as a holy land. This unique perception of India among the members of the Chinese clergy and their feeling of melancholy because they lived in the borderland, far removed from the sites frequented by the Buddha, can be discerned in Faxian's work.<sup>8</sup> Daozheng, one of the Chinese monks who accompanied Faxian, was so moved by the Buddhist sites and monastic institutions in India that he decided not to return to China. "From now until I attain Buddhahood," Daozheng is supposed to have remarked, "I wish that I not be reborn in the borderland."<sup>9</sup>

Faxian's account seems to have contributed to the formation of the Chinese perception of India as a sophisticated and culturally advanced society. In the sixth century, Li Daoyuan (d. 527) in his commentary on the third-century work *Shui jing* (*The Water Classic*) gives the following account of Middle India (referred to as "Madhyadeśa")<sup>10</sup> based on Faxian's *A Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms*:

*From here (i.e., Mathura) to the south all [the country] is Middle India (Madhyadeśa). Its people are rich. The inhabitants of Madhyadeśa dress and eat like people in China.*<sup>11</sup>

This statement in the context of Chinese discourse on foreign societies, where eating habits and manner of clothing were usually associated with the sophistication of a non-Chinese culture, indicates the unique status of the Indians in the Chinese world order. This perception of India as a civilized society persisted until the tenth century, kindled through the reports of later Chinese pilgrims and the works of Chinese clergy that highlighted the erudition of Indian people and the complexity of their society and cultural traditions.



**Map 3.** Xuanzang's Itinerary.  
Map illustration by Willa Davis using *Cartesia Map Art* for the base map of Asia.

## Xuanzang (600?–64)

Xuanzang was a leading Indophile of ancient China. The Chinese monk not only promoted Buddhist doctrines and the perception of India as a holy land through his writings, he also tried to foster diplomatic exchanges between India and China by lobbying his leading patrons, the Tang rulers Taizong (reigned 626–49) and Gaozong (reigned 649–683). In fact, the narrative of his pilgrimage to India, *The Records of the Western Regions Visited During the Great Tang Dynasty*,<sup>12</sup> was meant for his royal patrons as much as it addressed the contemporary Chinese clergy. Thus, Xuanzang's work is significant both as an account of religious pilgrimage and as a historical record of foreign states and societies neighboring Tang China. In fact, in the work Xuanzang comes across both as a pious pilgrim and as a diplomat for Tang China.<sup>13</sup>

By the time Xuanzang embarked on his trip to India in 627 (see Map 3), monastic institutions and Buddhist doctrines had taken deep roots in China. Almost all basic Buddhist texts had been translated into Chinese. Indigenous works explaining the teachings of the Buddha within the context of existing Daoist and Confucian ideas were being produced in large num-



**Xuanzang set out on his pilgrimage to India without formal authorization from the Tang court. His illegal departure from China may have been one of the reasons why Xuanzang deliberately sought audience with important foreign rulers in Central and South Asia.**

bers, and Chinese schools of Buddhism such as the Tiantai had started emerging. The influence of Buddhism extended from the mortuary beliefs and artistic traditions of the Chinese to the political sphere. Additionally, China was becoming an important center for Buddhist learning outside southern Asia, from where the doctrines were transmitted to Korea, Japan, and other neighboring kingdoms.

Born sometime around 600 CE, Xuanzang was ordained at the age of twenty. Like other Chinese pilgrims, one of Xuanzang's main reasons to undertake the arduous journey to India was to visit its sacred Buddhist sites. Dissatisfied with the translations of Indian Buddhist texts available in China, Xuanzang also wanted to procure original works and learn the doctrines directly from Indian teachers. He expresses his frustration with the translations of Buddhist works available in China in the following way: "Though the Buddha was born in the West," he writes, "his Dharma has spread to the East. In the course of translation, mistakes may have crept into the texts, and idioms may have been misapplied. When words are wrong, the meaning is lost, and when a phrase is mistaken, the doctrine becomes distorted."<sup>14</sup> The success of Xuanzang's mission is evident not only from the 657 Buddhist texts he brought back with him, but also from the quality of translations he undertook. In fact, he is considered one of the three best translators of Buddhist texts in ancient China.

