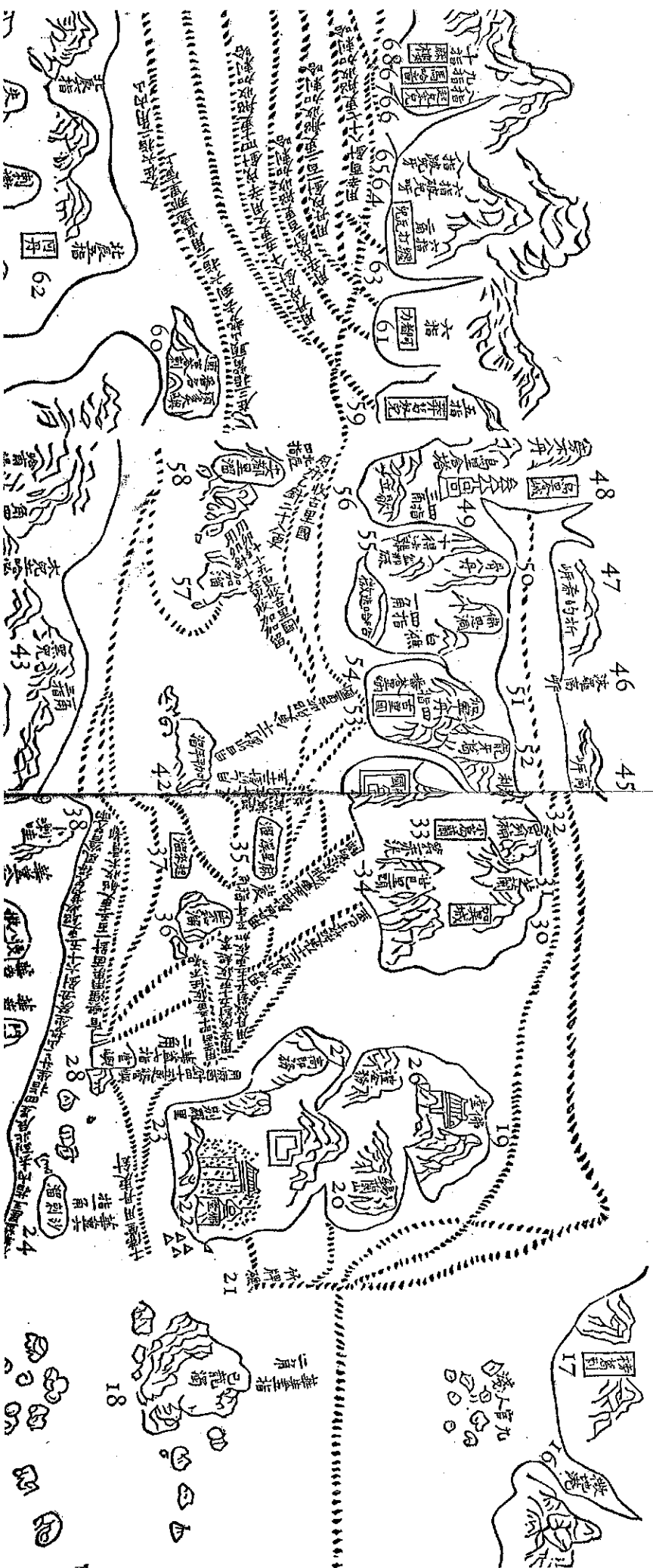


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THE GREAT CHINESE TRAVELLERS



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[1] *History and Life* OF THE MASTER OF THE LAW, TRIPI-TAKA, HSÜAN-TSANG, OF THE GREAT MONASTERY OF MOTHERLY LOVE, AND OF HIS TRAVELS IN THE WESTERN WORLD. WRITTEN BY THE SHAMAN HUI-LI. C. A.D. 648-649.

The infant name of the Master of the Law was Hsüan-tsang; his ordinary family name was Chin; he was a native of Chin-liu and was born in A.D. 602, the youngest of four sons. The boy

² Stein, *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks* (London, 1933), p. 62.

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who was to become known as the Master of the Law came of a family of fairly high officials who could trace their name and positions back to ancestors serving the Han Dynasty (just before the beginning of the Christian era). His father was distinguished for his superior abilities, for the elegance of his manners, and for his moderation. Over six feet in height, he loved to be recognized as a scholar—wearing his dress large and his girdle full. He anticipated the decay and fall of the Sui Dynasty (590–618) and buried himself in the study of his books; and so, refusing all offers of political office, declining all magisterial duties on the plea of ill health, he retired to a remote district.

At eight, Hsüan-tsang started reading the Sacred Books and was charmed with the writings of the ancient sages. His elder brother, Ch'ang-chieh, who had become a Buddhist monk and dwelt in the Pure Land Monastery at Lo-yang, the eastern capital, observed how strongly his young brother was attracted to religious study. He took him to the monastery and taught him the method and practice of the Sacred Books of Buddhism.

The future Tripitaka was but a child when there was an unexpected royal mandate to choose fourteen monks to be supported free of charge. Several hundred candidates applied for this important ordination. Cheng Shan-kuo, the high commissioner supervising the ceremony, had an aptitude for recognizing talent in those he met. He observed the young Hsüan-tsang loitering at the hall gate. "Who are you?" he asked. "Do you wish to be selected?" And the boy told him his name, saying that he longed to be chosen but was excluded because of his youth. The high commissioner asked him why he wanted to become a monk, and Tripitaka said, "My only thought in taking such a step is to spread the Light of Buddhism." This impressed the official. He sensed the eagerness and sincere piety in the boy's reply and, despite his youth, selected him to

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be one of those ordained. For, as the high commissioner explained to the other officials, "To repeat one's instructions is easy, but true self-possession and nerve are not so common." The high commissioner's wish in the matter prevailed; Tripitaka was one of those selected.

As a recluse he lived with his brother in the Pure Land Monastery. Thus five years passed in concentrated study and the precocious youth won the monks' respect for his ability, his precision and clarity in expounding the most involved principles of the religion. His memory was extraordinary—he had only to hear a book read once to remember it throughout; his understanding was equally exceptional—after a second reading he needed no further instruction. At this time he was but thirteen years old.

Soon after this the Sui Dynasty lost the empire (A.D. 618) and the whole kingdom was in confusion. The capital became the rendezvous for robbers, wild beasts roamed the countryside, magistrates were killed, and congregations of monks either perished or took to flight. The streets of the capital were filled with bleached bones; rebellions and riots, massacre and ruin prevailed everywhere; never had such calamity befallen the empire. Everyone was occupied with the arts of war; the books of Confucius and the sacred writings of Buddhism were forgotten and there were no religious conferences in the capital. Tripitaka, deeply affected by these conditions, said to his brother, "Even if this were our native city, could we during the present state of things avoid death? I have heard that the prince of T'ang has established himself at Ch'ang-an, his new capital. The empire relies on him as on father and mother. Let my brother go there with me." The brother agreed to this and together they went to the northwest.

But in Ch'ang-an, though law and order had been restored, yet the only books being studied dealt with military strategy,

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and Tripitaka, unwilling to be idle, persuaded his brother to go where they could hope to continue their religious studies. Again his brother consented and they went southwest to Hanchung, where they met two learned monks who had also left the capital. At the sight of them, the brothers wept for joy; they stayed with them for a month and some days receiving instruction, and then pushed on to Ch'eng-tu, situated in a region of abundance and peace, where Buddhist monks from far and near had taken refuge. So great a concentration of learned monks offered the eager students the unique opportunity of studying the different schools of Buddhist knowledge. In two or three years Tripitaka had gleaned all that he could from those masters. It was there that he became twenty, and was fully ordained as a monk. He felt that the time had come for him to return to Ch'ang-an in order to clarify certain points and resolve some difficulties he had met in his studies. But now his brother had reasons for not wanting to leave.

Ch'ang-chieh, too, was well versed in Buddhist writings and other texts, in Chinese literature and history, and in Taoist philosophy. Of noble and commanding presence, an eloquent preacher, he was so loved by the people that the governor of the province sought him out and honored him with admiration and deference. The brother could not be persuaded to leave the city where his talents had won him respect and renown. And because he used his influence with the governor to try to prevent his younger brother from leaving, Tripitaka secretly took passage with some merchants and went by boat down the Chia-ling River to the Yangtze, and so down that mighty river to Chingchow. Known by report to the clergy, the prince of Han-yang and his officers, great numbers of people, both religious and lay, heard him preach and carry on a learned disputation. The prince was ecstatic; he showered Tripitaka with presents, which the monk declined to accept. After this debate

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Tripitaka made his way northward, seeking out the most renowned monks: at Hsiang-chou [the modern An-yang] he asked questions of Hui-hsiu, a Master of the Law, and, continuing northward, he went to Chao-chou in order to study a difficult text under another famous monk, Tao-shen. In this way he returned to the capital, Ch'ang-an. There he found two great teachers who had attracted disciples as numerous as the clouds. By this time Tripitaka had visited the most celebrated masters throughout the country, devoured their words, and examined their principles; he realized that each master strictly followed the teaching of his own school. While verifying their doctrines, he finally understood that the holy books themselves had important differences, differences so great that he knew not which to follow. It was then he resolved to travel to the Western world in order to ask about doubtful passages. "Moreover," he said, "Fa-hsien [in India from 399-414] and Chih-yen, the pre-eminent monks of their age, went to India to seek the law for the guidance and profit of the people. Should I not aim to continue their noble example? It should be the duty of a great teacher to follow in their steps."

