

In Search of Longevity and Good Karma: Chinese Diplomatic Missions to Middle India in the Seventh Century*

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China's diplomatic relations with ancient Indian kingdoms has attracted limited attention. Notable anthologies on China's relations with her neighbors make little or no mention of premodern Sino-Indian political contacts.¹ Indian kingdoms are also missing from John King Fairbank's framework of the "Aims and Means in China's Foreign Relations," proposed in his classic work on the Chinese world order.² A close analysis, however, reveals that diplomatic channels between China and India were in fact opened and maintained by diverse groups of people with manifold motives. A strategic military alliance between China and India was contemplated by one of the earliest Chinese envoys to Central Asia. Commercial specialists from

* I would like to thank Chandreyi Basu, Alan DiGaetano, Antonino Forte, Toru Funayama, Xinru Liu, Victor H. Mair, Wang Bangwei, and the anonymous reviewer for their valuable comments, suggestions, and help. This work was supported in part by a grant from The City University of New York PSC-CUNY Research Award Program.

¹ Examples of such works include John King Fairbank's edited volume on *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); Morris Rossabi, ed., *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th–14th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); and Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak, eds., *China and Her Neighbours: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy 10th to 19th Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997). One exception is S. L. Tikhvinsky's *China and Her Neighbours: From Ancient Times To the Middle Ages, A Collection of Essays* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), which has a chapter on "Sino-Indian Relations from Ancient Times to the Sixteenth Century" by A. A. Bokshchanin. See pp. 105–138.

² See John K. Fairbank, "A Preliminary Framework," in *The Chinese World Order*, ed. John K. Fairbank, pp. 1–19, especially Table 2 on page 13.

various parts of Asia frequently took part in Sino-Indian tributary relations. And Buddhist monks from China visited the courts of important Indian kings and helped establish and sustain diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Although generally neglected, a few studies that have focused on the premodern Sino-Indian diplomacy deal primarily with Indian tribute missions to the Chinese court.³ The role of merchants and the commercial implications of such missions have been emphasized in a number of works.⁴ A focus on tribute missions, however, not only fails to explain Chinese interests in pursuing diplomatic ties with India, it also conceals the important contributions of individuals in shaping the relations between the two countries.⁵ By examining a series of Tang (618–907) missions to Middle India in the seventh century, this essay intends to demonstrate the multifaceted, complex, and unique nature of China's diplomatic contacts with India. At the same time, the study highlights the significant contribution of individuals to premodern Sino-Indian relations.

The four Tang embassies to Middle India, dispatched between 641 and 658, are especially noteworthy because at no other time, at least until the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), were Chinese embassies sent to one Indian kingdom so frequently and within such a short period. This study focuses on the motives for sending Tang diplomats to India; it not only exposes Emperor Taizong's (r. 626–649) personal interest in Indian longevity doctors late in his life, but also provides a new perspective on Xuanzang's (600?–664) pilgrimage to South Asia. The examination further illustrates the ways in which Buddhism bridged the geographical gaps, compensated for any lack of political negotiations, and nurtured a dialogue between Chinese and Indian courts around spiritual matters. In order to argue that individual interests played a vital role in the ties between the Tang court and Middle India,

³ See, for example, A. A. Bokshchanin's "Sino-Indian Relations."

⁴ See Xinru Liu's two works: *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges, AD 1–600* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), especially Chapters 2 and 3; and *Silk and Religion: An Exploration of Material Life and the Thought of People* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), especially Chapter 1. See also Tansen Sen, "Maritime Contacts between China and the Cola Kingdom (850–1279)," in *Mariners, Merchants and Oceans: Studies in Maritime History*, ed. K. S. Mathew (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 1995), pp. 25–41.

⁵ For example, Bokshchanin, when explaining the Chinese desire to maintain diplomatic relations with India, writes, "the Chinese initiatives increasingly reflected the methods used to nourish the illusion of Chinese sovereignty over all lands and people." See "Sino-Indian Relations," p. 127. Bokshchanin fails to discuss the pragmatic as well as spiritual interests that the Chinese rulers and court seem to have had in pursuing official ties with India.

I shall explain the personal and out-worldly objectives of emperors, Buddhist monks, and laymen. These “human elements” of Sino-Indian intercourse, including the transmission of Buddhism, have often been overlooked and, according to Erik Zürcher, deserve due attention.⁶

The first part of this study investigates the eminent Chinese monk Xuanzang’s role in, and motive for, opening diplomatic ties between the Tang court and the kingdom of Kanauj (also referred to as Kanyakubja) in Middle India. The next section explores Emperor Taizong’s interest in longevity drugs and doctors as a possible reason for sustaining official intercourse between China and India. A third section considers the contributions of Wang Xuance (fl. seventh century), the distinguished Chinese ambassador to India, to Sino-Indian diplomatic and Buddhist contacts. The article concludes with an examination of the impact of the Tang missions on contemporary Buddhist institutions in China and India, political alliances, commercial exchanges, and later Sino-Indian relations.

XUANZANG, HARSHA, AND TAIZONG

More than seventy embassies from India visited the Chinese court in the first millennium. Mostly commercial in nature, these embassies represented various Indian kingdoms.⁷ The Chinese designated the Indian embassies as tribute missions and often reciprocated by conferring titles and return goods.⁸ The fact that the Chinese responded with

⁶ Erik Zürcher, “Aliens and Respected Guests: The Role of Foreign Monks in Early Chinese Buddhism,” *Transactions of the International Conference of Eastern Studies* 40 (1995): 67–92. The contribution of individuals to cross-cultural contacts, often overlooked in the past, has been emphasized in recent works. See, for example, Jerry H. Bentley, “Hemispheric Integration, 500–1500 C.E.,” *Journal of World History* 9, no. 2 (1998): 215–236.

⁷ Ancient India, in Chinese historical and Buddhist sources, is usually divided into and referred to as Five Indias (*Wu Tianzhu*): North, South, Middle, West, and East. One of the earliest Chinese records of Indian geography is Li Daoyuan’s (466–527) *Shui jing zhu* (Commentary on the Water Classic). See L. Petch, *Northern India According to the Shui-ching-chu* (Rome: Istituto M.E.O., 1950).

⁸ For the tribute system and its place in the Chinese world order, see Yü Ying-shih, *Trade and Expansion in Han China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Choon S. Lee, “The Origin, Functions, and Nature of the Tributary System in the Chou times,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1980); L. I. Duman, “Ancient Chinese Foreign Policy and the Origins of the Tribute System,” in *China and Her Neighbours*, ed. S. L. Tikhvinsky, pp. 17–42; Pan Yihong, “The Development of the Tribute System in the pre-Qin and Han Periods,” in Larry N. Shyu et al., eds., *East Asia Inquiry: Selected Articles from the Annual Conferences of the Canadian Asian Studies Association 1988–1990* (Montreal: Canadian Asian Studies Association, 1991), pp. 193–221; and Pan Yihong, *Son of Heaven and Heavenly Qaghan: Sui-Tang China and its Neighbors* (Bellingham: Western Washington University, 1997), pp. 18–31.

very few embassies of their own seems to indicate that the South Asian region fell outside the immediate parameters of Chinese foreign policy.

Strategic cooperation had, in fact, been considered as far back as the second century B.C.E. Zhang Qian, a Western Han (202 B.C.E.–23 C.E.) envoy to Central Asia, in 126 B.C.E. recommended the annexation of a vital route that linked southwestern China to India. The aim was to establish a safe passage through India to Central Asia and form an alliance against the menacing Xiongnu tribe. The secret mission to secure the road failed, we are told in Chinese sources, due to the hostile tribes in the Sichuan area.⁹ Almost eight centuries later, when the Turks and Tibetans began threatening the borders of India and China, the possibility of an alliance resurfaced. Indian kingdoms sent several embassies to seek military assistance from the powerful Tang empire.¹⁰ Aware of the Indian interest in military collaboration, the Tang chief minister Li Mi (722–789) in 787 proposed a joint military action against the Tibetans.¹¹ This mutual interest in military collaboration seems to be one of the main outcomes of the Tang missions sent to Kanauj in the mid-seventh century.

Xuanzang, the famous Buddhist pilgrim, a leading translator of Sanskrit texts, and a shrewd lobbyist for the Buddhist cause in China, warrants the credit for initiating the eventful contacts between the Tang court and the kingdom of Kanauj. In 627, the relatively unknown Xuanzang, without formal authorization from the court, set out on his pilgrimage to India. With the aim of avoiding legal repercussions on his return, the Chinese monk seems to have made meetings with temporal rulers an essential part of the pilgrimage. During his nineteen-year journey, Xuanzang was granted audience by many important kings who ruled Central and South Asian kingdoms. His record of the pilgrimage, the *Da Tang Xiyu ji* (Records of the Western Regions [Visited During] the Great Tang Dynasty),¹² describe these meetings as proof

⁹ See Sima Tan (d. 110 B.C.E.) and Sima Qian (?145–86 B.C.E.), *Shi ji* (Records of the Grand Historian) 123 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996): 3166–3169.