Xuanzang set out on his pilgrimage to India without formal authorization from the Tang court. His illegal departure from China may have been one of the reasons why Xuanzang deliberately sought audience with important foreign rulers in Central and South Asia. He may have thought that the support from these rulers would make his travels in foreign lands and his ultimate return to China free of bureaucratic intrusions. Alternatively, perhaps, he wanted Emperor Taizong, the principal audience of his work, to appreciate the personal and intimate contacts he made with powerful rulers in Central and South Asia. His account thus provides rare insight into the political, diplomatic and religious activities undertaken by contemporary rulers in Central and South Asia.

Like Faxian, Xuanzang takes note of the Indic influences on Central Asian kingdoms. He reports, for example, that the people of Yanqi (Agni), Kuchi (Kucha), and Khotan used modified versions of Indic script. Also similar to Faxian, Xuanzang narrates, although in more detail, the Buddhist legends and miracles associated with the sites he visited and the Buddhist relics he saw. In addition, the perilous nature of long-distance travel between India and China experienced by Faxian is also evident in the work of Xuanzang. However, the most noteworthy aspects of his account are the general discussions of India presented in fascicle two of *The Records of the Western Regions* and the details of the Chinese monk's interaction with the Indian ruler Harṣavardhana that appear in fascicle five.

Xuanzang begins fascicle two with a discussion of the names for India appearing in various Chinese records. He concludes by stating that the correct Chinese term for India should be Yindu, a name that is still in use in China. Next, the Chinese monk explains the geography and climate, the measurement system, and the concept of time in India. Xuanzang then provides a glimpse of urban life and architecture and narrates in detail the existing caste system, the educational requirements for the Brahmins, the teaching of Buddhist doctrines, legal and economic practices, social and cultural norms, and the eating habits of the natives, and lists the natural and manufactured products of India.



A fourteenth-century painting of the monk Xuanzang returning to China with Buddhist texts.

Image source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Xuanzang\\_w.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Xuanzang_w.jpg)



Map 4. Harṣavardhana's empire and tributary states.  
Map illustration by Willa Davis.