~~[By going to India, the home of Buddhism, he would find the teachers who could resolve his perplexities: so his biographer explains. Waley, however, suggests that Tripitaka was well aware that the number of sects in India was even greater than in China, and that since the Indian teachers commanded greater respect and authority, his dilemma would be deepened, not resolved. Rather, one of his main aims in going to India was to secure the Sanskrit text of the Yoga Sāstra, a monumental compendium of Idealist philosophy, of which only parts had reached China. The Yoga school, as explained by a later pilgrim, taught that "the Outside does not exist, but that the Inside does. All things are mental activities only." And Waley illustrates this by the following example. "Sometimes we think~~

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~~that the odd noises we hear on the telephone were made by the distant person to whom we are talking when in reality they are due to a defect in our own receiving apparatus."]²~~

Hearing of the obstructions to be overcome and the dangers of the Western road, he considered what he should do; he would not, he resolved, give up his intention. Then he entered a sanctuary and there supplicated the holy ones to extend their mysterious influences so that he could make his journey and return safely. In the autumn of 630, he was preparing to start. He yearned for a happy omen. It came to him in a dream as his final plans were made. He dreamt that he beheld Mount Sumeru, the Divine Mountain, rising from the middle of the Great Sea; made out of gold, silver, beryl and crystal, it looked supremely beautiful and majestic. He desired to scale the mountain, but the waves around it rose high and wild and he saw neither ship nor raft. Without a shadow of fear he walked into the waves and at the very instant he did so, a lotus of stone sprang up under his foot, which, as soon as he had placed his foot on it, vanished to reappear in front of him. In a moment, dry-footed, he found himself at the base of the holy mountain. But he could not climb its craggy, steep sides. As he gathered his strength to try to leap forward, a powerful whirlwind lifted him up to the very summit. From there he gazed around and beheld nothing but the boundless horizon. Ravished with joy, he awoke.

On this, forthwith, he started on his journey. He was twenty-eight years of age. He had company as far as Liang-chou, where he was invited to explain some of the Buddhist Scriptures. Now Liang-chou, where he stayed a month and some days, was a city frequented by merchants and traders from Central Asia, from the borders of Tibet and the kingdoms beyond the Pamirs. All these men heard Tripitaka speak

² Waley, *The Real Tripitaka*, p. 14.

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at the Religious Conference, and, deeply impressed by his learning and manner, returned to their homes to extol him to their rulers. Not only did they laud him, they also announced his intention to travel to India; as a consequence everyone in the most distant kingdoms was prepared with joyful heart to entertain the pilgrim royally as he passed through their lands. But at home, severe restrictions were placed on all persons seeking to go abroad; the governor of Liang-chou, obedient to the royal mandate prohibiting travel, learned from an informer that it was rumored that a monk was planning to go to the West. The governor, full of anxiety, called Tripitaka to his presence and asked him the object of his visit. When the Master of the Law told him that he was on his way to the West, the governor urged him to return to the capital. But Tripitaka, his mind made up, was not to be deterred by either edict or official. It was then he secured the help of Liang-chou's most revered monk, who sent him two disciples to help him on his journey. Tripitaka disappeared from sight; guided by the young monks he hid by day and traveled by night and in due time arrived at Kua-chou [the present An-hsi], the last halting-place with local supplies on the road to Hami. The governor of Kua-chou, greatly pleased at his coming, provided him with all the necessary provisions for his stay.

The Master of the Law, on inquiring about the western routes, was told: "At fifty *li* [three *li* to the mile], marching to the north, one comes to the River Su-lo, of which the lower course is wide and the upper one is very contracted. Its waters are constantly whirling and flow with such impetuosity that they cannot be passed in a boat. Near the widest part the Yü-men Barrier has been established, by which one is obliged to pass and which is the key to the western frontiers. To the northwest, beyond this barrier, there are five signal towers where the guards, entrusted with keeping the lookout, re-

side. They are a hundred *li* apart one from the other. In the space which separates them there is neither water nor herbage. Beyond these five towers there lie the desert of Mo-ho-yen and the frontiers of I-wu [Hami]." On hearing these particulars he was filled with dread and distress. The horse he had been riding was dead; sad and silent he let a whole month pass while he tried to figure out how he should proceed. While he was in such deep distress, spies from Liang-chou informed the governor of Tripitaka's intentions while bringing him the mandate ordering the monk's detention. The governor, a man of piety, secretly showed Tripitaka the mandate and was so moved by the monk's fervid avowal to risk his life to seek the Law that he destroyed the document before him. Having thus shown him that he would not hinder his going, he said: "And now, sir, you must depart in all haste."³

From this moment on all his fears and anxieties increased greatly. Of the two novices who had accompanied him from Liang-chou, one defected and the other was too frail to make so arduous a journey. Though Tripitaka did secure a horse, he was worried at having no guide to accompany him. Going into the temple, he bowed before the image of Buddha and prayed fervently for a guide who would lead him safely past the frontier barrier. Prayers, auspicious dreams and happy omens fortified his heart; suddenly, as he was praying, a foreigner, a man from the West, coming to worship, saluted the Master of the Law by circling him three times. "My personal name is Bandha," he said, and asked Tripitaka to be allowed to take the Five Vows [to become a dedicated layman]. Delighted at having done so, Bandha asked permission to return, which he soon did with a present of cakes and fruit. The Master of the Law, observing that Bandha was intelligent and respectful, devout and strong, told him his need for help

³ Ibid., p. 17.

in starting for the West. Bandha readily offered to conduct him past the five signal towers. On the morrow at sundown—"when the sun was down among the grass"—Tripitaka rode to a thicket where shortly after Bandha appeared with an old graybeard, also a foreigner, mounted on a lean horse of reddish color. His appearance did not reassure Tripitaka, but Bandha introduced him as a man intimately acquainted with the western routes: "He has gone to and come back from Hami more than thirty times." Then the old man warned him: "The western routes are bad and dangerous. At times streams of drift sand obstruct, at others demons and burning winds. If they are encountered no one can escape. Often big caravans lose themselves and perish. How much worse for you, sir, going alone! I pray you consider this seriously and do not trifle with your life." But Hsüan-tsang remained firm and declared that until he reached the country of the Brahmans he would never turn eastward again for China. "If I were to die on the way I should not regret it." Thereupon the graybeard said, "Master, since you are decided to go, you must mount my horse. More than fifteen times already, going and coming, he has done the way to Hami. He is strong and knows the routes. Your horse, on the contrary, is weak and will never reach there." And because a diviner in Ch'ang-an had told Tripitaka that he would leave for the Western World on just such a horse, red-colored, old and skinny, with a lacquered saddle bound in front with iron, he accepted the exchange as a fulfillment of the omen. The graybeard, rejoicing in the deal he had made, made his respectful obeisance; they separated.

Having packed his baggage, Tripitaka, thus mounted, left Kua-chou and rode through the night with Bandha. In the third watch they came to the river and sighted the Yü-men Barrier from a distance. At ten *li* from the barrier the upper stream is not more than ten feet wide. Here they crossed over

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a rough footbridge which Bandha made by cutting some wood, spreading the branches and filling it up with sand. Tripitaka was delighted that the river had been crossed, and, being tired, he dismounted. Bandha also, some fifty paces from where Tripitaka was resting, spread his mat on the ground and lay down. And so they both slept. In a little while, Tripitaka awoke to see Bandha approaching him, knife in hand; he watched: the young man stopped when about ten paces away, turned, and went back to his mat. Not knowing the man's intention, Tripitaka had risen from his mat and repeated some Scripture. After that, they both slept again.

Hardly had they started in the morning when Bandha announced that he could go no farther, that he had important family matters to attend to, and that he was not willing to break the laws of his country: Tripitaka knew that he was afraid and let him go. But Bandha was not so easily gotten rid of. He was fearful that Tripitaka would be caught and that, when questioned, would implicate him. He was satisfied only when Tripitaka took an oath: "I swear that though my body be cut up as small as the very dust I will never turn back," and he gave Bandha his hand to seal his words.

Deserted by his guide, utterly alone, he started across the sandy waste, guiding himself by the heaps of bones and horse dung along the way. Suddenly, on the dry plain he saw armed hosts, hundreds of men clad in fur and felt moving in the distance. He saw camels and horses, the glitter of standards and lances; then fresh forms and figures appeared and changed into a thousand shapes: they were the terrifying mirages created by demons for which that desert is famous. Even as his eyes beheld the awful sight, he heard a voice in that vast wilderness crying: "Do not fear, do not fear!" After covering eighty *li*, Tripitaka approached the first signal tower. In order to pass it unobserved he hid himself until nightfall. Then when

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he was trying to fill his water bottle from the water near the tower, an arrow whistled past his head. Calling out that he was a monk from the capital, the soldiers came and took him before the commandant of the post, a native of Tun-huang, who ordered the fire built up to inspect him closely. Having verified that he was indeed the would-be pilgrim in search of the Law, about whom a report had reached him from Liang-chou, he felt pity and treated Tripitaka kindly. Failing to persuade him to return, the commander bade him get a night's rest, promising to guide him in the morning. At the first light, he gave Tripitaka provisions and water for the journey and instructed him to follow the road straight for the next signal tower, where he commended him to its commander, a relative of his. Arriving there the same night, Tripitaka went through the same experience: he was stopped by an arrow and taken before the commandant. On receiving his relative's message, he welcomed Tripitaka and warned him not to approach the fifth and last signal tower as it was held by men of violent disposition. Instead, he advised him to head for the Spring of the Wild Horses, which was 100 *li* off, there to replenish his water. He provided him with a huge leather water bottle and fodder for his horse.