¹⁰ See, for example, Wang Qinruo et al., eds. (completed in 1013), *Cefu yuangui* (Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature) 995 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988): 11687a.

¹¹ See Sima Guang (1019–1086), *Zizhi tongjian* (Comprehensive Mirror for the Aid in Government) 233 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992): 7505.

¹² Xuanzang's work can be found in Takakusu Junjiro and Watanabe Kaigyoku, eds., *Taisho shinshu daizokyo* (Newly Revised Tripitaka Inaugurated in the Taisho Era [hereafter T.] (Tokyo: Taisho issaikyo kankokai, 1924–32), 2087: 867b–947c. The work has been annotated by Ji Xianlin in *Da Tang Xiyu ji jiaozhu* (Annotation of the Records of the Western Regions [Visited During] the Great Tang Dynasty) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985). See also Kuwayama Shoshin, *Daito Saiiki ki* (Records of the Western Regions [Visited

of the keen interest the temporal leaders had in him and his spiritual journey.¹³

It is more likely, however, that Xuanzang initiated the meetings on his own. He may have thought that temporal support would make his travels in India and his ultimate return to China, unlike his departure, hassle free. Or, perhaps, he wanted Emperor Taizong, the principal audience of his work, to appreciate the personal and intimate contacts he had had with the powerful rulers of foreign lands. In any case, Xuanzang was instrumental in turning Taizong's attention towards Buddhism and South Asia. In India, he had successfully convinced Harsha (also known as Shiladitya), the king of Kanauj, to open diplomatic channels with China.

When describing his first meeting with the Indian king, Xuanzang writes that Harsha was aware, although in a limited way, of Emperor Taizong's achievements:

Harsha said: "In Mahacina, I have heard, there is a Prince of Qin. When young he was clever and when he grew up he was a divine warrior. The past dynasty had left the country in disarray and calamity. Armies fought each other and people suffered. He brought the country out of anarchy and ruin into order and prosperity, and made it supreme over distant regions to which his good influences extended. All his subjects, having their moral and material wants filled, cared for this fine ruler and sang the 'Song of King Qin's Conquest.' This fine ruler has long been known to us. Is the great kingdom of Tang this very country?"

"It is," said Xuanzang in reply and explained that "Cina was how the kingdom was called during a previous king[']s reign]. The Great Tang is now the name of my master's kingdom. Before accession he was called the Prince of Qin. Now that he has mounted [the throne], he is proclaimed as the Son of Heaven. When the fortune of the pre-

During] the Great Tang Dynasty) (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1987). For the latest translation of Xuanzang's diary, see Li Rongxi, *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996). An extensive study of the life of Xuanzang is Alexander Leonhard Mayer and Klaus Röhrborn's *Xuanzangs Leben und Werk* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992).

¹³ It must be pointed out that Xuanzang's narrative of his pilgrimage to India was written specifically for the eyes of the most powerful person in seventh-century Tang China—Emperor Taizong. With the prospective reader in mind, Xuanzang set out to write a book that satisfied the emperor's political curiosity about the Western Regions and, at the same time, emphasized his personal contacts with and knowledge of foreign political leaders. Peiyi Wu is correct in noting that Xuanzang's narrative includes "almost everything except his pilgrimage." See "An Ambivalent Pilgrim to T'ai Shan in the Seventeenth Century," in *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, eds. Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 65–88, especially p. 67.

vious dynasty had come to an end, people were without a leader. Chaos and warfare brought misery and harm to the common people. The Prince of Qin, with innate ambition and a compassionate heart, ousted all evil enemies. As peace prevailed over the eight quarters, thousands of [foreign] kingdoms came to pay tribute to the court. [The Son of Heaven] loves and tends to creatures of the four kinds of birth, and respects [the teachings of] the Three Jewels. He has reduced taxes and mitigated punishments. The country has surplus funds 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."

Harsha said: "This is really great. The people of your land must have performed good deeds in order to have such a saintly lord."¹⁴

It may be noted here that the Chinese pilgrim left China less than a year after Taizong ascended to the Tang throne. The fact that Taizong's success had come at the expense of a bloody struggle among the heirs and the forced retirement of his father, Emperor Gaozu (r. 618–626), must have been fresh in Xuanzang's mind when he met Harsha. In 646, when he was completing the narration of his pilgrimage, however, Xuanzang, as we shall see later, was on very good terms with the Tang ruler. It is, therefore, conceivable that the praises that Harsha seems to have showered upon Emperor Taizong were added by Xuanzang in his diary merely to gratify the imperial audience. All we can conclude from Xuanzang's meeting with Harsha is that the Chinese pilgrim somehow persuaded the Indian king to send an envoy to Tang China.

Giving full credit to Xuanzang, the official Chinese sources record the arrival of an embassy from Kanauj in 641.¹⁵ Although Harsha had

¹⁴ *Da Tang Xiyu ji*, T. 2087: 894c.28–895a.17.

¹⁵ There is great confusion about the sequence of events. A few scholars, such as Devahuti, believe that Harsha sent the embassy to China before he met Xuanzang. Others, in contrast, put the date of the 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. Opinion about the start of the pilgrimage, as Kuwayama has noted, is divided between the first year of the Zhenguan period (January 23, 627 to February 10, 628) and the third year of the same reign era (January 30, 629 to February 17, 630). Kuwayama concludes that "Xuanzang must have left Changan not later than the beginning of the second year of Zhenguan," based on the political situation in Central Asia. An earlier date of departure would place the meeting between Harsha and Xuanzang in 640, a year before the Indian embassy reached China. The problem is also complicated by Xuanzang's description of his entry into Kanyakubja. At the end of Chapter 4 (T.2087: 893b.28–29) of his diary, Xuanzang notes that he entered Kanyakubja from the kingdom of Qiebita (Kapitha, near present-day Farrukhabad). In Chapter 5 (T.2087: 894c.19), where he describes his meeting with Harsha, Xuanzang says

been the king of Kanauj for decades before his embassy reached China, *Xin Tang shu* (New Dynastic History of the Tang) notes that the embassy from Middle India brought a letter that informed the Chinese court about Harsha's recent "proclamation to the throne of Magadha."¹⁶ Rather than a gesture of prostration, as the Chinese records would have us believe about any correspondence from foreign rulers, the letter from Harsha to the Chinese emperor may have just been a self-introductory communication. Pointing to the fact that Harsha was at the height of his power when he dispatched the mission to China, D. Devahuti writes, "politically ambitious, intellectually vigorous, and confident in an over-all atmosphere of activity and well-being for which he himself was mainly responsible, Harsha may be expected to have opened relations with China for reasons that flow from such conditions." She further notes that Buddhism may have provided extra impetus to the opening of diplomatic contacts between the two countries.¹⁷

In response, the Chinese court sent Liang Huaijing, a mid-level official, probably from the Honglu si (Court of State Ceremonials), to escort Harsha's envoy back to India. Liang held the title of Yunqi wei (Commandant of Fleet-as-clouds Cavalry), a merit title for military officials.¹⁸ The title may not necessarily mean that the Chinese embassy was on a military mission. The Court of State Ceremonials, the office in charge of diplomatic affairs, was often headed by and

that he proceeded to Kanyakubja with the king of Kamarupa in East India. The use of the word *chu* ("in the beginning") before the narration of the meeting indicates that Xuanzang may have been reflecting on a past event. Since he traveled from Magadha to Karmarupa, before proceeding to Kanyakubja, and the fact that Harsha calls the Chinese monk "the distant guest of Nalanda" seems to indicate that the meeting took place when Xuanzang was still a student of the renowned Buddhist university. In this case, Xuanzang may have met the Indian king as early as 637 or 638 (see the note on Xuanzang's dream below). See D. Devahuti, *Harsha: A Political Study* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983); Yang Tingfu, *Xuanzang nianpu* (Chronology of Xuanzang) (repr., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988); and Kuwayama Shoshin, "How Xuanzang Learned about Nalanda," in *Tang China and Beyond: Studies on East Asia from the Seventh to the Tenth Century*, ed. Antonino Forte (Kyoto: Istituto Italiano di Cultura Scuola di Studi sull'Asia Orientale, 1988), pp. 1–33.

¹⁶ Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) and Song Qi (998–1061), *Xin Tang shu* 221a (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975): 6237. The Chinese, at least since the time of Faxian (337?–422?), refer to the area around Pataliputra (present day Patna) in Middle India as Magadha—the name of Ashoka's kingdom. Xuanzang differentiates between Harsha's kingdom, which he calls Keluojuzhe/Qunüchengguo (Kanyakubja), and Magadha (Mojietuo). He notes, however, that Harsha's authority extended over the Magadhan region. Because of the Ashokan connection, Magadha, for the Chinese, was not only familiar but also a more prestigious designation.

¹⁷ D. Devahuti, *Harsha*, p. 254.

¹⁸ Translation of official titles in this essay is based on Charles O. Hucker's *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

employed officials with military background.¹⁹ As part of their responsibilities, the officials at the Court of State Ceremonies were to make inquiries and gather information about foreign countries, and visit “foreign lands to cultivate good relations.”²⁰ According to Feng Chengjun, Liang may have been part of the Chinese delegation that escorted the Tang princess Wencheng to Tibet. Liang’s trip to India, Feng argues, was only a supplement to his main mission.²¹ As will be suggested later, however, it may be a mistake to completely rule out a Chinese military interest in the Kingdom of Kanauj.