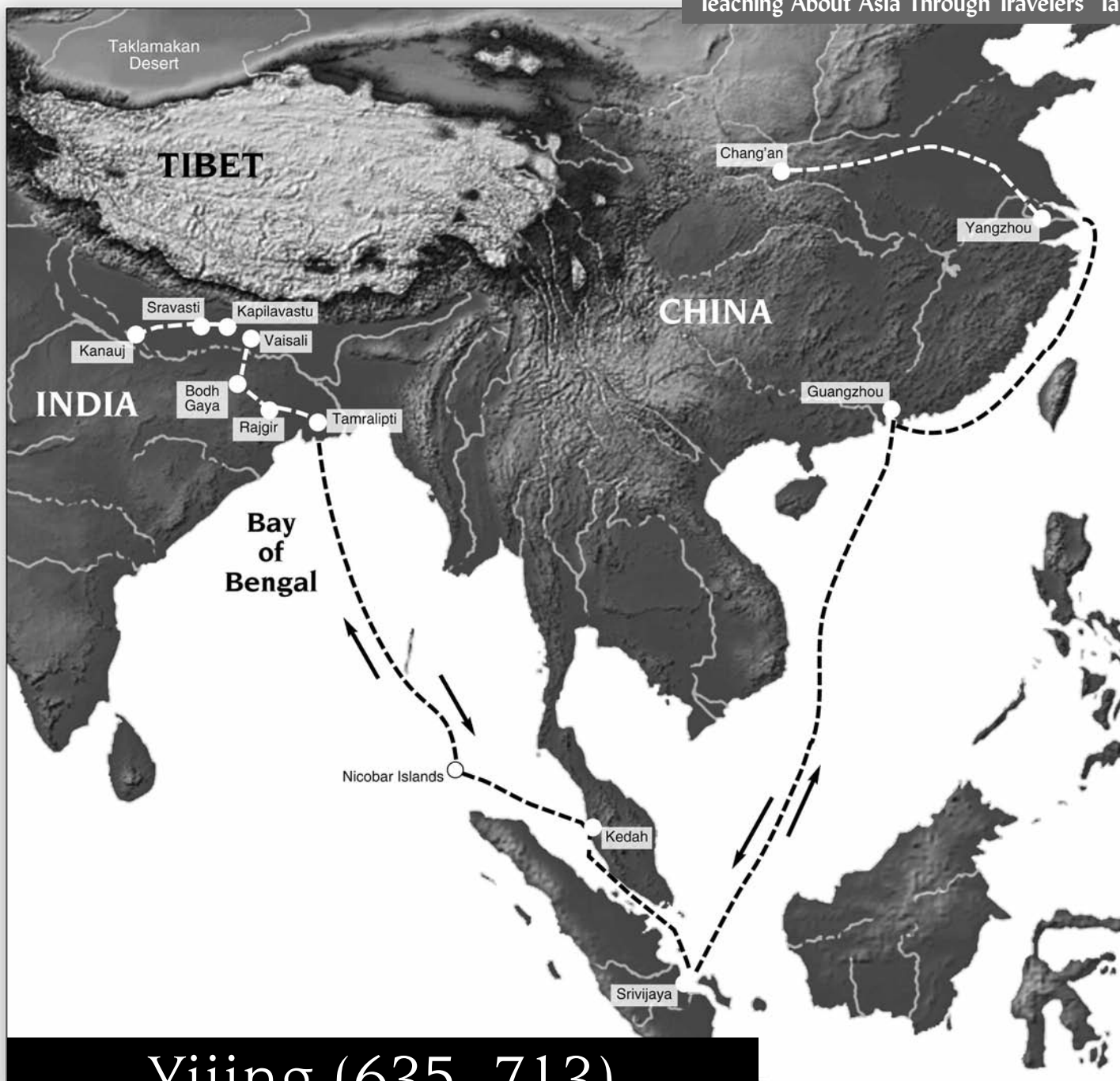
After this overview of India, Xuanzang proceeds to give a detailed account of the kingdoms and towns he visited in India, including, in fascicle five, the city of Kanauj, the capital of King Harṣavardhana's empire (Map 4). Xuanzang reached the city sometime in 637 or 638, when Harṣavardhana was at the height of this rule, his empire extending from northwestern Bengal in the east to the river Beas in Punjab in the west. Harṣavardhana had, for the first time since the collapse of the Gupta empire in the fifth century, brought peace and prosperity to northern India; and both Buddhism and Hinduism are said to have flourished under his reign. As with other sections of his work, Xuanzang begins the fascicle with a general description of Kanauj and a narration of the legend associated with its founding. The reigning king, he points out, was Harṣavardhana, and notes his virtues, valor, and

sympathy for the Buddhist doctrine. Xuanzang then reports his audience with the Indian king, who, we are told, was aware of the reign of a "compassionate" ruler in China. Xuanzang explained to Harṣavardhana that the ruler he had heard about was none other than the reigning Tang emperor Taizong. "He has," Xuanzang told the Indian king, "reduced taxes and mitigated punishments. The country has surplus revenue and nobody attempts to violate the laws. As to his moral influence and his profound edification of the people, it is exhausting to narrate in any detail." Harṣavardhana responded: "Excellent! The people of your land must have performed good deeds in order to have such a saintly lord."<sup>15</sup>