A short distance from the signal tower he entered the desert called Mo-ho-yen, which has a length of 800 *li* and which in ancient times was called the River of Sand. One sees there neither birds nor quadrupeds, nor water, nor pasture. Again demonic visions assailed him and to protect himself he read from his favorite sacred text. After having covered one hundred *li* he lost his way; he could not find the Spring of the Wild Horses. To add to his panic, in a terrible moment he dropped the water bag and the water that was to have carried him across the desert disappeared into the sand. Besides, as the route made long detours, he no longer knew which direc-

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tion to follow. He then thought to turn back to the signal tower he had last left. But after he had proceeded about ten *li*, he remembered his oath not to take his way eastward until he had reached India and so, fervently praying for divine help, he headed for the northwest. All around he saw only limitless plains, without a trace of men or horses. At night he was frightened by lights lit by wicked spirits and in the daytime by terrible sandstorms. He suffered cruelly from thirst. Yet in the midst of these severe trials his heart remained a stranger to fear. After traveling without water for four nights and five days, he lay down exhausted. In the middle of the fifth night, after fervent prayers to Kuan-yin, refreshed by a cool breeze, he found rest in a short sleep. A divine vision seen in a dream roused him to fresh effort. After about 10 *li*, his horse, which had also found strength to get on its legs again, suddenly turned in another direction and after a few more *li* carried him to a patch of green pasture. When he had allowed his horse to graze and was about to move on, Tripitaka discovered a pool of water, sweet and bright as a mirror. He drank without stint and so his parched body and vital powers were restored. And there he tarried a day before continuing on his journey. With a supply of water to sustain him and fresh fodder for the horse he emerged two days later from the desert; he had reached Hami.

He stopped at a temple inhabited by three Chinese monks; one was an old man whose vestment was without a girdle and whose feet were without covering. The old man embraced the Master of the Law, uttering many cries and piteous exclamations. "How could I have hoped ever to see again a man of my own country?" And the Master of the Law likewise, as he saw him, was moved to tears. The king invited him to his own house and provided him with an abundance of food. Tripitaka's arrival at Hami coincided with the visit of envoys from the ruler of Turfan, a larger, richer oasis to the west.

When the Turfanese envoys reported to their master that Tripitaka was on his way to India, the king sent an impressive escort to meet him and bring him safely to his city. Though Tripitaka had not planned to visit Turfan, he was obliged to, and, crossing the southern desert, in six days he reached its borders. It was sunset and he wanted to stop there. But the king was waiting and fresh horses were readied to carry him. Leaving his old red horse, which was to follow, he came to the royal city at midnight. The king was notified and the city gate was opened. Despite the late hour the king came out to meet him, and, surrounded by attendants bearing lighted torches, led Tripitaka to a seat under a precious canopy in an elegant pavilion. "I was sure you would arrive tonight," the king said, "and therefore my wife and children with myself have taken no sleep." In a moment the queen with tens of serving-women came to pay her respects. Food was served, and only as the day-dawn came was Tripitaka able to announce that he was utterly fatigued and longed for sleep. Thereupon the king retired to his palace and left several eunuchs to wait on his guest during the night.

All this was done to give proper honor to the man whom the king had decided he wanted to have as the head of the Buddhist Church in Turfan. From the first time the idea was broached Tripitaka declined the king's offer, explaining that he was on his way to the West to seek interpretations of the Scriptures not yet known outside India so that the sweet dew

⁵ Op. cit., p. 19.

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of the expanded Law might also water the regions of the East. But the king was not accustomed to being denied his wish: "The Ts'ung Ling Mountains may fall down, but not my purpose. Be assured of my sincerity and do not doubt my real affection." And so their wills clashed. First the king tried coddling and cajolery to win his way; to everything Tripitaka gave the same refusal. Finally the frustrated king resorted to threats; in a loud voice he said: "I have another way of deciding this question. If you still think you can go where and when you like, know that I can detain you here by force and send you back to your own country. I commend you to think this over; it will be better for you to obey." To this Tripitaka replied: "I came here for the sake of the great Buddhist Law. Now I have met with someone who opposes me. Your power is only over my body; Your Majesty cannot command my will or my spirit." And then he vowed not to eat or drink in order to affect the king's heart. Three days of his hunger strike passed before the king, seeing him grow fainter and fainter, bowed down before him and said: "The Master of the Law has free permission to go to the West. I pray you take a slight morning meal." Then, after the king had proved his sincerity and had taken an oath by repeating his words with his hand pointed toward the sun, and again in the temple before the Buddha, he made two requests of Tripitaka. "When you return I beg you to stop in this kingdom for three years so that I may be permitted to protect and patronize you. I would also like you to remain here for another month; while you teach us one of the Scriptures I will have garments prepared for your difficult journey ahead." To both requests the Master of the Law agreed. Then he consented to eat.

Once the king had recognized the power of Tripitaka's will, he arranged to equip the monk as he chose. Knowing that he would face regions of extreme cold, he had various articles of

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suitable clothing made, such as face coverings, gloves, leather boots, and so forth. He also gave him a hundred ounces of gold, thirty thousand silver pieces, and five hundred rolls of silk—enough to endow him for twenty years. Thirty horses and twenty-four servants were put at Tripitaka's disposal and he assigned one of his high officials to escort him to the next kingdom, providing the official with a royal gift of fine silks and luscious fruits—products for which Turfan was justly famed—for the neighboring ruler. And finally, he wrote twenty-four royal letters to be presented at twenty-four different countries, and each letter had a large roll of satin as a credential. Tripitaka was overwhelmed by such munificence—it evoked from him a speech of gratitude. The king's reply was brief. "You have, respected master, allowed me to regard you as a brother, and therefore you have the right to share with me the wealth of my kingdom. Why then offer me so many thanks?" [Even Tripitaka's devoted biographer allows the king the last word.] Certainly Tripitaka, in his long road across the breadth of Central Asia and over the bitter heights of the Pamirs, knew how greatly the king of Turfan had protected him against hardships and dangers. Because of such royal care he traveled as comfortably and safely as was possible at that time and in those regions.

Going westward, they crossed the high Silver Mountain, whence the silver is dug which supplies the Western countries with their silver currency. On the other side the party encountered a band of robbers; after giving the sum the robbers demanded, they departed. That night they camped by the side of a stream, planning to reach Kharashahr the next day. While Tripitaka's party were still asleep, a group of Central Asian traders who had joined their caravan started for the city to make an advantageous sale of their goods; later that morning and but two or three miles from their camp, Tripitaka's party

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found the bodies of the merchants—robbers had killed them and stripped them of their wealth. Deeply affected by the sight, they were glad when they sighted the royal city.

Hsüan-tsang described the oasis of Kharashahr: "On all sides it is girt with hills. The roads are precipitous and easy of defense. Numerous streams unite, and are led in channels to irrigate the fields. The soil is suitable for red millet, winter wheat, scented dates, grapes, pears and plums, and other fruits. The air is soft and agreeable; the manners of the people are sincere and upright. The written character is, with few differences, like that of India. The clothing of the people is of cotton or wool. They go with shorn locks and without headdress. In commerce they use gold coins, silver coins and little copper coins. The king is a native of the country; he is brave, but little attentive to military plans, yet he loves to speak of his own conquests. This country has no annals. The laws are not settled. The professors of religion read their books and observe the rules and regulations with purity and strictness."

Hsüan-tsang noted at Kucha, the next oasis some fifty miles farther west, that the soil was suitable for rice and grain and also for a kind of rice which is not glutinous. The country produces grapes and pomegranates, and numerous species of plums, pears, and almonds also grow here. The ground is rich in minerals—gold, copper, iron, lead, and tin. The air is soft, and the manners of the people honest. The style of writing is Indian, with some differences. They excel other countries in their skill in playing on the lute and pipe. They clothe themselves with ornamental garments of silk and embroidery. They cut their hair and wear a flowing covering over their heads. In commerce they use gold, silver, and copper coins. The king's wisdom being small, he is ruled by a powerful minister. The children born of common parents have their heads flattened by the pressure of a wooden board. He also reported

the wonders pointed out and the marvelous accounts he heard. To the north of a city there is a great dragon lake. The dragons, changing their form, couple with mares. The offspring is a wild species of horse, dragon-horse, difficult to tame and of a fierce nature. The breed of these dragon-horses became docile and this country consequently became famous for its many excellent horses. Former records of this country say: "In late times there was a king called Gold Flower, who exhibited rare intelligence. He was able to yoke the dragons to his chariot. When the king wished to disappear, he touched the ears of the dragons with his whip, and forthwith he became invisible."

From very early time till now there have been no wells in the town, so that the inhabitants have been accustomed to get water from the dragon lake. On these occasions the dragons, changing themselves into the likeness of men, had intercourse with the women. Their children, when born, were powerful and courageous, and swift of foot as the horse. Thus gradually corrupting themselves, the men all became of the dragon breed, and relying on their strength, they became rebellious and disobedient to the royal authority. Then the king, forming an alliance with the Turks, massacred the men, young and old; all were destroyed.