When Liang Huaijing arrived in Kanauj, as *Xin Tang shu* notes, “Harsha asked the people of his country: ‘Have any envoys from Mahacina come to my country in the past?’ They all answered, ‘No.’ And when he was told that the Middle Kingdom was Mahacina, [the king] came out [of the palace]. Prostrating himself, he received the imperial letter and placed it on his head. He again sent an envoy [with Liang Huaijing] to the Chinese court.”²² The sinocentric worldview of this account notwithstanding, diplomatic ties between Kanauj and the Tang court were now formally established.

Two years later, in the seventeenth year of the Zhenguan era (643), a high-level delegation from the Tang court was sent to India. Consisting of twenty-two people, the mission was led by Li Yibiao, who held the titles of Chaosan dafu (Grand Master for Closing Court), Weiweisi cheng (Aide to the Court of the Imperial Regalia), and Shang hujun (Senior Military Protector), and his second-in-command Wang Xuance, a former District Magistrate (Xianling).²³ Arriving in Kanauj in the twelfth lunar month of the same reign era (January–February 644), the Chinese envoys attended a Buddhist ceremony organized by Harsha. During the ceremony they also gained an audience with the king of Kamarupa. On February 18, 645, the mission reached the city of Rajagriha, where they placed an inscription tablet at the foot of the

¹⁹ On the evolution of the Court of State Ceremonials and its role in Sino-foreign contacts, see Li Hu, *Han Tang waijiao zhidu shi* (A History of Foreign Policy from Han to Tang Dynasties) (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 1998); see also Iwami Kiyohiro, “To no Koroji to Korokyakkan” (The Tang Court of State Ceremonials and the Guest House of the Court of State Ceremonials), *Kodai bunka* 42, no. 8 (1990): 48–56; and Pan, *Son of Heaven*, pp. 75–81.

²⁰ Pan, *Son of Heaven*, p. 77.

²¹ Feng Chengjun, “Wang Xuance shi ji” (Collection of Materials Concerning Wang Xuance), repr. in *Xiyu Nanhai shidi kaozheng huibian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1957), pp. 102–128, especially p. 126.

²² *Xin Tang shu* 221a: 6238.

²³ Daoshi, comp. (668), *Fayuan zhulin* (Pearl-grove of the Garden Law) notes that the mission was sent to accompany a Brahman, probably an envoy from Harsha, who was returning to his country. See T. 2122: 504b.1–3.

sacred mountain Gridrakuta. On March 13, 645, the envoy visited the Mahabodhi Monastery in Bodh Gaya and placed an inscription beneath the Bodhi tree under which Shakyamuni is supposed to have attained enlightenment.²⁴ This mission also included an artisan named Song Fazhi, who drew various images of Buddhist architecture and artifacts. The painting of the Maitreya under the Bodhi tree that he seems to have drawn in India was later used as a blueprint for a sculpture at the Jing'ai Monastery in Luoyang.²⁵

The object of this second Tang embassy to India was more than just to visit sacred Buddhist sites. *Xin Tang shu*, *Cefu yuangui*, *Tang hui yao* (Draft History of the Tang Dynasty), and some other Chinese sources note that Emperor Taizong sent this mission with the aim of acquiring the technology of boiling sugar.²⁶ The biography of Xuanzang in *Xu gao-seng zhuan* (Continuation of the Biographies of the Eminent Monks) explains the episode in greater detail:

[King] Harsha and the monks [from Mahabodhi Monastery] each sent secondary envoys carrying various sutras and treasures to go afar and present [the gifts] to China. The Indian missions had access [to China] since the time of Xuanzang. They were told that this was the way of the Emperor. When the envoys were about to return to the West, Wang Xuance and twenty others were ordered to go towards Bactria along with them. Moreover, they were presented with more than a thousand bolts of silk. Wang [Xuance], monks, and others had their individual assignments. At the [Maha]bodhi Monastery, the monks summoned the makers of sharkara (sugar), and then sent two makers

²⁴ The contents of these two inscriptions are found in *Fayuan zhulin* T. 2122: 503b. 11–16 and 504b. 10–22. See Sylvain Lévi, “Les Missions de Wang Hiuén-ts’è dans l’Inde,” *Journal Asiatique* 9, no. 15 (1900): 297–341, 401–468; and Éd. Chavannes, “Les Inscriptions Chinoises de Bodh-Gayā: Le Bouddhisme en Chine et dans l’Inde aux Xe et XIe Siècles,” *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions* 34 (1886): 1–58, especially pp. 27–32.

²⁵ See *Fayuan zhulin* T. 2122: 503a.6–12; and Zhang Yanyuan (815–?), *Lidai minghua ji* (Records of the Famous Painters of All the Dynasties) 3 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1965): 213.

²⁶ *Xin Tang shu* 221a: 6239; *Cefu yuangui* 970: 11400b; and Wang Pu (922–982), *Tang hui yao* 100 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1991): 2135. On detailed studies of the transmission of the sugar-making technology from India to Tang China, see the following works by Ji Xianlin: “CĪNĪ wenti—Zhong-Yin wenhua jiaoliu de yige lizheng” (The Problem of CĪNĪ: An Example of Sino-Indian Cultural Exchanges), *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 4 (1987), repr. in Ji Xianlin, *Ji Xianlin xueshu lunzhu zixuan ji* (Collection of Self-selected Scholarly Articles of Ji Xianlin) (Beijing: Beijing Shifan xueyuan chubanshe, 1991), pp. 650–660; “Tang Taizong yu Mojietuo—Tangdai Yindu zhitangshu chuanru Zhongguo wenti” (Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty and Magadha: The Problem of the Transmission of Indian Sugar-making Technology During the Tang Dynasty), *Wenxian* 2 (1988): 3–21 and 3 (1988): 232–248; and *Wenhua jiaoliu de guji: Zhonghua zhe tang shi* (Tracks of Cultural Intercourse: The History of Chinese Cane Sugar) (Beijing: Jingji ribao chubanshe, 1997).

[of sugar] and eight monks to accompany [the Chinese embassy] to China. An Imperial decree was requested in order to proceed to Yuezhou.²⁷ There, using sugarcane, they were able to make sugar. Everything was successfully accomplished.²⁸

The above event demonstrates the involvement of Buddhist monks not only in diplomatic contacts between China and India, but also informs us of their role in the transmission of the sugar-making technology. The impact of this technological transfer on later Chinese history and society has been noted in the works of Christian Daniels and Sucheta Mazumdar.²⁹ Both have emphasized the Buddhist elements involved in the transmission. Daniels suggests that the motive behind the technology transfer may have originated with the Buddhist monks rather than the imperial court. Given the significance of sugar in Buddhist doctrine, it is entirely possible that the initial desire for sugar-making technology was greater among the Chinese Buddhist community than among court officials or the common people.³⁰ It is also conceivable, then, that the Buddhist monks were intentionally included in the Tang mission in order to bring the technology to China.

While the Tang embassy was meeting the Indian leaders, touring Buddhist sites, and arranging the transfer of sugar-making technology, Xuanzang was on his way home. Whether Xuanzang, before he returned to China, knew of the developing diplomatic ties between the two powerful courts of Asia is unclear. He did, however, put the success of his unofficial diplomatic role to the test before he entered China. Eager to return to China with more than six hundred volumes of Buddhist texts he had collected from Indian monasteries, Xuanzang sent a letter to the Tang emperor from Khotan. Seeking the permission to reenter China, Xuanzang underlined his role in dissemination of the Chinese civilization and the propagation of the emperor's virtues. He had, Xuanzang notes, "publicized His Majesty's grace and virtues in order to inspire the respect and admiration of people in countries with

²⁷ *Xin Tang shu* notes the site as Yangzhou.

²⁸ Daoxuan (596–667), *Xu gaoseng zhuan* T. 2060: 454c.22–29. For variant translations, see Sucheta Mazumdar, *Sugar and Society in China: Peasants, Technology, and the World Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 27; and Christian Daniels, "Agro-Industries: Sugarcane Technology," in Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China*, Volume 6, *Biology and Biological Technology*, Part 3, *Agro-Industries and Forestry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 370–371.

²⁹ Daniels, "Agro-Industries," and Mazumdar, *Sugar and Society*.

³⁰ Buddhist monastic laws, which propounded strict dietary rules, allowed the use of two by-products of cane sugar. While a syrup called *phanita* (Ch. *zhejiang*) could be used to treat illness, *gulodaka*, a mixture of molasses and water, was allowed in regular cuisine. See Mazumdar, *Sugar and Society*, pp. 21–26.

dissimilar traditions.”³¹ Probably aware of Xuanzang’s contribution to the opening of diplomatic ties between China and Kanauj, the emperor immediately sent a reply stating that he was “extremely happy to learn that the monk had returned after seeking the Way in foreign lands. You can come and see me at once.”³² On the seventh (or sixth) day of the first month of the nineteenth year of the Zhenguan period (645), the now famous pilgrim arrived at the Tang capital with great fanfare. On the twenty-third day of the same month, Xuanzang had his first audience with Emperor Taizong at his palace in Luoyang.