The praise notwithstanding, this meeting between Xuanzang and Harṣavardhana resulted in the establishment of diplomatic relations between Kanauj and the Tang court. The contribution of the Chinese pilgrim to the initiation of official exchanges is fully acknowledged by the official scribes of the Tang dynasty. In fact, after returning to Tang China, Xuanzang continued to play a key role in promoting Buddhist and diplomatic exchanges between the two courts. Xuanzang's motivation to promote such relations may have been related to the fact that the major Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India and the learning center at Nalanda were part of Harṣavardhana's empire. Xuanzang might have believed that a cordial relation between the two courts would facilitate Buddhist exchanges between Tang China and northern India.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, the issue of "borderland complex" among the Chinese clergy indicated in the work of Faxian is manifested in the account of Xuanzang's travel to India. In a conversation between his Indian hosts at the Nalanda Monastery just after he decided to return to Tang China, Xuanzang was reminded of the peripheral position of China in regard to the Buddhist world in India. "Why do you wish to leave after having come here?" enquired one of the monks at Nalanda. "China," he continued, "is a borderland where the common people are slighted and the Dharma despised; the Buddhas are never born in that country. As the people are narrow-minded, with deep moral impurity, saints and sages do not go there. The climate is cold and the land is full of dangerous mountains. What is there for you to be nostalgic about?" Xuanzang replied, "The King of the Dharma (i.e., the Buddha) has founded his teachings and it is proper for us to propagate them. How can we forget about those who are not yet enlightened while we have gained the benefit in our own minds?" He argued that China was a civilized land with laws, principled officials, and cultured people.<sup>17</sup>

Such dialogues between Xuanzang and Indians make the account of his travels unique and significant for the study of cross-cultural perspectives. It not only offers the views on India and the Indian society of the Chinese pilgrim, it also provides rare glimpses into the Indian perception and knowledge of China, seldom available in contemporary Indian sources. Xuanzang's account is also exceptional because of his meticulous records of Buddhist sites such as Bamiyan and Nalanda. These notices have already aided the work of modern archeologists and historians of medieval South Asia.<sup>18</sup> Thus, *The Records of the Western Regions* is a rich resource for historians, archeologists, Buddhologists, and those interested in studying cross-cultural interactions in the premodern world.



## Yijing (635–713)

Map 5. Yijing's Itinerary.

Map illustration by Willa Davis using *Cartesia Map Art* for the base map of Asia.

Compared to the travel records of Faxian and Xuanzang, the works of Yijing have attracted limited attention from students and scholars of Asian and world history. Yijing embarked on his trip to India in 671 and returned in 695 (Map 5). Before returning to China, he completed and sent to China from the kingdom of Śrīvijaya (located in present-day Indonesia) two works of immense importance: *The Record of Buddhism As Practiced in India Sent Home from the Southern Seas* and the *Memoirs of Eminent Monks who Visited India and Neighboring Regions in Search on the Law during the Great Tang Dynasty*.<sup>19</sup> The former work is a detailed account of how Buddhist doctrines and monastic rules were practiced in India. The latter contains biographical information about fifty-six Chinese monks who traveled to India in the seventh century.

By recording the practice of monastic rules of Indian monasteries, Yijing wanted to rectify what he calls the “errors” in the applications of the “original [Buddhist] principles” in China.<sup>20</sup> He describes forty practices at Indian monasteries ranging from “cleansing after meals” to the “regulations for ordination” and compares them to the procedures in China. Often he underscores the consequences of not following the original intent of the monastic





A Buddhist text detailing the translation activities undertaken by the monk Yijing.  
Image source: <http://www.fosss.org/ssyl/yjyj.JPG>

## 義淨譯經

高僧傳云。唐釋義淨。姓張氏。范陽人也。髻亂之時。解親落髮。偏詢名匠。廣探群籍。內外開習。今古博通。年十五歲。便立其志。欲遊西土。仰法顯之雅操。慕玄奘之高風。勤無棄時。手不釋卷。年三十七。方遂發足。奮勵孤行。備歷艱險。所至之境。皆曉言音。凡遇尊長。俱加禮重。鷲峯難足。咸遂周遊。鹿苑祇林。並諧瞻矚。諸有聖迹。畢得追尋。經二十五年。歷三十餘國。證聖元年。還至河洛。得梵本經。四百餘部。真容一鋪。舍利百顆。天后親迎于上東門外。繒蓋幢幡。歌樂前導。勅於佛授記寺安置。與實叉難陀。翻華嚴經。得其指授。後自專譯金光明最勝王等經。天后製聖教序。今標經首。暨和帝深崇釋典。持抽睿思。製三藏聖教序。自天后迄睿宗。共譯經律論。凡三百餘卷。淨雖翻三藏。而偏攻律部。譯綴之暇。曲授學徒。凡兩行事。皆尚急護。澁囊滌穢。特異常倫。

rules. On other occasions, he recommends a compromise due to cultural differences between India and China. “As to the mode of eating,” for example, he writes that in India people “use only the right hand, but if one has had an illness or has some other reasons, one is permitted to keep a spoon for use. We never hear of chop-sticks in the five parts of India; they are not mentioned in the *Vinaya* of the Four Schools,<sup>21</sup> and it is only China that has them.” He suggests that since in the monastic rules “chop-sticks were never allowed nor were they prohibited” they could be used in China, “for if we obstinately reject their use, people may laugh or complain.”<sup>22</sup>