The old records say: "A former king of this country worshiped the 'three precious' ones [Buddha, the Law, the community of monks]. Wishing to pay homage to the sacred relics of the outside world, he entrusted the affairs of the empire to his younger brother on the mother's side. The younger brother, having received such orders, mutilated himself in order to prevent any evil passion. He enclosed the mutilated parts in a golden casket, and laid it before the king. 'What is this?' inquired the king. In reply he said, 'On the day of Your Majesty's return home, I pray you open it and see!' The king gave it to

the manager of his affairs, who entrusted the casket to a portion of the king's bodyguard to keep. When the king returned, there were certain mischief-making people who said. 'The king's deputy, in his absence, has been debauching himself in the inner rooms of the women.' The king, hearing this, was very angry, and would have subjected his brother to cruel punishment. The brother said, 'I dare not flee from punishment, but I pray you open the golden casket.' The king accordingly opened it, and saw that it contained a mutilated member. Seeing it, he said, 'What strange thing is this, and what does it signify?' Replying, the brother said. 'When the king proposed to go abroad, he ordered me to undertake the affairs of the government. Fearing the slanderous reports that might arise, I mutilated myself. You have the proof of my foresight. Let the king look kindly on me.' The king was filled with deepest reverence and strangely moved with affection; in consequence, he permitted him free ingress and egress throughout his palace."

While Tripitaka wrote down such events in Kucha's past, his biographer, Hui-li, concentrated on the religious aspects of his hero's debate with Hinayana Buddhists, followers of the Lesser Vehicle, whom Tripitaka considered heretics. [~~In *The Real Tripitaka*, Waley, in his learned and characteristically delightful account of the debate, presents the religious significance of the exchange between Mokshagupta, the Hinayanist, and Tripitaka and tells why that local pundit was much relieved when the pert young Chinese intellectual left Kucha and took the road for the West.~~]

Two days out of Kucha the party came face to face with a band of some two thousand strong mounted Turkish bandits. Numerous as they were, the robbers were easily dispersed for they were preoccupied with their own quarrels over the distribution of the booty stolen from the previous caravan. The way to the West took them over stretches of desert—days

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spent amid a world of sand or stone—punctuated by flourishing oases. Thus they came to the T'ien Shan mountain range; ahead of them lay some forty miles of mountains, steep and dangerous and reaching to the clouds. The glare of the glaciers brought on snow blindness, adding another hardship to be endured in that region of icy peaks. They faced the constant danger of avalanches. Wind and snow, driving in swirling masses, chilled them despite the protection of the heavy fur-trimmed clothes they wore. When hungry or sleepy, there was no dry place where they could halt and rest—they soon learned to hang the pot for cooking and to spread the mats for sleeping on the ice. In the seven days they spent making their way through the [Bedel] Pass, fourteen men—almost half the party—starved and were frozen to death while the number of oxen and horses that perished was still greater. [So high a loss along the main line of communication between the eastern and western Turks is thought to indicate that part of the caravan was blotted out by an avalanche or was lost in an icefall.] Once over the pass, they arrived at the Issyk Kul, a great lake, 1400 to 1500 *li* long, enclosed by mountains; into it many streams empty themselves and are lost. Bluish-black in color, salty and bitter in taste, the waves of the lake break tumultuously on the shores. In its depths, dragons and fishes swim together; scaly monsters rise to the surface, and passing travelers pray to them for good fortune. Although water animals are numerous, no one is foolish enough to try to fish for them.

Following the shore for about five hundred *li* they came to a settlement where Yeh-hu, the khan of the western Turks, was encamped on a hunting expedition. The horses of these barbarous people are very fine. The khan wore a robe of green silk, and his hair, worn loose, was only bound around with a silken band some ten feet in length which was twisted around

his head and fell down behind. He was surrounded by about two hundred officers, clothed in robes of brocade, their hair braided. On either side were troops dressed in furs and fine-spun woolen garments; they carried lances and bows and standards, and were mounted on camels and horses. The eye could not estimate their numbers.

The khan was filled with joy at Tripitaka's coming. "Stay here for a while; after two or three days I will come back." And he assigned a large tent for him and arranged for the monk's comfort. The khan's own tent was a large pavilion decorated with golden floral ornaments so glittering that they blinded the eye. In front of it the officers sat in two rows on long mats spread out for them; they were dressed in garments of shining embroidered silk. Although the khan was but the ruler of a wandering horde, yet there was a dignified arrangement about his entourage.

The Turks, Tripitaka's party learned, worship fire: they do not use wooden seats because wood contains fire and so even in worship they never seat themselves but only spread padded mats on the ground. But for their guest they made a seat out of an iron warming pan covered with thick padding. The khan read the letter they brought and examined the gifts sent by the king of Turfan; he was much pleased. He ordered the visitors to be seated and had wine passed around while music played. The khan and his ministers drank to the visitors, and offered wine to the Master of the Law. After this they drank, toasting one another in succession, filling their cups and emptying them in succession, ever more and more animated, during which time the music resounded in a confused clang. And though the style of the music was of the sort common to the barbarians, yet the Chinese found it was diverting both to the ear and the eye, pleasing the thoughts and the mind. In a little while food was served—boiled quarters of mutton and

veal were heaped up before the guests. For the master they had prepared pure foods such as rice cakes, cream, sugar candy, honey sticks, raisins, and so forth. When the feast was over, the wine was again passed around. Then the master was asked to expound the Law. He spoke on the Ten Precepts [~~Ten Commandments~~], the love of preserving life, and the righteous life that leads to final deliverance. The khan raised his hands to his head, signifying a delighted acceptance of such teaching. "Sir," he said, "you shouldn't go to India. That country is very hot. I am afraid you will succumb to the heat. The people are like savages, without any decorum. It's not worth going all that way to see them."

When Tripitaka respectfully rejected this advice and restated his intention to gaze on the sacred places and search for the Law, the khan attached to his party a young soldier who had spent some years in China and spoke Chinese and would serve as an interpreter as far as Afghanistan. He also presented him with a complete set of clothes of crimson satin and fifty pieces of silk. Then, with all his officers, he accompanied him a little to start him on his way.

Next, Tripitaka came to a little town. Now deserted, it once had about three hundred households. Made up of Chinese who had been carried off forcibly by the Turks, a few, after a time, had come together to start this small community. Tripitaka noticed that though they had adopted the Turkish dress they had preserved their own language and customs. Farther on they passed the Thousand Springs, named for its numerous ponds and springs, and admired the trees, so wonderful for their luxuriant foliage and height. The cool refreshing climate of this spot was enjoyed by the khan when he wanted to avoid the heat of the summer. Abruptly, this delightful region ended at a great sandy desert in which there was neither water nor grass. The road was swallowed up in the waste,

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which appeared boundless; only by aiming for a particular mountain and following the bones which lie scattered about can the route be followed. The next important city where they were received was Samarkand.

Hsüan-tsang described this kingdom whose Chinese name meant "the peaceful, or happy." "It is," he noted, "completely enclosed by rugged land and very populous. The precious merchandise of many foreign countries is stored up here. The soil is rich and productive, and yields abundant harvests. The forest trees afford a thick vegetation, and flowers and fruits are plentiful. The *shen* horses are bred here. The inhabitants are skillful in the arts and trades beyond those of other countries. The climate is agreeable and temperate. The people are brave and energetic. This country is in the middle of the Tartar people. They are copied by all surrounding peoples in point of politeness and propriety. The king is full of courage, and the neighboring countries obey his commands. The cavalry is strong and sizable, composed principally of men of Chih-chia, who are naturally brave and fierce, and meet death as a way to salvation. When they attack, no enemy can stand before them.

Hui-li related what occurred in Samarkand, where the king and the people were fire worshipers. In the city there were two Buddhist temples, but neither had monks, and if an occasional wandering monk sought shelter in either of them, the barbarians followed him with burning firebrands and drove him off. Tripitaka's party at first was treated with little respect; but after a day or two the king invited him to preach to him about the Buddha. So great an impression did his talk make that the king asked to take the Vows of Abstinence, and from that time on showed the Chinese monk the highest respect. Soon after, two novices in the party went to a temple to worship. The people drove them away by setting it on fire.

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Tripitaka mentioned the incident to the king, who immediately ordered the arsonists arrested. Then before all the people, he sentenced them to have their hands cut off. Hearing what their punishment was to be, Tripitaka interceded, asking that they not be mutilated and that their sentence be changed to flogging and expulsion from the city. After this display of mercy, many people, both high and low, asked to be instructed in Buddhism. "Accordingly," his devoted biographer said, "he ordained many of them as monks and set them up in monasteries. The Master of the Law transformed their heretical hearts and corrected their evil customs. And so it was wherever he went."

Fifteen hundred *li* farther to the west, and having crossed five kingdoms, the party reached Kesh. "From this place," Tripitaka wrote, "we enter the mountains; the road is steep and precipitous, and the passage along the defiles dangerous and difficult. There are no people or villages, and little water or vegetation. Going along the mountains 300 *li* or so southeast, we enter the Iron Gates. The pass so called is bordered on the right and left by mountains. These mountains are of prodigious height. The trail is narrow, which adds to the difficulty and danger. On both sides there is a rocky wall of an iron color. Here there are set up double wooden doors, strengthened with iron and furnished with many bells hung up. Because of the protection afforded to the pass by these doors, the name of *Iron Gates* is given. This is the barrier against the advance of the Turks.

"Passing through the Iron Gates we arrive within Bactria. On the east it is bounded by the T'ien Shan Mountains, on the west it touches on Persia, on the south are the great Snowy Mountains [the Hindukush], on the north the Iron Gates. The great river Oxus flows through the midst of this country in a westerly direction. For many centuries past the royal race

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has been extinct. The several chieftains have by force contended for their possessions, and each held their own independently, relying only upon the natural divisions of the country. Thus they have constituted twenty-seven states, divided by natural boundaries, yet as a whole dependent on the Turks. The climate of this country is warm and damp, and consequently epidemics prevail.