Emperor Taizong was preparing a large scale military offensive against Koguryo when he met Xuanzang. Two months earlier the emperor, facing stiff opposition from his leading ministers, had tried hard to justify his expedition against the Korean kingdom. In an edict issued from Luoyang, the emperor described the Koguryo leader Yon Kaesomun as a tyrant. To emancipate the people of Koguryo and the neighboring kingdoms from Yon’s cruelties, the emperor argued, an offensive action was not only necessary but also morally justified.³³ The return of Xuanzang must have been taken as an auspicious sign by the emperor. Hence, Taizong, who was generally unsympathetic and sometimes critical of the Buddhist cause, quickly granted audience to Xuanzang.³⁴ Taizong’s aim was not to learn about Buddhist teachings from Xuanzang, nor perhaps was he terribly interested in the details of the Western Regions at that moment, although he did ask the pilgrim to write an account of his journey. More likely, as can be seen from Taizong’s suggestion for Xuanzang to return to secular life and assist him in administrative affairs, the emperor wanted to secure spiritual support for his temporal quest. In fact, Taizong indirectly made such a request to the monk: “I cannot completely express my ideas in such a hurry. I wish that you could come with me to the Eastern region and observe the local customs. We can carry on the conversation besides directing the army.”³⁵

³¹ Huili and Yancong, comp. (688), *Da Tang da Ci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan*, T. 2053: 251c.26. Slightly modified from Li Rongxi’s translation in *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), p. 168.

³² *Da Tang da Ci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan* T. 2053: 252a.6–7.

³³ *Zizhi tongjian* 197: 6214; see also Howard J. Wechsler, “T’ai-tsung (reign 626–49) the Consolidator,” in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 3, Sui and T’ang China, 589–906*, Part 1, eds. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbanks, pp. 188–241; and Pan, *Son of Heaven*, pp. 210–217.

³⁴ For Taizong’s attitude towards Buddhism, see Arthur F. Wright, “T’ang T’ai-tsung and Buddhism,” in *Perspectives on the T’ang*, eds. Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 239–263; and Weinstein, *Buddhism*, pp. 11–27.

³⁵ *Da Tang da Ci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan* T. 2053: 253b.21–22.

In the past a number of Buddhist monks, especially those from South and Central Asia, had participated in Chinese military campaigns. The success of their magical and miraculous powers in such operations was legendary since at least the fourth century. The Kuchean monk Fotudeng, who arrived in China in 310, is perhaps the best example of such "state-monks."³⁶ In the fifth century, renowned monks such as Jiumoluoshi (Kumarajiva), Tanwuchan (Dharmaksema?), and Qiunabamo (Gunavarman?) are also known to have assisted the Chinese rulers in military and state affairs. It is not surprising, therefore, that Taizong sought Xuanzang's assistance in the war against the Korean kingdom.

Xuanzang, aware of the Chinese emperor's intent, politely turned down the request. "I think," he explained, "I do not have any abilities to help the campaign. Therefore, I shall only feel guilty of wasting provisions on the way." And, with the aim of projecting himself as a true Buddhist, Xuanzang added that the Buddhist rules prohibited him from being involved in battles and wars.³⁷ The Tang emperor did not pursue the matter any further. Before departing for his Korean campaign, however, he arranged accommodation for Xuanzang at the Hongfu Monastery in the capital and asked him to write an account of the foreign countries he visited.

The Tang forces met with initial success in the war against Koguryo. A number of enemy towns in the Liaodong region were quickly sacked by the Chinese troops. However, the failure to capture a key town, lack of supplies, and cold weather turned the tide against Taizong and his army. In the tenth lunar month of 645, a severe winter storm killed hundreds of Tang soldiers.³⁸ The fatigued emperor himself seems to have picked up a life-threatening illness during a blizzard.³⁹ Even after the ailing Taizong returned to the capital in the second lunar month of the twentieth year of the Zhenguan period (646), the Tang offensive against the Korean kingdom continued. And although Yon Kaesomun sent a special embassy to the Tang court to "acknowledge guilt,"⁴⁰ Taizong was determined to go all the way to the Koguryo capital. The following year, however, when the Tang army intensified the military offensive, the emperor was too weak to lead his army.

³⁶ See Arthur F. Wright, "Fo-t'u-teng: A Biography," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 3-4 (December 1948): 321-371.

³⁷ *Da Tang da Ci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan* T. 2053: 253b.25-253c.1.

³⁸ *Zizhi tongjian* 198: 6230.

³⁹ *Zizhi tongjian* notes that the emperor fell sick when his entourage reached Dingzhou in the twelfth lunar month. See 198: 6232.

⁴⁰ *Zizhi tongjian* 198: 6236.

WAR AND LONGEVITY

The last two years of Taizong's life are marked by a quest for quick remedies for his failing health, including the search for life-prolonging drugs and spiritual healing. It is perhaps because of this health factor that Buddhism and India become important highlights in the closing years of arguably the most dynamic Tang emperor. Credit for drawing the emperor's attention to the fruits of good karma and to the Indian doctors specializing in life-prolonging drugs goes to Xuanzang and the Tang envoys returning from India.

In the twenty-first year of the Zhenguan period (647), Li Yibiao, the Tang ambassador who led the Chinese embassy to Kanauj in 643, finally managed to obtain an audience with the emperor. Li Yibiao and his entourage, including the sugar-makers, seem to have reached China in late 645 or early 646, when the emperor was still engaged in the military campaign against Koguryo. With the returning Chinese embassy, King Harsha sent a third diplomatic mission carrying gifts that included fire pearls, turmeric, and a [sample of?] Bodhi tree. In his report to the emperor, Li Yibiao made note of another king he had met in India:

In the region of King Tongzi (Kumara) of East India,⁴¹ neither Buddhism nor any other foreign religion has flourished. I have already told [the king] that in China, before [the coming of] Buddhism, there were already the sayings of sage men that were popular among the people. However, this literature has not come [here]. The people who get to hear [these Chinese sayings] will definitely believe and honor them. The king said: "When you return to your country, translate it into Sanskrit. I would like to read it. It should definitely come to this disciple since it is not too late for transmission."⁴²

In response to the Indian king's request, the emperor ordered Daoist priests, in collaboration with Xuanzang, to translate the Daoist work *Daode jing* into Sanskrit.⁴³ The reluctant Xuanzang, however, tried to convince the court that it was not worth translating the Daoist text. First, Xuanzang explained, it would be linguistically impossible to

⁴¹ Li Yibiao probably means King Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa. See Paul Pelliot, "Autour d'une Traduction Sanscrite du Tao Tö King," *T'oung Pao* 13 (1912): 351-430, p. 382 n. 1.

⁴² Daoxuan (596-667), *Ji gujin fodaolunheng [shilu]* T. 2104: 386b.25-386c.1.

⁴³ For a detailed study of this episode, see Pelliot, "Autour d'une Traduction Sanscrite." The practice of propagating Daoism through diplomatic missions during the Tang dynasty

translate Chinese words into Sanskrit. Secondly, he argued, since the belief system of the Indians was completely different from that of the Chinese, it would be difficult for them to understand Daoist philosophy. The translated text may become a laughingstock, warned Xuanzang.⁴⁴ Certainly, the Buddhist monk did not want any part in the promotion of a rival sect in his Holy Land.

Whether the main assignment for the next Tang embassy to India, sent in early 648, was to present the translated Daoist scripture to the king of Kamarupa is not documented. In fact, extant sources indicate that Xuanzang or the Daoist master, who received orders from Emperor Taizong, may not have completed the translation of *Daode jing* into Sanskrit.⁴⁵ This third Tang embassy, nonetheless, became the most celebrated of the Chinese missions to India. The lead envoy Wang Xuance's stunning victory against the Indian king Aluonashun, the usurper of the throne of Harsha, is the reason for the distinction given to the Tang envoy and this particular mission to Middle India.

Indian sources fail to tell us when and how Harsha died. Nor is Aluonashun's role in the destruction of Kanauj mentioned in any available Indian records.⁴⁶ Indeed, the only clues about the two events, as the section on the death of Harsha in Devahuti's work shows, come from Chinese material.⁴⁷ In the fourth lunar month of the twenty-second year of the Zhenguan period (648), the Chinese sources inform us, soldiers led by Aluonashun attacked Wang Xuance and his entourage. Most of the members of the Chinese embassy were either killed or captured by the Indian attacker. Only Wang Xuance, who now had the title of You Weishuaifu (Right Defense Guard Commandant), and his

is noted in T. H. Barrett's *Taoism under the T'ang: Religion & Empire during the Golden Age of Chinese History* (London: The Wellsweep Press, 1996), pp. 22–23.

⁴⁴ *Ji gujin fodaolunheng [shilu]* T. 2104: 386b.24–387b.2; and *Xu gaoseng zhuan* T. 2060: 455b.15–455c.10.