The biographies of Chinese pilgrims in Yijing’s *Memoirs of Eminent Monks* reveal that, despite the perilous nature of the journey, Buddhist monks from China visited India frequently and in considerable numbers during the seventh century. Some of these monks used the overland routes through Central Asia and Tibet to India. Others, similar to Yijing, took the maritime route via Southeast Asian ports. Some returned to China after their pilgrimages, others either decided to stay in India or died before they could embark on the return voyage.

These biographies are short accounts of pilgrimages of Chinese monks who have left no records of their trips to India. In the biography of the monk Xuanzhao in fascicle one, for example, Yijing gives Xuanzhao’s genealogy and narrates his experience learning the Buddhist doctrine, the long journey he took to India through Tibet, the education he received at Indian monasteries, and his return to China through Nepal and Tibet. Shortly after reaching China, Xuanzhao was ordered by the Tang Emperor Gaozong to return to India to procure for him longevity drugs and physicians. Yijing reports that Xuanzhao accomplished his objective but died before he could return to China. Together with fifty-five other biographies, this account demonstrates the resolute and fervent desire of the Chinese clergy to visit Buddhist sites and study in India.

Addressing the large number of Buddhist followers unable to undertake the perilous journey to India, Yijing wrote the following in his introduction to *The Record of Buddhism*: “If you read this Record of mine, you may, without moving one step, travel in all the five countries of India.”<sup>23</sup> He ends the work by stating, “My real hope and wish is to represent the Vulture Peak in the Small Rooms [peak of Mount Song] of my friends, and to build a second Rājagṛha City in the Divine Land of China.”<sup>24</sup> These two statements represent the wishes of all other Chinese pilgrims, including Faxian and Xuanzang, who returned to write narratives of their pilgrimages to India. Through their narratives, they sought to provide the followers of the Buddhist doctrine in China an opportunity to envision the sites and events in the life of the Buddha that they considered sacred and miraculous. Additionally, these pilgrims, by returning with Buddhist texts, relics, and other paraphernalia, tried to recreate in China an Indic world where the followers could perform pilgrimages without embarking on the arduous journey to India and, at the same time, dispel their feeling of borderland complex. ■