"At the end of winter and the beginning of spring, rain falls without intermission. With regard to the character of the people, it is mean and cowardly; their appearance is low and rustic. Their knowledge of good faith and rectitude extends so far as relates to their dealings one with another. Their language differs somewhat from that of other countries. The number of radical letters in their language is twenty-five; by combining these they express all objects around them. Their writing is across the page, and they read from left to right. Their literary records have increased gradually. Most of the people use fine cotton for their dress; some use wool. In commercial transactions they use gold and silver alike. The coins are different in pattern from those of other countries."

They had arrived at Kunduz, that part of Bactria [now northern Afghanistan] whose ruler, Tardu, was the eldest son of Yeh-hu, the khan of the western Turks, who had entertained them at his rich hunting encampment. Tardu was also the brother-in-law of the king of Turfan, from whom Tripitaka brought glowing letters of introduction. Tardu was mourning his wife, the Turfanese princess who had recently died, and, unhappy and ill, begged Tripitaka to stay with him until he had regained his health, when he would himself conduct him to India. While Tripitaka was his guest, Tardu married his late wife's younger sister and was, almost immediately, poisoned by her. With Tardu dead, the queen and her lover took over the kingdom. [Waley remarks that it must have been "dis-

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couraging for Tripitaka, after successfully winning the patronage of Tardu, to have to begin all over with Tardu's murderers; but he seems to have adapted himself to the situation."]⁶ During the weeks when the funeral ceremony and the installation of the new ruler were taking place, Tripitaka met Dharmasimha, a monk who had traveled to India for instruction in Buddhism and who, on the western side of the Pamirs, was called "the Lawmaker"; he overawed the monks of Sogdiana and Khotan, who dared not meet him in discussion. Hui-li, to demonstrate Tripitaka's superiority, related how his hero, seeking to know the depth of Dharmasimha's knowledge, sent messengers to inquire of him the number of Scriptures and religious treatises the lawmaker knew. His disciples were annoyed at such presumption, but Dharmasimha quietly answered, "I can explain any of them you like." Tripitaka, confining his questions to the school to which the Lawmaker belonged, asked questions that were not easy to solve. When Dharmasimha admitted that he could not answer the questions easily or satisfactorily, his disciples were filled with shame; but his honesty cleared the way for him to enjoy Tripitaka's company. "He ceased not to praise the master," Hui-li wrote, "acknowledging that he was by no means his equal."

When at last the new khan had established his rule, Tripitaka thought he could properly continue on his way to India. The khan urged him to take the time to make a detour and visit his city of Balkh, saying it was famous for its many sacred Buddhist sites.

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~~it. Since the beginning of the second century A.D. Balkh yielded only to the Magadha capital as a great Buddhist center.]~~ Among its sacred relics Tripitaka found the washbasin which Buddha had used; about the size of a peck measure, it was of colors that dazzled the eyes. There was also a tooth of Buddha, about an inch long and about eight- or nine-tenths of an inch in breadth, yellowish white, pure and shining; and Buddha's sweeping brush, made of the Ka-she plant, two feet long, its handle set with many gems. It was there that Tripitaka met Prajnakara, a monk of the Lesser Vehicle, and a native of Takka [that part of the Punjab that borders on Kashmir]. He was truly a man of singular wisdom and learning. Unlike the previous local celebrities, he was able to explain with extreme clarity Tripitaka's questions on the doubtful and difficult passages he had encountered in some of the Lesser Vehicle scriptures. He remained in the New Monastery with Prajnakara for a month, and then, with his new friend, headed southward for India. Together they made the difficult crossing of the Hindukush. The hardships they endured in traversing those high mountain passes can be glimpsed through Tripitaka's quiet phrases. "The Snowy Mountains are high and the valleys deep; the precipices and crevasses are very dangerous. A blizzard keeps on without intermission; the ice remains through the full summer and the snowdrifts fall into the valleys and block the road. The demon spirits send, in their rage, every kind of calamity; robbers waylay and kill travelers. Going with difficulty the six hundred *li* or so, we gradually arrived at Bamiyān, a kingdom located deep in a valley of the Hindukush. The capital leans on a steep hill bordering on a valley. On the north it is backed by high precipices. The country produces spring wheat and few flowers or fruits. It is suitable for cattle, and affords pasture for many sheep and horses. The climate is wintry, and the manners of the people hard and uncultivated.

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The clothes are chiefly made of skin and wool, which are the most suitable for the country. These people are remarkable, among all their neighbors, for a love of religion; there are ten monasteries and about a thousand monks, belonging to the Lokotarra sect." [A little-known Transcendental School of Hinayana Buddhism. ~~And Waley remarks that "Tripitaka must have felt the sort of thrill on coming on these sectarians . . . as an entomologist feels when he lights upon a rare butterfly."~~]

He described the colossal statues carved into the cliff. Impressive, though mutilated, they still make Bamiān famous. "To the northeast of the royal city there is a mountain on which is placed a stone figure of Buddha, erect, in height 140 or 150 feet. Its golden hues sparkle on every side, and its precious ornaments dazzle the eyes by their brightness.

"To the east of this spot there is a standing figure of Sakya Buddha, made of metallic stone [brass or bronze] in height 100 feet. It has been cast in different parts and joined together, and thus placed in a completed form as it stands.

"To the east of the city there is a figure of Buddha lying in a sleeping position, as when he attained nirvana. The figure is in length about 100 feet or so. The king of this country every five years assembles the great congregation. He sacrifices all his possessions, from his wife and children down to his country's treasures; he gives, in addition, his own body. Then his ministers and the lower order of officers prevail on the monks to barter back those possessions; and in these matters most of their time is taken up."

From Bamiān, they entered the defiles of the Snowy Mountains, crossed the black ridge of the cloud-swept mountain pass, and, fifteen days later, after having become lost in a driving snowstorm, reached the borders of the kingdom of Kapisi. [About forty miles north of Kabul. In the second century A.D. it had been part of the Indo-Scythian kingdom

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whose great king, Kanishka, had been the patron of Mahayana Buddhism, the Greater Vehicle, to which Tripitaka adhered.] This region, Tripitaka said, "produces cereals of all sorts, and many kinds of fruit trees. The *shen* horses are bred here, and there is also the scented root of the turmeric. Here also are found objects of merchandise from all parts. The climate is cold and windy. The people are cruel and fierce; their language is coarse and rude; their marriage rites a mere intermingling of the sexes. Their literature is like that of the Tocharian country, but the customs, common language, and rules of behavior are somewhat different. For clothing they use wool garments trimmed with fur. In commerce they use gold and silver coins, and also little copper coins, which in appearance and stamp differ from those of other countries. The king is of a shrewd nature, and being brave and determined, he has brought into subjection the neighboring countries, some ten of which he rules. He cherishes his people with affection, and reverences much the three precious objects of worship. Periodically, he makes a silver figure of Buddha eighteen feet high, and at the same time he convokes an assembly, called the Moksha Mahaparishad, when he gives alms to the poor and wretched, and relieves widows and the bereaved.

"There are about a hundred monasteries in this country and some six thousand priests who mostly study the rules of the Great Vehicle. There are also some ten temples and a thousand or so heretics [Jains and Hindus]; there are naked ascetics, and others who cover themselves with ashes, and some who make chaplets of bones, which they wear as crowns on their heads."

According to tradition, Kanishka, having subdued all the neighboring provinces and brought into obedience people of distant countries, governed a territory that extended east of the Pamirs; he received hostages from tribes who occupied the

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territory between those mountains and China. Even a son of a Han emperor, Hui-li says, was a hostage. Kanishka treated him with singular attention, providing him with different establishments for the different seasons—during the cold months he resided in India, in the summer in Kapisi. This dwelling, a monastery, was still known as Serika, their word for China. Built for the Chinese hostage, his portrait had been painted several times on the wall—the features, clothing, and ornaments were those of a Chinese. After the Chinese prince was allowed to return to his own country, his sojourn was remembered. An inscription said that, at the foot of the statue to the Great Spirit King, the guardian of the Buddha Hall, Kanishka had buried a treasure to be used to repair the building. Spirits summoned to guard the treasure, appearing as lions, or snakes, or savage beasts, show their rage to anyone daring to steal it. Thus not long before, a petty king of covetous mind and wicked and cruel disposition, having heard of the quantity of jewels and precious substances concealed in this convent, drove away the monks and began digging for them. The King of the Spirits had on his head the figure of a parrot, which now began to flap its wings and to utter screams. The earth shook and quaked, the king and his army were thrown prostrate on the ground; after a while, arising from the earth, he confessed his fault and left.

Tripitaka, the monastery's first Chinese visitor, was greeted with especial warmth by the monks and they related the circumstances of its founding and its subsequent history. Seeing how badly dilapidated the building was, Tripitaka suggested to the monks that the time had come to use the treasure for the purpose for which it had been buried and offered to supervise the excavation. In his presence they dug down seven or eight feet and actually found a copper vessel containing several pounds of gold and scores of pearls. Soon after this agreeable

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event, the king invited Tripitaka to take part in an impressive gathering of Buddhist philosophers. Only Tripitaka, Hui-li proudly wrote, proved himself proficient in all the systems of doctrine and all those present acknowledged his pre-eminence. Soon the time came when Prajnakara and Tripitaka had to separate: Prajnakara to return to Balkh and Tripitaka to take the road for India.