⁴⁵ See Sun Xiushen, "Jiamoluguo Tongzi wang qing Laozi xiang ji 'Daode jing'" (The Image of Laozi and *Daode jing* Requested by King Kumara of Kamarupa), in *Wang Xuance shiji gouchen* (Trawling the Achievements of Wang Xuance), ed. Sun Xiushen (Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1998), pp. 117–122.

⁴⁶ Sun Xiushen uses a notice on the battle between Wang Xuance and Aluonashun which he says is a Chinese translation of Harsha's drama *Nagananda* (Ch. *Long xi ji*). However, Sun's reference is to the Tibetan *Deb-ther dkar-po* (The White Annals) written by the twentieth-century author Dge-'dun-chos-'phel (1905?–1951?). See Sun's "Tufan chujun zhu Tangshi pingpan" (Troops Dispatched by Tibet to Help the Tang Envoy Quell a Rebellion), in *Wang Xuance shiji gouchen*, pp. 111–112. I have been unable to locate the episode in the extant Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of *Nagananda*. On an earlier Tibetan record of the Wang Xuance episode, found in 'Tshal-pa Kun-dga'rdo-rje's fourteenth-century work *Deb-ther dmar-po* (The Red Annals), see Narayan Chandra Sen, *Accounts of India and Kashmir in the Dynastic Histories of the T'ang Period* (Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati, 1968), p. 5.

⁴⁷ Devahuti provides useful translations of Chinese sources regarding the death of Harsha and the diplomatic intercourse between China and Kanauj. See *Harsha*, pp. 238–263.

second-in-command Jiang Shiren escaped. After they arrived in Tibet, the two members of the Chinese embassy assembled a regiment of twelve hundred mercenaries and more than seven hundred Nepali cavalry. Xuance's army then launched an attack on Aluonashun. "In three days of continuous fighting," notes *Jiu Tang shu* (The Old Dynastic History of the Tang), "they (the troops led by Wang Xuance) completely overpowered the barbarians. More than three thousand people were beheaded, and those who jumped into the water and died by drowning numbered more than ten thousand. Aluonashun abandoned the city and fled, [but] Shiren pursued and captured him. The men and women who were taken captive numbered two thousand, and the cows and horses seized were more than thirty thousand. India trembled at these [events]. [Wang Xuance] returned [to China] taking Aluonashun as a captive."⁴⁸ The prestigious title of the Grand Master for Closing Court was bestowed upon Wang Xuance for his success in the battle.

Although it is clear that Harsha, whom the Chinese seem to have respected and admired, died sometime between 646 and early 648, a number of important issues remain unsettled.⁴⁹ Who was Aluonashun? Did he really usurp Harsha's throne? And finally, what provoked Aluonashun to attack the Tang embassy? Given the exaggerated Chinese accounts and the absence of Indian records, we can only guess what events may actually have transpired.

Most Chinese sources on the battle between Wang Xuance and Aluonashun record that the Indian attacker was the king of a Dinafudi kingdom. Waddell, Lévi, and other modern scholars have deciphered the name of the kingdom to be the transliteration of Tirabhukti, a small kingdom in northern Bihar. The site of the battle is reported as Chaboheluo (Champaran?) on the banks of river Qiantuo-wei (Gandaki?).⁵⁰ Although the clash between the Chinese-led mer-

⁴⁸ Liu Xu (887–946), *Jiu Tang shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975) 198: 5308. For a detailed study of the battle, see L. A. Waddell, "Tibetan Invasion of India in 647 AD and Its Results," *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record* 31, no. 61–62 (January–April 1911): 37–65.

⁴⁹ Daoxuan (596–667), the author of Xuanzang's biography in *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, notes that Xuanzang, when in India, dreamt of a golden man who foretold him that King Harsha would die after ten years. "Then," he writes, "at the end of the Yongwei period, King Shiladitya died as expected. And now there is chaos [in India], just as [was foretold] in the dream." See T. 2060: 452c.19–22. Daoxuan's account of the situation in Kanauj is clearly based on the report given by Wang Xuance on his return to China in 648. In this case, Daoxuan was probably narrating an event sometime in 637 or 638, shortly before Xuanzang's audience with Harsha. See note 15.

⁵⁰ See Waddell's "Tibetan Invasion" for a detailed examination of the geography and sites involved in the battle.

cenary army and the Indian ruler may have been a historical fact, the Chinese scribes probably fabricated Aluonashun's role as a usurper. Had such a noteworthy uprising taken place in Kanauj, it may have found its way into the twelfth-century north Indian work *Rajatarangini*.⁵¹ Rather, it is likely that Harsha died a natural death. Instead of the usurper, Aluonashun could have been one of the many rulers who sought to benefit from the chaos that followed the sudden death of Harsha. Aluonashun may have attacked the Chinese embassy either because he thought the mission was on its way to reinforce the existing regime in Kanauj, or perhaps he wanted to rob the entourage of the precious gifts it may have been carrying. Wang Xuance's victory not only made him a hero in China, but the whole episode was depicted by the Tang scribes as an appropriate punishment for someone who had ambushed the peaceful Chinese delegation and deposed a just Indian ruler.

As if the captured Indian villain was not enough to demonstrate the success of the mission, Wang Xuance returned to China with a Brahman doctor. Called Naluoershapo[mei] (Narayanasvamin?), the Brahman physician introduced himself as an expert in preparing longevity drugs. To demonstrate the potency of his skills, he claimed to be over two hundred years old. Indian medicine, including Brahman doctors of longevity, seems to have been popular in China during the Tang and earlier periods.⁵² The *Sui shu* (Dynastic History of the Sui), for example, records a number of Brahmanical medical texts and prescriptions that dealt with various symptoms.⁵³ Xuanzang, too, in his diary presented to the emperor, notes the training in longevity and medicine that Brahmans in India receive. Before the popularity of esoteric Buddhism in eighth-century Tang China, which propagated its own liturgical ways to immortality, Brahmans were often sought to manufacture longevity drugs. Is it possible that one of the motives for sending Wang Xuance to India was to find such a Brahman for the ailing Taizong?

⁵¹ Kalhana (fl. twelfth century), the Kashmiri author of *Rajatarangini*, not only includes records on Kanyakubja during the post-Harsha period, but seems also to have studied the life of the famous seventh-century king in some detail. See M. A. Stein, trans., *Kalhana's Rajatarangini: A Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir*, 3 vols. (repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1989), I: 11.

⁵² For Buddhist and Brahmanical medicine in ancient China, see Paul U. Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), Chapter 6; Liu Chengji, "Zhong-Yin lishi shang de yiyao guanxi" (Medical Contacts in the History of Sino-Indian Relations), *Zhongyi zazhi* 4 (1958): 280-283; and Fan Xingjun, "Hufang kao" (An Examination of Foreign Prescriptions [in Ancient China]), *Zhonghua yixue zazhi* 22, 1112 (1936): 145-176.

⁵³ Wei Zheng (580-643) et al., comp., *Sui shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971): 1019-1026.

The quest for a longevity doctor, especially at a time when the emperor had recently witnessed the deaths of some of his leading officials and was struggling with his own health problems, is hardly surprising.⁵⁴ However, Chen Tsu-lung, in his study of the "Hot-spring Inscription" penned by Taizong in the first lunar month of the twenty-second year of the Zhenguan period (648), has dismissed the Tang emperor's interest in the "doctrine of immortality."⁵⁵ "First of all," he writes, "should we care to study the contents of this (the Hot-spring Inscription) rubbing, it would be quite easy for us to understand how much T'ai-tsung (Taizong) preferred maintaining his health by bathing in a hot-spring rather than take any 'drug of giving long life' and then, according to the *Chen-kuan Cheng-yao* (Zhenguan zhengyao), he is reported to have severely criticized both the First Emperor (r. 246–208) of the Ch'in (Qin) Dynasty and the Emperor Wu (r. 140–85 B.C.) of the Western Han Dynasty for their devotion to the doctrine of immortality and their foolishness in pinning their faith on the elixir of life."⁵⁶ But, it is apparent that this strong and "practical" leader had a change of heart and his faith took a significant turn in the last few months of his life.

For most of his life Taizong had little or no interest in either Buddhist philosophy or India. But he did, as was suggested above, share some of the popular beliefs regarding the miraculous powers of Buddhist monks. In 648, still adamant about punishing the Koguryo king, the emperor once again pressed Xuanzang to participate in state affairs. Xuanzang for the second straight time declined the emperor's request. Xuanzang's refusal, instead of deterring the emperor, actually seems to have drawn him closer to the Buddhist doctrine. In fact, as has been pointed out by modern scholars, the emperor's interaction with Xuanzang kindled his interest in Buddhist activities. And soon, "performing a volte-face," writes Stanley Weinstein, "he (Emperor Taizong) now proclaimed Buddhism to be superior to both Confucianism and Taoism (Daoism) as well as to the other schools of Chinese philosophy."⁵⁷ Weinstein is right when he explains that the emperor's change of heart was "largely attributable to his failing health."⁵⁸ Taizong's

⁵⁴ Taizong was particularly struck by the deaths of the scholar-official Gao Shilian in the first lunar month of 647, and a year later the Secretariat Director Ma Zhou. See *Zizhi tongjian* 198: 6244; 6252.