## NOTES

1. On the exchanges between India and China during the first millennium, see Xinru Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges, AD 1–600* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600–1400* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawai'i Press, 2003).
2. Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*.
3. For an excellent study of the value of these accounts as works of Chinese literature, see Nancy Elizabeth Boulton's “Early Chinese Buddhist Travel Records as a Literary Genre,” 2 vols. (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 1982).
4. The account of Faxian's travel in the *A Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms* appears in the third person, suggesting the work was written by someone to whom the monk recounted his journey. An easily accessible translation of Faxian's travel record is James Legge's *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms: Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-Hien of his Travels in India and Ceylon (A.D. 399–414) in Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline* (reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1965). The full text of this work is available at the following Web site: <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=2124>.
5. Together with the *Sūtras* (the teachings of the Buddha) and the *Abhidharmas* (commentaries on Buddhist teachings), *Vinayas* form part of the Buddhist Canon known as the *Tripitaka* (the “three baskets”). For details on the early *Vinaya* literature in China, see Tōru Funayama's “The Acceptance of Buddhist Precepts by the Chinese in the Fifth Century,” *Journal of Asian History* 38.2 (2004): 97–118. A general, albeit somewhat dated, overview of the history of Buddhist doctrines in China can be found in Kenneth Ch'en's *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (reprint, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).
6. Legge, *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*, 16–17.
7. Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China*; and Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*.
8. An outstanding work that examines this feeling among Chinese pilgrims (especially that of Xuanzang) is Malcolm David Eckel's *To See the Buddha: A Philosopher's Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), Chapter 3. See also T. H. Barrett, “Exploratory Observations on Some Weeping Pilgrims,” in Tadeusz Skorupski ed., *The Buddhist Studies Forum, vol. 1: Seminar Papers 1987–1988* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1990), 99–110.
9. This passage, with slightly different translation, appears in Legge, *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*, 99–100. Antonino Forte has suggested that, due to the great distance between China and the sacred Buddhist sites in India, the Chinese clergy suffered from, what he calls, a “borderland complex.” He explains that the Chinese Buddhists tried to overcome this “feeling of uneasiness and a state of dilemma” by “showing that China, too, was a sacred land of Buddhism.” See “Hui-chih (fl. 676–703 AD), A Brahmin Born in China,” *Estratto da Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale* 45 (1985): 106–34; and Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*.
10. In Chinese records, ancient India is divided into five regions: North India, South India, East India, West India, and Middle India. Most of the Buddhist pilgrimage sites and famous monastic institutions were located in Middle India.
11. Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*, 8. There is wordplay in the original records. Faxian and Li Daoyuan use the same word “Zhongguo” (lit. “Middle Kingdom”) for both Middle India and China to underscore the similarities between the two regions.
12. A recent translation of this work is Li Rongxi's *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996). A popular narrative of Xuanzang's pilgrimage to India is Sally Hovey Wriggins's *The Silk Road Journey with Xuanzang* (revised edition, Boulder: Westview Press, 2004). Fascicle 1 of Xuanzang's record, translated by Samuel Beal, is available at the following Web site: <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/xuanzang.html>.
13. The account of Xuanzang's travels in India can also be found in his biography, written by Huili and Yancong and completed in 664. The recent translation of this work is Li Rongxi's *A Biography of the Tripitaka Master of the Great Cien Monastery of the Great Tang Dynasty* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1995).
14. Li, *The Great Tang Dynasty*, 19–20.
15. Li, *The Great Tang Dynasty*, 146. See also Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*, 18–20.
16. For details about the diplomatic exchanges between Kanauj and the Tang court, see Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*, Chapter 1. Harṣavardhana and the diplomatic exchanges between Kanauj and the Tang court are also examined in D. Devahuti's *Harsa: A Political Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1990).
17. Li, *A Biography*, 138. See also, Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*, 11–12.
18. One of the important developments related to South Asian history described in the work of Xuanzang was the decay of urban centers in the Ganges basin, which included the famous Buddhist pilgrimage sites Kuśinagara (the site where the Buddha attained nirvana) and Vaiśālī (the site where the Buddha gave his last sermon). The decline of urban centers that began in the fourth century and its impact on monastic institutions are depicted in the travel records of Faxian and Yijing as well. These records have been used to examine the economic conditions in early medieval India and the decline of Buddhism in southern Asia. See, for example, R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism: c. A.D. 300–1200* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965) and Kanai Lal Hazra, *The Rise and Decline of Buddhism in India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1995). See also Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*, Chapters 3 and 4.
19. For translations of these works, see J. Takakusu's *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago (AD 671–695)* (reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1982); and Latika Lahiri's *Chinese Monks in India: Biography of Eminent Monks Who Went to the Western World in Search of the Law During the Great Tang Dynasty* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).
20. Takakusu, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 18.
21. I.e., the four schools of Buddhism prevalent in India: the Sthavira, the Sammitiya, the Mahāsaṃghika, and the Mūlasarvāstivāda. For a discussion of these schools by Yijing, see Takakusu, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 7–14.
22. Takakusu, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 90.
23. Takakusu, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 19.
24. With slight changes to Takakusu, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 215. The Vulture Peak (or Ḡṛhṛakūṭa), name of a mountain in present-day Bihar state of India that looked like a vulture, was a location where the Buddha expounded some of his major teachings. Rājagṛha (present-day Rajgir in Bihar) was also frequented by the Buddha and considered a sacred site by the followers of the doctrine.

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