In the spring of 633, Tripitaka left Kashmir to visit other important Buddhist centers. Leaving Sakala [the present-day Sialkot in eastern Punjab] he had a grim encounter. Traversing a great forest, the party was stopped by a band of robbers, fifty sword-wielding desperados, who stripped them of their clothes and goods and then drove them at sword's point into a dried-up pond. The pond, enclosed by a wall of thickly matted, prickly vines, was an ideal pen where the robbers could kill their victims. One of the young monks noticed a small break in the thorny wall. Quickly he showed it to Tripitaka; together they forced their way through the barbed hedge, and once on the other side ran for help. They had to go almost a mile before they found a Brahman plowing his field. When he heard what had happened, he instantly unyoked his oxen and led them to the village, where he summoned the villagers by blowing on a conch and beating a drum. Eighty men answered the call. They grabbed whatever weapons they could, and ran to the pond. The robbers, seeing so large a crowd, quickly dispersed and disappeared into the forest. Tripitaka and the villagers freed the men who had been trussed up, and, with makeshift garments given by the villagers, they went to the village to spend the night. Shaken by the terrifying experience, their narrow escape from death, and the losses they had suffered, the men wept. Tripitaka was the only one who seemed utterly unaffected. "The greatest gift living creatures possess is life," he said to explain his equanimity. "In one of my country's books it is said 'Heaven and earth's greatest treasure is life.' We are alive; let us rejoice that we have our greatest treasure; why lament the few garments and possessions we have lost?"

On the morrow, another great forest brought them another

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and very different adventure. In a grove of mango trees at the border of the Takka country, Tripitaka's party met a Brahman, eminent for his deep knowledge of diverse philosophies and remarkable for his age. He claimed to be seven hundred years old—he said he had been a disciple of the great Nagarjuna [lived about A.D. 100]—though his mind and body were those of a man in his thirties. He was served by two followers, each of whom was 100 years old. He and Tripitaka conversed awhile to their mutual delight and edification. When the Brahman heard of their encounter with the robbers, he invited Tripitaka to stay with him and sent one of his serving-men to the nearby town to get food for so large a party. The inhabitants, mostly Hindus [and therefore not too friendly to Buddhists] heard the Brahman's messenger: "The monk from China, whose fame has come to us from Kashmir, has arrived in our neighborhood. He has been robbed of everything, even to his clothes." Forgotten were all animosities, and three hundred of their leading townsmen, shocked at this news, in a body set out to welcome Tripitaka, each one bringing a length of cotton cloth and a contribution of food and drink for the party. Respectfully they offered their presents to Tripitaka. Deeply moved, he thanked them and blessed them, using one of the many formulas of blessing. He might have said, "Peace and security to you who have two feet. Peace and security to yours that have four feet. Peace be to all your goings and peace to your returns. When you plow your fields, may you have your desires, when you sow your seed, may you have your desire."⁷ Then Tripitaka spoke to them about the doctrine of rewards and punishments, explaining how men, in whichever of their incarnations, receive the just due for what they have done. After he had spoken, Hui-li said, the townspeople gave up their erroneous Hinduism and accepted the right reason of

⁷ Waley, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

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Buddhism. With light and joyous hearts they then returned home. Tripitaka stayed a full month to have the Brahman expound the philosophical system of his master, Nagarjuna.

Finally his party came to the upper Ganges, whose water is blue like the ocean, and whose waves are wide-rolling as the sea. "The taste of the water is sweet and pleasant, and sands of extreme fineness border its course. In their books this is the River of Religious Merit which can wash away countless sins. Those who are weary of life, if they end their days in it, are borne to heaven and receive happiness. If a man dies and his bones are cast into the river, he cannot fall into an evil way; whilst he is carried by its waters and forgotten by men, his soul is preserved in safety in the other world. In this belief men and women swarm to the banks of the river." Tripitaka did not discuss the merits of this Hindu practice; he was more interested in relating the fate of Vimalamitra, a Master of the Lesser Vehicle, who dropped straight into hell. He investigated the exact spot near Matipura [thought to be the modern Bijnor], where at a stupa beside a grove of mango trees, Vimalamitra, a master of established name and fame, vowed to write a treatise which would make scholars forget the principles of the Great Vehicle and of Idealism. His would be an immortal work, the fruit of his long-meditated design. No sooner had he spoken the vow than his mind became confused and wild, his boastful tongue, multiplied five times, protruded, while his hot blood gushed out. Realizing that his blasphemy had brought him to the edge of death, he tore up his notes,

recanted of his foolishness, and vowed never to attack the doctrines of the Greater Vehicle. The earth shook as he expired. Where he died it split wide open; below was the abyss of hell. ["Long afterwards the same story was told of a monk who had the audacity to suggest that Tripitaka sometimes talked nonsense. He can little have foreseen, when he heard the story of Vimalamitra at Matipura, that his own every saying would become as inviolate as the Mahayana itself."]⁹

The next important place to be visited was Kanyakubja [now called Kanauji, located about fifty miles northwest of Cawnpore], one of the kingdoms ruled by the extraordinary King Harsha [c. 610-650]. Himself the hero of a famous Sanskrit poem, he was dramatist and poet, and a notable patron of Buddhism. Hui-li says there were 10,000 monks in the capital studying the Great and Lesser Vehicle promiscuously. Tripitaka stayed there three months furthering his education under the direction of Viryasena, a Master of the Lesser Vehicle. He related how Kanyakubja got its name. There once was a king who was widely revered and feared. He had 1000 sons famed for wisdom and courage and 100 daughters of singular grace and beauty. At this time there was a Rishi [ascetic] who, having entered a condition of ecstasy, by his spiritual power passed several myriads of years in this condition, until his form became like a decayed tree. Now it happened that a wandering bird let a seed drop on his shoulder which grew up and afforded him a welcome protection and shade. After a succession of years he awoke from his ecstasy. He arose and desired to get rid of the tree, but feared to injure the nests of the birds in it. The men of the time, extolling his virtue, called him "The Great-Tree Rishi." The Rishi saw the daughters of the king gamboling together. Then the world of desire which pollutes the mind was engendered in him. Im-

⁹ Waley, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

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mediately he went to pay his salutations to the king and ask for one of his daughters.

The king, hearing of the Rishi's arrival, went himself to meet him, and addressed him graciously. "Great Rishi! you were reposing in peace—what has disturbed you?" The Rishi answered, "On awaking from my trance, I saw the king's daughters; a lustful heart was produced in me, and I have come to request one in marriage." The king hearing this, and seeing no way to escape, said to the Rishi, "Go back and rest, and await the happy period." The Rishi, hearing the mandate, returned to the forest. The king then asked his daughters in succession, but none of them consented to be given in marriage. The king, fearing the power of the Rishi, was much grieved. And now the youngest daughter said, "The king, my father, has his thousand sons. Why, then, are you sad as if you were afraid of something?"

The king replied, "The Great-Tree Rishi has been pleased to seek a marriage with one of you. If he is thwarted he will destroy my kingdom."

The girl replied, "Dismiss your heavy grief. Let me, I pray, in my poor person promote the prosperity of the country." At her words the king was overjoyed, and ordered his chariot to accompany her with gifts to her marriage. At the hermitage of the Rishi, he offered his respectful greetings and said, "Great Rishi! since you condescended to fix your mind on external things, I venture to offer you my young daughter." The Rishi, looking at her, was displeased, and said to the king, "You despise my old age, surely, in offering me this ungainly thing." The king said, "I asked all my daughters in succession, but they were unwilling to comply with your request; this little one alone offered to serve you." The Rishi, extremely angered, uttered this curse. "Let the ninety-nine girls become humpbacked; being thus deformed, they will find no one to

marry them in all the world." From this time the town had this name: Kanyakubja, *i.e.*, "city of the humpbacked women."

Tripitaka's party boarded a vessel carrying some eighty other passengers to go down the Ganges to Cawnpore. At a place where the river flowed between banks covered with thick foliage, ten pirate boats suddenly darted out from their hiding places and closed in on them. Some of the passengers threw themselves into the river. The pirates took the vessel in tow, brought it to the shore, and then ordered the men to strip so that they could be searched for gold and precious stones. The pirates worshiped the goddess Durga; to ensure good fortune it was their yearly custom to sacrifice a handsome young man. That year still was without a suitable victim. Tripitaka caught their attention. "This young monk is of noble form and pleasing features; he will bring us good luck. Let us kill him." Tripitaka coolly answered them, "I don't grudge your using my poor miserable body, but I think it will bring you bad luck, not good. I came from a far distant country to worship the image of Buddha under the bodhi tree, to visit the Vulture Peak where he preached, and to study the Sacred Books and Law. Since I have not yet accomplished this, bad luck will surely come." His logic did not convince the pirates; when one of Tripitaka's companions offered himself, they refused to accept a substitute and went ahead with their preparations. They built an altar in the woods, plastered it neatly with mud, and at the point of their knives forced Tripitaka to mount it. There they bound him. Even then Tripitaka showed no fear. He made one request. "Give me a little time to compose my thoughts so that with joyous spirit I can enter into extinction." Concentrating on his deepest religious desires his mind was composed and his whole being was fixed on Maitreya; in his meditation his body and soul were ravished with such joy that he forgot that he was on an altar and that pirates

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were waiting to kill him. Then a miracle happened. Suddenly a cyclone swept a path through the forest. It sent the sand swirling and whipped the river into waves; it lifted the boats moored along the shore and then smashed them down. The pirates were terrified. "Whence comes this young monk? What is his name?" they asked. Tripitaka's companions said, "He is the famous monk from China come to search for Buddha's Law. If you kill him your guilt will be unparalleled. Behold how the winds and waves have risen. These are but small samples of heaven's rage. Hasten to repent!" More frightened than before, the pirates begged to be forgiven, and prostrated themselves before Tripitaka. He was still in a trance when a pirate accidentally touched his hand. At that, he opened his eyes and asked, "Has the hour come?" But the pirate answered, "We dare not hurt you; we pray you accept our repentance." Tripitaka accepted their confession of sins, and then preached to them about the punishment they would suffer in the Avici Hell, the lowest of the Buddhist hells, if they pursued their pagan ways and persisted in an evil life of robbery and murder. His words encouraged them to make amends. Not only did they throw their pirate gear into the river, they also restored everything they had taken. Then and there they took the Five Vows to become lay members of the Buddhist community. By that time the wind and the waves subsided.