⁵⁵ See Chen Tsu-lung, "On the 'Hot-spring Inscription' Preserved by a Rubbing in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris," *T'oung Pao* 46, no. 1–2 (1958): 376–396.

⁵⁶ Chen Tsu-lung, "On the 'Hot-spring Inscription,'" p. 387.

⁵⁷ Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism Under the T'ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 25.

⁵⁸ Weinstein, *Buddhism*, p. 26.

changing attitude is clearly demonstrated in the discussion he had with Xuanzang in mid-648. "Worried about his life," as Yancong, one of the biographers of Xuanzang, puts it, the emperor asked the Buddhist master to name the most meritorious deed that the Tang ruler could perform. Xuanzang suggested that the ordination of monks would be most beneficial. A few months later, in the first day of the ninth lunar month of 648, the emperor issued an edict allowing the ordination of 18,500 monks and nuns.⁵⁹

Within a few days of the issuance of this edict, Wang Xuance returned from India with the captured tyrant and the longevity doctor. Did Taizong interpret the arrival of the Brahman expert on life-prolonging drugs to be retribution for his meritorious deed of ordaining monks? Indeed, the emperor's action does indicate an anticipated miracle from the Indian doctor. Ignoring his own criticism of "foolish seekers of longevity," Taizong housed the wonderworker in the Office of Precious Metals and ordered him to produce the life-prolonging drug. The emperor assigned the Minister of War, Cui Dunli, to look after the needs of the alchemist. Every effort seems to have been made to provide the doctor with ingredients required to manufacture the drug for the emperor. "Envoys," *Zizhi tongjian* records, "were sent in four directions to find strange herbs and rare stones. Embassies were also sent to the Indian kingdoms to procure [longevity] drugs."⁶⁰ The cordial reception the Indian doctor received seems to confirm that bringing Indian life-prolonging technology and technicians to China could have been one of the, if not the main, tasks of the third Tang mission to Middle India.

Neither karmic deeds nor the Indian longevity doctor, however, were able to prolong Emperor Taizong's life. In the third lunar month of the twenty-third year of the Zhenguan period (649) the emperor died at the age of 49. A few years later, when Emperor Li Zhi (posthumously known as Gaozong) wanted to experiment with longevity drugs, high officials at the court pointed out the failed attempt of the Indian doctor to save his father. They even suggested that the death of Taizong may have resulted from the drugs concocted by the Brahman Narayanasvamin.⁶¹ The blame for bringing the Indian doctor was put on Wang Xuance, who now held the title of You (Companion) to Li Yuanqing (one of the sons of Emperor Gaozu). Wang tried to defend

⁵⁹ *Da Tang da Ci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan* T. 2053: 259a.1-11.

⁶⁰ *Zizhi tongjian* 200: 6303.

⁶¹ *Jiu Tang shu* 84: 2799.

the doctor's abilities, but Emperor Gaozong, like his father, took note of the foolish desires of the First Emperor and Emperor Wu and decided to send the doctor back to India.⁶² Accusing Wang of trickery and lying, one of the powerful Chief Ministers, Li Ji (594–669), seconded the emperor's decision.⁶³

Before he could embark on his voyage home, the disgraced doctor of longevity died at the Chinese capital. Nonetheless, the quest for life-prolonging drugs and doctors from India persisted, and Wang Xuance maintained his status as an expert of Indian affairs. In fact, a few months after the severe criticism, the Indophile was once again on his way to Middle India.

WANG XUANCE AND BUDDHISM

Fragments of Wang Xuance's records of his visits to India, a memorial he presented to the Tang court in 662, and recent archaeological evidence indicate that the Chinese diplomat was a lay Buddhist. These sources provide crucial information about Wang Xuance's personal life which, due to the lack of biographical material and the loss of the diplomat's original diary, would have otherwise remained unknown.⁶⁴ Wang Xuance's feelings about Buddhism and the fact that he was greatly touched by the Buddhist sites he visited is expressed in the following passage: "I had," the diplomat wrote about his maiden trip to Middle India in 643, "the unexpected good fortune to see the venerable foot-prints [of the Buddha]. Sometimes sad, sometimes happy, I could not control my feelings. This is why I have engraved an inscription on the mountain face to perpetuate an everlasting souvenir so that the emperor of the Tang may have a splendor as durable as that of the sun and the moon, and the law of the Buddha may be as extensive and as vast as this mountain and may obtain an equal strength."⁶⁵

What is more, the schedule of the 643 Tang embassy to India shows significant interaction between the Chinese envoys and the Indian Buddhist community. Even the transmission of the sugar-making tech-

⁶² *Zizhi tongjian* 200: 6303; and *Cefu yuangui* 46: 525a.

⁶³ *Cefu yuangui* 46: 525a–b.

⁶⁴ Wang Xuance's records of his visits to South Asia, *Zhong Tianzhuguo xing ji* (Records of the Travels to Middle India), in ten chapters was completed in the first year of the Kai-feng period (666). Included in the work were maps and sketches of India and Buddhist artifacts. For a recent study of the Chinese diplomat and his travels, see Sun Xiushen, *Wang Xuance shiji gouchen*. See also Lévi, "Les Missions" and Feng, "Wang Xuance."

⁶⁵ *Fayuan zhulin* T. 2122: 504b.8–9.

nology, as we saw above, involved Buddhist monks and monasteries. Wang Xuance's third trip during the Xianqing period (656–660) was also dominated by Buddhist activities. Sent sometime in the third lunar month of the third year of the Xianqing period (658), the purpose of this fourth Tang embassy to Middle India was to carry a robe for presentation at the Mahabodhi Monastery—a meritorious deed of gift giving (*dana*) on behalf of Emperor Gaozong. Buddhist monks, including a Sogdian named Sengjiapamo (Sanghavarman?), were part of this imperial pilgrimage.⁶⁶ On November 5, 660, Jielong (Shilana?), the head of the Mahabodhi Monastery, organized a grand reception for the Chinese embassy and presented Wang Xuance with gifts that included pearls, ivory, relics of the Buddha, and impressions of the Buddha. By now, if not at an earlier stage, the Tang diplomat had fully converted to Buddhist teachings. His strong faith in and support for Buddhism is reflected in the memorial he presented to the Tang court soon after he returned from India.

Wang Xuance reached the Tang capital in the spring of the first year of the Longshao period (661). After several months, Emperor Gaozong revived the controversy regarding the Buddhist tradition of not bowing to the laity and the temporal ruler. On the fifteenth day of the fourth month of 662, the emperor issued an edict calling his officials to debate on the topic. Sixty-four officials reported their views on the issue in the following month. Wang Xuance's memorial was one of the thirty-two that supported the position of the Buddhist community. "I have," wrote Wang, "witnessed and heard a number of things through the three diplomatic missions [to India] that I undertook. I have heard that King Shuddhodana was the father of the Buddha, and Mahamaya his mother. Monk Upali, who was originally a servant of the royal family, received personal obeisance from the king just as the Buddha did. I have, moreover, seen that the monks and nuns of that country, who according to the [monastic] laws do not worship the various heavenly gods and spirits, also do not pay homage to the kings and parents. The kings and parents, [on the contrary], all bow to the monks, nuns and various other followers of the Way." After giving other examples and quoting from Buddhist texts such as *Weimo jing* (Vimalakirti sutra) and *Fahua jing* (the Lotus sutra), Wang Xuance concluded by noting: "I hope, in accordance to the ways of the past, [you] do not change the rules, and following the previous policies of Emperor Wen (i.e., Taizong) let the custom of [monks and nuns] not bowing [to the laity] con-

⁶⁶ Yijing (635–713), *Da Tang Xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan* T. 2066: 4c.15–18.

tinue.”⁶⁷ In all, 539 officials supported the continuation of past policies and 354 opted for a change.⁶⁸

Proof of Wang Xuance’s Buddhist piety is also supported by archaeological sources. An inscription dated October 29, 665, found in the south Binyang cave of Longmen in Luoyang, records the installation of the image of Maitreya by Wang Xuance.⁶⁹ Another inscription, dated to the second year of the Yonglong period (681), found in the Bingling cave 54, in Gansu Province, depicts Wang Xuance’s pious act of installing images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas.⁷⁰ Although Wang Xuance seems to have stopped short of renouncing lay life, his nephew Zhihong took Buddhist vows and visited India in the eighth century.⁷¹

Indirect evidence also points to personal contacts among Wang Xuance and Xuanzang, the two most prominent Tang experts of India. In a letter, dated 654, written by Xuanzang to monks Jnanaprabha and Prajnadeva of Mahabodhi Monastery, the Chinese monk mentions that he learned about the recent death of his Indian teacher Dharmadirgha, from a “returning envoy.”⁷² The Tang envoy mentioned by Xuanzang may have been Wang Xuance. It is also possible that Xuanzang along with Wang Xuance suggested to Emperor Gaozong the idea of sending a special mission to bestow a robe at the Mahabodhi Monastery. It is hard to imagine that the emperor, who in 657 had forbidden monks and nuns from receiving obeisance from their parents and elders and was questioning other Buddhist customs, would have planned

⁶⁷ Yancong, comp., *Ji shamen buying baisu deng shi* (Collection of [Memorials] on why Monks should not Pay Homage to the Laity and Other Matters), T. 2108: 461c.28–462b.14; and Dong Hao (1740–1818), comp., *Quan Tangwen* (Complete Prose Literature of the Tang Dynasty) 204 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990): 910b–911a. One of the earliest debates on the issue, in the fifth century, is discussed in Leon Hurvitz’s “Render unto Caesar” in “Early Chinese Buddhism: Hui-yuan’s Treatise on the Exemption of the Buddhist Clergy from the Requirements of Civil Etiquette,” *Sino-Indian Studies* (Liebenthal Festschrift), 5.3–4 (1957): 80–114.

⁶⁸ Weinstein, *Buddhism*, pp. 32–34. For an extensive study of the debate, see Tonami Mamoru, *Todai seiji shakaishi kenkyu* (English Title: *Studies in the Political and Social History of Tang China*) (Kyoto: Dohosha, 1986), 488–496. For a brief overview of court debates before and during the Tang dynasty, see Livia Kohn, *Laughing at the Tao: Debates among Buddhists and Taoists in Medieval China* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1995), “Introduction.”

⁶⁹ See Wen Yucheng, “Longmen suo jian Zhongwai jiaotong shiliao chutan” (A Preliminary Study of Sources on Sino-Foreign Contacts from Longmen), *Xibei shidi* 1 (1983): 61–67.

⁷⁰ Lin Meicun, “Da Tang Tianzhu shi chu ming’ jiaozhu” (Annotation of the Inscription on the Mission to India during the Great Tang Dynasty), in his *Han-Tang Xiyu yu Zhongguo Wenming* (The Western Regions and the Chinese Civilization during the Han and Tang Dynasties) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998), pp. 420–442, especially p. 423.

⁷¹ *Da Tang Xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan* T. 2066: 8c.19–20.

⁷² *Da Tang da Ci’en si sanzang fashi zhuan* T. 2053: 261b.26–27.

the diplomatic pilgrimage himself. In fact, we find Xuanzang in the company of the emperor in the months preceding the Tang mission of 658. Like his father, Emperor Gaozong, too, revered Xuanzang. Even before he ascended to the Tang throne, Gaozong, in 636, appointed Xuanzang as the chief monk of the Ci'en Monastery dedicated to Gaozong's mother. The Chinese monk was also the spiritual preceptor to the emperor's first son by his wife Empress Wu. And in 657, when the monk wanted to leave the noisy capital and retire to the Shaolin Monastery, the emperor denied the request insisting that his "presence was necessary for the spiritual welfare of the Emperor."⁷³ In other words, it is likely that the Tang mission of 658 was sent to Middle India on Xuanzang's suggestion during his stay with the emperor. As before, Wang Xuance, recently criticized for bringing the Indian longevity doctor to China, was asked to perform the pious act of seeking good karma on behalf of the emperor.

Some scholars believe that Wang Xuance visited India for a fourth time between 663 and 665. The motive, they offer, was to bring the Chinese monk Xuanzhao back to China.⁷⁴ The argument is based on Xuanzhao's biography in *Da Tang Xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan* (Records of the Eminent Monks who went to the Western Regions during the Great Tang [Dynasty] in Search of the Law), which claims that the monk, on his way to North India during the Linde period (664–665), "met a Chinese envoy sent by the Tang emperor."⁷⁵ Those who support this view argue that the absence of notices on Wang Xuance's activities in China during the Linde period prove that the envoy mentioned in Xuanzhao's biography is none other than the veteran diplomat. This argument, however, is weak and cannot be substantiated. First, records of Wang Xuance's activities in China are so limited that their inadequacy cannot be used to prove that he was visiting India during the interim period. Second, the Buddhist sources that have highlighted Wang Xuance's diplomatic pilgrimages would have also recorded the Indophile's fourth visit, especially if it had been for yet another religious undertaking. The above episode is interesting, however, because both Xuanzhao and the Tang envoy of the Linde period were sent to India by the emperor to fetch a Brahman called Lujiayituo (Lokaditya?) and drugs of longevity.⁷⁶ It seems that Emperor Gaozong, who banished his father's Indian doctor, had not entirely discarded his intent of finding a way to longevity in India.

⁷³ See Weinstein, *Buddhism*, pp. 29–30.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Sun Xiushen, *Wang Xuance shiji gouchen*.

⁷⁵ *Da Tang Xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan* T. 2066: 2a.8.

⁷⁶ *Da Tang Xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan* T. 2066: 2a.8–10; and *Tang hui yao* 51a: 1040–1041.

CONCLUSION

The successful transmission of Buddhism from India to China was one of the important factors that catalyzed the interaction between the people of two countries, including missionaries, traders, performers, and court officials. Buddhism was also responsible for creating a favorable image of India among the Chinese populace.⁷⁷ Indeed, the designation Western Heaven (Xi Tian) for India in Chinese literature reflects the view of a large number, if not the majority, of Chinese. Although not widely recorded in Indian sources, the steady stream of missionaries, magicians, doctors, astronomers, and profit seekers from India to China indicate the equally approbatory image of China in South Asia.

Crucial to the development of the contacts between India and China was the role of individuals. With their own motives and interests these individuals facilitated the interaction between the two countries and contributed to the transmission and dissemination of information, technology, culture, and religion. Especially in the case of premodern Sino-Indian diplomatic relations, which could have been severely limited due to physical obstacles, individuals such as Xuanzang, Wang Xuance, Taizong, and Harsha played a significant role in sustaining, what Fernand Braudel calls, the “channels of movement.”⁷⁸ The flourishing diplomatic relationship between the Tang court and Kanauj is an example of how individuals, motivated by personal agendas, initiated and shaped cross-cultural exchange.

The ramifications of the diplomatic missions exchanged between the Tang court and Kanauj in the mid-seventh century, however, extend far and beyond the individuals who helped establish the bilateral relations. The biggest beneficiaries of the Tang missions to Middle India were the Buddhist communities in China and India. Stemming from Taizong’s desire to accumulate good deeds and his interest in Xuanzang, the Chinese Buddhist community secured the ordination of a large number of monks and nuns. It also procured financial grants from the court for various religious activities. One of the major imperial dedications to the Buddhist community during the reign of Emperor Taizong was the endowment of the Ci’en Monastery. Xuanzang was asked to move in and take charge of this lavishly decorated and fur-

⁷⁷ See Yang Jidong, “Replacing *hu* with *fan*: A Change in the Chinese Perception of Buddhism during the Medieval Period,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 21, no. 1 (1998): 157–170.

⁷⁸ See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols., trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 1: 277.

nished monastery.⁷⁹ Chinese Buddhist monasteries, with the help of the Tang embassies, also seem to have received a continuous supply of Buddhist texts and artifacts from India. In addition, as was suggested above, the Tang missions may have helped fulfill the demand for sugar-making technology among the Buddhist community in China.

In Middle India, the Mahabodhi Monastery was one of the main destinations of the Tang missions. The monastery, through the diplomatic missions and pilgrims, received perpetual gifts and donations from the Chinese emperors and Buddhist adherents. The interest of the Mahabodhi Monastery in pursuing ties with China is demonstrated in the grand receptions given to the Chinese embassies and in the letters exchanged between the abbots of the Indian monasteries and Xuanzang.⁸⁰ The frequent interaction among the monastery and the Chinese court and the Buddhist community may have brought further fame and fortune to the already renowned institution. Other Buddhist sites in India, including Nalanda and Gridrakuta, could have similarly benefited from the visits of Chinese embassies. More important, however, was the impetus that the Tang missions provided to the exchange of Buddhist monks between India and China. First, the imperial interest in Indian Buddhist sites may have motivated Chinese monks to make pilgrimages to India. Secondly, the visits of Chinese envoys seem to vouch for the cordial reception Buddhist missionaries could expect to receive in China. Consequently, we find that the number of Buddhist monks traveling between the two countries peaked in the seventh and eighth centuries.

An important factor facilitating the diplomatic ties and exchange of Buddhist monks between India and China in the seventh century was the peaceful relationship established in 640 between the Tang court and the Tibetan kingdom. The first Tang embassy to Kanauj coincides with the beginning of the period of peace along the China-Tibet-India route. As noted above, the Tang embassy of 641 may have been an extension of a Chinese diplomatic mission to Tibet. The shorter route from China to India through Tibet, as evidenced by written and archaeological sources, became popular among diplomats and Buddhist monks traveling between two countries.⁸¹ In 648, when Wang

⁷⁹ On the construction of the Ci'en Monastery and its dedication to Xuanzang, see *Da Tang da Ci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan* T. 2053: 257c.28–260a.6.

⁸⁰ See Devahuti, "Appendix IVA: Exchange of Letters between Monks in Maha-bodhi monastery in Bodh Gaya and Hsuan-tsang in Tz'u-en monastery in Ch'ang-an (Sian)," in *Harsha*, pp. 281–296.