For eight or nine days Tripitaka stayed near the bodhi tree worshiping at each sacred spot. While he was there four monks from the famous Nalanda monastery, some sixty miles away, came to escort him back with them. The welcome took on impressive proportions when, at one of the monastery's farms, they were joined by two hundred monks and a thousand lay patrons of Buddhism. With such an escort, with banners and with parasols, flowers and incense, Tripitaka made his entrance into Nalanda, where the entire community of ten thousand monks awaited him. He was conducted to a special seat beside that of the presiding monk, who invited him to be seated. Only then did the others sit down. Then the great gong was sounded, and the presiding monk announced, "While the Master of the Law dwells in the monastery everything is to be at his disposal." After that he was entrusted

¹⁰ Op. cit., p. 43.

¹¹ Waley, op. cit., p. 43.

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to twenty middle-aged monks well versed in the proper etiquette, to be prepared and coached before being led into the presence of the elderly Silabhadra, Nalanda's greatest scholar. Observing the approach he had been taught for a would-be disciple, Tripitaka advanced on his hands and knees, kissed the aged monk's foot, and touched his head to the ground before him. After the usual greetings and compliments, when Tripitaka was invited to be seated, he told Silabhadra that he had journeyed from China to study the principles of a certain doctrine (the Yoga-sastra) under him. At these words the aged monk turned to his disciple Buddhabhadra, a man over seventy, and with tears in his eyes bade him recount the dream. It had happened three years ago when he was suffering intense, protracted pain. While he dozed, three celestial visitors told him that he should desire to live so that he might proclaim to those who have not yet heard it the truth of the Yoga-sastra Doctrine. Having exhorted him, they announced that "a monk of the country of China, eager to understand the Great Law and desirous to study with you, will arrive in due time; instruct him carefully." All those present were filled with wonder at hearing the miraculous event. And when Silabhadra asked Tripitaka how many years he had been on his journey, Tripitaka, forgetful of everything but the awe and excitement of the tremendous moment, answered, "During three years." [Both men were enchanted that the prophecy was confirmed; the only flaw is that Tripitaka had been journeying a good five years.] They rejoiced in their divinely heralded relationship of master and disciple.

Nalanda was a notable institution of learning. Tripitaka proudly described its extraordinary standing and its profound contributions to Buddhist philosophy and doctrine. "The monks, to the number of several thousands, are men of the highest ability and talent. Their distinction is very great at

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the present time, and there are many hundreds whose fame has rapidly spread through distant regions. The rules of this monastery are severe, and all monks are bound to observe them. The day is not sufficient for asking and answering profound questions. From morning till night they engage in discussion; the old and the young mutually help one another. Learned men from different cities, who desire to acquire a renown in discussion quickly, come here, and then their wisdom spreads far and wide. For this reason some style themselves Nalanda students, and are honored as a consequence. If outsiders desire to take part in the discussions, the keeper of the gate proposes some hard questions; many are unable to answer, and retire. One must have studied deeply both old and new books before admission. Men of conspicuous talent, of solid learning, great ability, and illustrious virtue, add their names to the succession of celebrities who have belonged to the college and who have composed many treatises and commentaries which, widely diffused and known for their perspicuity, endure to the present time." Tripitaka spent five years there [633-637].

The Chinese visitors were impressed with Nalanda, which stood, foursquare, like a city precinct. It was the only monastery which by imperial decree was permitted to keep a water clock to determine the exact time. [Its vast ruins testify to its former size and grandeur.] Originally, Hui-li says, the area was a nobleman's garden which five hundred merchants bought for ten *lakhs* of gold [a *lakh* equals 100,000] and presented to Buddha. He preached the Law there for three months and most of the merchants thus attained arhatship. After Buddha's nirvana, a former king built the monastery, which six successive rulers enlarged. The vast establishment, surrounded by a wall having a single gate, had richly decorated towers and fairy-like turrets grouped around a central

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hall; on all sides were cool groves shaded by mango trees and deep, clear ponds. The dormitories, four-storied buildings located on the outside courts, were brightly ornamented with carved porches, colored eaves, and pearl-red pillars, carved and painted and joined by beautifully adorned balustrades. Roofs of shining tiles added to the beauty of the scene. Of all the monasteries of India, Nalanda is remarkable for its grandiose size and its towering structures. Its 10,000 monks and visitors were studying the Great Vehicle, which, because of the nature of the Buddhist dialectic, also required mastery of the writings of the eighteen branches of the Lesser Vehicle, and proficiency in Indian subjects—in the Vedas, logic, grammar, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and so forth. Out of the whole student body, a mere dozen, including Tripitaka, were considered to have mastered fifty books; but only Silabhadra, so the Nalanda students thought, had read and digested everything ever written. The schedule offered daily lectures in about a hundred classrooms, and the students attended them with great punctuality—"not even an inch of shadow on the dial late" is Hui-li's expression. In the monastic university's seven hundred years there had never been a single case meriting disciplinary action.

This avid pursuit of learning was subsidized. The king had endowed the university with more than a hundred villages each of which had two hundred households whose duty required a daily delivery of a stated number of pounds of ordinary rice, *ghee* [purified butter], and milk. It was to this largesse that the presiding monk had welcomed his distinguished visitor and Tripitaka was thus admitted to his allotment of the commodities furnished the monks and all the facilities for study. He took up his residence in the large establishment of Buddhabhadra, Silabhadra's disciple. Every day he received 120 betel leaves for chewing, twenty areca

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nuts and the same number of cardamoms, an ounce of camphor, and a *sheng* (about one and a half pounds) of Mahasali rice. He recalled that the grains of this unusual rice, grown only in Magadha, were as large as black beans, were scented, and of an exquisite flavor and shining color; it was called "the rice for the use of the great." His daily ration also supplied him with *ghee* and other staples. Each month he received a *sheng* of oil. To relieve the monks of domestic chores, two lay servants attended the wants of each monk—a convenience also extended to visiting students, for Tripitaka was one of many such studying at Nalanda. In addition he had the use of an elephant for his excursions outside the university. Freed from every want during their residence at Nalanda, the students were expected to apply their minds and energies to an inner development. [Small wonder "that Nalanda was the headquarters of Idealism—of the doctrine that mental happenings alone are real."]¹²

On his elephant, Tripitaka made a brief pilgrimage to the holy places near the monastery—Rajaghriha, the capital where the king lived during Buddha's lifetime, and Vulture Peak, a bold solitary rock where Buddha preached the Lotus Scripture; in the opposite direction, but also close by, was the Bamboo Garden, the first piece of land presented to Buddha and his followers, where Kasyapa convoked the assembly of arhats after Buddha's death. When Tripitaka had visited all the holy sites nearby he returned to Nalanda to begin five years of intensive study in Buddhist writings and in Sanskrit, a language whose structure and vocabulary differed radically from his native Chinese.

When he had completed his studies he continued his tour of India. Heading eastward through a dark forest he came to a monastery in which there was a miracle-working sandal-

¹² Waley, op. cit., p. 46.

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wood image of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. So great was the shrine's reputation that its guardian had had to erect an iron-tipped wooden fence to protect the statue. The crowds of worshipers who flocked there were forced to throw their floral offerings from a distance and they believed that if a flower lodged in the Bodhisattva's hands or attached itself to his arm, it was a sign that their prayers would be answered. Forewarned of this, Tripitaka was forearmed; that his requests would be surely heard, he strung a large assortment of flowers into garlands before going to the image. He fell on his hands and knees before the statue and made three prayers. First, that when all his studies were finished he might return peacefully and quietly to China; second, that he might be worthy of being born again in the Tusita Heaven where he could worship Maitreya; and, third, a sign to know whether he possessed some portion of "the nature of Buddha." If his flowers fell on the statue's hands, the first prayer would be answered; if on the arms, the second would be; and if around the neck, then he would know that he had some part of the nature of Buddha. Having uttered his prayers, Tripitaka threw three garlands; one came to rest on the statue's hands, another on the arms, and the third ringed the neck. He stood overpowered with joy while the pilgrims and custodians clapped their hands and stamped their feet at the miracle they had seen. "When you arrive at Perfect Wisdom and become a Buddha, remember this day, and make us the first to whom you bring salvation," they implored him.

Shortly thereafter a messenger came from King Harsha asking Nalanda to send four monks well versed in the different branches of Mahayana Scriptures to Orissa to debate with a

¹⁵ Op. cit., p. 52.

group of Hinayana monks. Among the four, Silabhadra named Tripitaka. As the time approached the other three grew increasingly anxious about their ability to defend their doctrines before the great king. Tripitaka, calm and unafraid, said, "In China and later in Kashmir I was well schooled in all the Hinayana texts; there was never a Little Vehicle argument that I was not able to refute. No matter how slender my ability and how ordinary my wisdom, I will be more than a match for them. But you should not worry. If I am defeated it will not affect the outcome; it will simply mean that henceforth a monk from China will not have a very high reputation." But before it was time to start for Orissa, Harsha changed his mind and sent another messenger, postponing the debate. During this time a noted Hindu philosopher, eager for a religious debate, hung forty theses on the Nalanda gate and defiantly wrote at the end, "If anyone can refute these principles, I will give my head as proof of his victory." Tripitaka answered the challenge, discoursing until the Hindu was silent and unable to reply. At last, rising, the Hindu said, "I am vanquished. I am ready to abide by my compact." The least bloodthirsty of men, Tripitaka bade him stay, serve, and follow his teachings. It was in friendly conversations with this learned Hindu that the Master of the Law became sufficiently informed to be able to write his refutation, "The Destruction of Heresy," which point by point maintained the Mahayana doctrine over Hindu arguments. When he had completed this, he told the Brahman he was free to go where ever he wished. Soon thereafter the Brahman, filled with joy at his meeting with Tripitaka, went to Assam and told King Kumara of the extraordinary qualities of the Chinese monk. The king lost no time in sending a messenger inviting Tripitaka to his court.