⁸¹ An inscription laid by Wang Xuance and his entourage in Tibet in 658, which was discovered in 1990, confirms the popularity of the China-Tibet-India route in Sino-Indian

Xuance fled from the attacking forces of the “tyrant” Aluonashun, he used this route to escape to Tibet. It was perhaps because of the alliance between China and Tibet that he readily found military support from the Tibetans.

L. A. Waddell has proposed that the Tibetans instigated the attack on Aluonashun, and “the Chinese envoy merely ‘accompanied’ the force, and that it was *they* (the Tibetans) who attacked and inflicted the defeat.”⁸² Waddell’s argument, however, is based on his misinterpretation of Chinese record in the *Jiu Tang shu*. The passage which Waddell uses as the basis of his argument should read: “In the twenty-second year of the Zhenguan period (648), the Right Defense Guard Commandant [and] the Main Envoy Wang Xuance went to the Western Regions on a diplomatic mission. [His entourage] was attacked by Middle India. *The Tibetans dispatched picked troops to accompany Wang Xuance in attacking [Middle] India.* [They] completely destroyed Middle India. [The Tibetans] sent envoys who came to report the [news of] victory [to the Chinese court].”⁸³ In addition, all other extant Tang sources and even the two Tibetan records of the episode note that it was the Tibetans who assisted Wang Xuance after the Chinese entourage was attacked by Aluonashun. *Deb-ther dmar-po* (The Red Annals), for example, records “T’ai Tsung (Taizong) sent an envoy to India. That Magadha was to be conquered was *heard by* the Tibetans, who then sent soldiers and Magadha was conquered.”⁸⁴ Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's study of the reign of Srong-btsan-sgam-po (d. 649) also highlights the assistance of the Tibetan forces in capturing and handing over of the Indian king to the Chinese emperor. Emperor Taizong was

diplomatic intercourse. For discussion on the inscription, see Xizang Zizhiqu Wenguanhui Wenwu Puchadui, “Xizang Jilongxian faxian Tang Xianqing sannian ‘Da Tang Tianzhu shi chu ming’” (‘The Inscription on the Mission to India during the Great Tang Dynasty’ dated third year of the Xianqing era discovered in Jilong County, Tibet), *Kaogu* 7 (1994): 619–623; Hou Wei, “‘Da Tang Tianzhu shi chu ming’ ji qi xiangguan wenti de yanyiu” (Research on the ‘Inscription on the Mission to India during the Great Tang Dynasty’ and Other Related Problems), *Toho Gakuho* 66 (1994): 270–253; and Lin Meicun’s “‘Da Tang Tianzhu shi chu ming’ jiaozhu.” Yijing’s *Da Tang Xiyu qiu fa gaoseng zhuan*, on the other hand, indicates that the China-Tibet-India route was also popular among the Chinese Buddhist monks visiting India during the seventh century. The route from China to India through Tibet is recorded in Daoxuan’s *Shijia fang zhi* (A Record of the Country of Shakya) T. 2088: 950c11–23. Waddell thinks that it would require a minimum of seven months to travel from the Tang capital to Magadha, much shorter than the route through Central Asia. See his “Tibetan Invasion of India,” pp. 46–47.

⁸² Waddell, “Tibetan Invasion of India,” 43–44.

⁸³ *Jiu Tang shu* 196: 5222.

⁸⁴ Translated in Narayan Chandra Sen, *Accounts of India and Kashmir*, p. 5. The emphasis is mine.

so pleased with the Tibetan gesture that he, the work records, “erected an edifice of the Tibetan monarch in proximity to his own pre-arranged vault, to commemorate the Tibetan king.”⁸⁵ Pan Yihong is right in concluding that “it was in their own interest that the Tibetans joined Tang troops to attack India so as to demonstrate their strength.”⁸⁶ Moreover, it may have been an opportunity for the Tibetans to show their earnestness in upholding the alliance with the Tang court.

The contribution of Nepal, another kingdom on the China-Tibet-India route, to Wang Xuance’s victory is also noteworthy. *Jiu Tang shu* records that the king of Nepal was “delighted” to meet the Chinese ambassador Li Yibiao on his way to India in 643. “Later,” the work notes, “[when] Wang Xuance was attacked by India, Nepal contributed by dispatching cavalry to join the Tibetan [force] and sack India.”⁸⁷ It may be noted that when the Chinese envoy had an audience with the Nepali king, the kingdom was already subjugated by the powerful Tibetan King Srong-btsan-sgam-po. Moreover, before he received the Chinese princess Wencheng through marriage alliance, Srong-btsan-sgam-po had already obtained a Nepalese princess through similar method.⁸⁸ This Chinese-Tibetan-Nepali nexus, therefore, enucleates Wang Xuance’s success in gathering military support from Tibet and Nepal in a short time.⁸⁹

By 640, the Tang dynasty, under Emperor Taizong, had made substantial gains in Turkic Central Asia, forged an alliance with the Tibetans, and was on the verge of waging war against Koguryo in the Korean peninsula. It was, perhaps, to extend its political influence that the Tang court, in 641, sent the exploratory mission to Kanauj, the kingdom of the most powerful ruler of South Asia. By initiating diplomatic ties with Kanauj, the Tang court either planned to forge a military alliance or simply sought to find an alternate route into Central Asia. Later, the routing of Aluonashun’s army by the Wang Xuance-led alliance seems to have triggered Indian military interest in China. In the

⁸⁵ Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, *Deb-ther dmar-po*, translated into English by Samten Norboo (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 1978), pp. 76–77.

⁸⁶ Pan Yihong, *Son of Heaven*, p. 238.

⁸⁷ *Jiu Tang shu* 198: 5222.

⁸⁸ See Christopher I. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 23 n.54.

⁸⁹ On China’s relations with Nepal during the Tang dynasty, see Sun Xiushen, “Tang chu Zhongguo yu Nipoer wangguo de jiaotong” (Contacts between China and the Kingdom of Nepal during the Early Tang Dynasty), *Dunhuang yanjiu* 1 (1999): 100–109.

eighth year of the Kaiyuan era (720), for example, King Shilinalulu(seng?)jiamo (Sri Narayansimha?) of South India requested military troops, including elephants and horses, from the Chinese in order to mount an attack on the Arabs and the Tibetans.⁹⁰ Military help from the Chinese was also requested by the kings of Kashmir. This Indian interest in seeking military help from the Chinese and its possible connection to the changing dynamics of Central Asian politics during the eighth and ninth centuries is worth probing and deserves a separate study.

Although not explicit, the Tang mission to Kanauj may have had certain commercial consequences as well. The link between the popularity of Buddhism in China and the growth of Sino-Indian commerce is aptly discussed in the works of Xinru Liu. The Chinese demand for sacred Buddhist items, Liu argues, sustained the bilateral transactions in commodities such as coral, pearls, glass, and silk.⁹¹ Liu has further demonstrated the exchange of silk, cotton, and Buddhist relics executed by the Tang envoys discussed in this essay.⁹² During his last visit to India, for instance, Wang Xuance seems to have paid as much as four thousand bolts of silk to purchase a small parietal bone of the Buddha from Kapisha in northwestern India.⁹³ Certainly, the Buddhist institutions in India, with their deposits of the relics of the Buddha, would have benefited from such Chinese interest in obtaining sacred Buddhist items. At the same time, merchants moving between Indian and Chinese markets may have also profited from the sustained popularity of Buddhism, the peace along the highways linking the two countries, and the growing bilateral contacts. If tribute missions from India are any indication of developing Sino-Indian commercial contacts, and it seems correct to presume so, then forty or so Indian tributary missions in the seventh and eighth centuries attest to the brisk nature of such relations.

Like ancient China's diplomatic relations with her other neighboring countries, there were political and commercial underpinnings to the Chinese embassies sent to India. However, it is China's spiritual attraction towards India, due to her status as the birthplace of Buddhism, that makes premodern Sino-Indian relations unique and note-

⁹⁰ *Cefu yuangui* 995: 11687a.

⁹¹ Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China*.

⁹² Liu, *Silk and Religion*, Chapter 1; and her "Silk and Religions in Eurasia, c. A.D. 600–1200," *Journal of World History* 6, no. 1 (1995): 2548, especially pp. 28–34.

⁹³ See Kuwayama Shoshin, *Kapishi-Gandara shi kenkyu* (Research on the History of Kapisha and Gandhara) (Kyoto: Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University, 1990), p. 280; Liu, *Silk and Religion*, p. 47; and Liu, "Silk and Religions in Eurasia," p. 33.

worthy. Almost every aspect of the bilateral contacts between the two nations, especially in the first millennium, involved, or was influenced by, spiritual matters. While Xinru Liu has noted the significant impact of Buddhism on Sino-Indian commercial exchanges, the above study on the Tang missions to Middle India demonstrates the Buddhist influence on, and involvement in, China's diplomatic relations with India. The examination of the Tang embassies also seems to indicate that China's spiritual interest in India went beyond Buddhism. The persisting imperial demand for Brahman longevity doctors and drugs, discussed in this paper, is proof of such extended spiritual fascination. It is perhaps right to conclude, therefore, that India occupied a special place in the Chinese world order, which not only deserves due attention, but also needs further in-depth examination.