The day before Kumara's messenger arrived, a naked Jain of the Sky-clad sect unexpectedly walked into Tripitaka's

cell. Knowing that such Jains were skilled diviners, he bade him welcome. When the stranger was seated, he opened his doubts to him. "I am a monk from China who has been in India studying and traveling to holy sites for many years. I wish to return home. Cast my horoscope and tell me whether I shall get back safely, whether it is better for me to wait awhile or start at once. Can you tell me whether I shall live a long or short time?" With a piece of chalk the Jain drew a figure on the ground, and after casting lots, he replied, "The signs are good for your remaining, and if you do you will gain profound respect among the religious and laymen all over India. If you leave, you will have a safe return and continue to be respected by all here, but not as much as if you remain. Your span of years will end ten years from now. It is impossible for me to know if there might not be a continuation of your good fortune." Then Tripitaka said, "I intend to return, but I have collected a great number of images and sacred books and I do not know how to get them back to China with me." To this the Jain replied, "Do not be anxious about that. King Harsha and King Kumara will provide you with an escort. You will return without an accident." "But this is preposterous," Tripitaka answered. "I have never seen these two kings. Why would they show me such kindness?" The Jain continued, "Kumara has already sent messengers to invite you; they will be here in two or three days. After Kumara you will also meet Harsha." And with these words he left. His mind made up to return, Tripitaka began arranging his collection of statues and books.

When the monks learned of Tripitaka's decision they pleaded with him to stay. "India is the place of Buddha's birth. What greater happiness can you have than spending the rest of your life visiting the holy sites? Moreover, China is a land of barbarians and so the Buddhas are never born

there." Tripitaka answered with a patriotic discourse on the government, culture, and excellence of his own land. "Just because Buddha did not go to China," he concluded, "does not mean that it is an insignificant kingdom." He finally silenced their arguments by reminding them that the Scripture relates that Vimilakirti once asked a disciple why the sun travels to the Rose Apple Tree [the world of men]. "And he was properly answered, 'So that it might dispel the darkness.' This is the reason I intend to return to my own country." When Silabhadra asked him why he had come to his decision, Tripitaka answered with great respect, "Since my arrival at Nalanda you, sir, have condescended to explain the difficulties I encountered in the Yoga-sastra. In India I have visited the sacred sites and learned the hidden meanings of the different schools. I desire now to go back and translate the texts and explain them to others so they will know what I have heard. This will cause others to be as grateful as I am for your kindness in helping me understand. This is the only reason I am unwilling to delay my return and remain here." When his aged teacher heard these words, he gave him his consent and blessing.

Two days later, as the Jain had foretold, Kumara's invitation arrived. With it began the fantastic finale to Tripitaka's stay in India.

Silabhadra recognized the awkwardness of the situation. Suppose Harsha should renew his invitation to hold the great debate with the Hinayanists and Tripitaka were not there to support the Nalanda doctrines? Unwilling to risk defeat or offend Harsha, the aged monk respectfully declined Kumara's invitation, pleading that Tripitaka was about to start for home. Kumara replied that Tripitaka could return by way of Assam. Again Silabhadra declined for his disciple. Then Kumara, his imperial will thwarted, threatened to let the evil

part of his nature prevail. "If necessary," his letter continued, "I will equip my army and elephants and sweep down on Nalanda and trample it to dust." How much better it would be, he suggested, if Tripitaka came and converted the king, who would lead his country to join the Great Vehicle. The aged monk saw the logic of the king's arguments; he urged Tripitaka not to shrink from the slight trouble of visiting Assam. The Master of the Law, leaving his teacher, went with the envoy and arrived there.

Kumara's capital, Gauhati, on the Brahmaputra River, was six hundred miles east of Nalanda. There the king, attended by his principal ministers, met Tripitaka and with great honor and reverence conducted him to the palace, where he received the vows at Tripitaka's hands. Every day he arranged music and banquets as well as religious offerings of flowers and incense. Thus a pleasant month had gone by when King Harsha, returning from a military expedition, was annoyed to learn that Tripitaka was the guest of Kumara. Peremptorily, he sent a messenger bidding Kumara send the monk from China to him. Kumara impetuously replied that he would rather send Harsha his head than his revered guest; and then, frightened at his folly, he mobilized an impressive escort to conduct Tripitaka to Harsha. Twenty thousand elephants marched as 30,000 boats went up the Ganges to Kajangala [just south of the Ganges and 280 miles east of Benares]. Kumara left Tripitaka in a pavilion-of-travel erected on the north side of the river, and crossed the river to apologize to Harsha. The latter, overjoyed and placated, asked the whereabouts of the monk from China. Why had Tripitaka been left behind at the pavilion? Kumara replied with suave grace, "Your Majesty is known for his respect for men of virtue and wisdom and his love of religion; therefore I thought he would prefer to go to meet Tripitaka instead of having him brought

to you." The king agreed, "It is well. You can go now and tomorrow I myself will come there to him." But when Kumara had returned to Tripitaka he told him, "Though the king says he will come tomorrow, I suspect he will arrive tonight. Be prepared; if he comes, don't be alarmed." "That would be against my understanding of the Laws of Buddhism," Tripitaka reassured him.

About the first watch of the night, some men announced that several thousand lighted torches could be seen on the river, and that they heard the sound of ceremonial drums. It was the king. [When Harsha marched, he and he alone was always accompanied by several hundred men with golden drums who beat one stroke for every step taken, the "music-paced drums."] Kumara ordered everyone to carry torches and to go out to meet him. King Harsha threw himself at Tripitaka's feet, scattered flowers over them, and then, looking up at him with ardent respect, sang his praises in flowing words. Then he asked the monk why did he not comply with the royal invitation made long before. Calmly, Tripitaka explained that when his first invitation came he was still intent on finishing his studies and could not leave. Harsha's next question was unexpected. "You come from China. I have heard that you have a song and a dance called 'The Prince of Ch'in Breaks the Ranks.' Who is this prince and what deed of his made him so distinguished?" Tripitaka related that that song and dance, performed in temples and village fairs, reenacted the great event that occurred in the summer of the year 620, when the Emperor T'ai Tsung, then the prince of Ch'in, defeated the last opponents of the T'ang Dynasty. After his victory, "the sun and moon and stars shone out again, and the world was filled with gratitude for his care. For this reason we sing his praises."

["In 641 the King of Tibet had married a Chinese princess

who was brought from China by six hundred followers. As the 'Breaking of the Ranks' had become a sort of Chinese national dance anthem, it is extremely likely that some of the Chinese followers danced it at the wedding festivities. Probably an account of the dance was brought back by Assamese envoys who represented their country at the wedding."]¹⁶

After the formal and elaborate entry, Harsha entertained the monk at a great banquet. He mentioned that he would like to read Tripitaka's treatise, "The Destruction of Heresy."

"Here it is," said Tripitaka, giving the king a copy. The king was pleased with what he read and said to his priests, "I have heard that the rising sun puts out the glowworm's light and that the voice of the thunder silences the sound of hammer and chisel. Just so Tripitaka's doctrines have annihilated your preachments about salvation. Not one of you has stepped forward to refute him. Even your abbot, who claimed he was superior to all his rivals and boasted that he had mastered every science, always opposed the Great Vehicle. And yet when he heard that this foreign monk had arrived, he immediately decided to go on a pilgrimage. From his action I guess none of you would be willing to stand up to a debate." The king addressed Tripitaka, "This treatise is good, very good; quite enough to convince me and those present. But there are those in other parts of the country who will still cling to and defend their foolish doctrine of the Lesser Vehicle. Let us have a great assembly in Kanyakubja [modern Kanauj], and invite all the monks and Brahmans, too, from all India. I want them to hear the subtleties of the Great Vehicle. This will stop their slanders. It will give you the opportunity to demolish, once and for all time, their arrogant beliefs." And that same day the king sent an order for all disciples of all schools to gather at his capital, Kanauj, there to examine the

¹⁶ Waley, op. cit., p. 61.

treatise of the Chinese Master of the Law. Tripitaka, in the king's company, went to Kanauj; the year 642 was ending. Already present were the kings of eighteen vassal countries, three thousand monks versed in the literature of the Lesser and the Great Vehicle, and some three thousand Hindus and Jains. A thousand monks from Nalanda attended. Each of these thousands of celebrated visitors was accompanied by a retinue of servants; some came on elephants, some in chariots, some were carried in palanquins, and some were distinguished by their show of standards and parasols. The vast conclave spread over many miles. "Without exaggeration," said Hui-li, "they were as numerous as the drops of rain which fall from the skies."

Now Harsha, the empire builder, whose deeds were celebrated in the Sanskrit poem the *Harshacarita*, was a dramatist and poet in his own right; with an eye for the dramatic, he staged the great public debates. He arranged the arena carefully. About a mile from the palace two thatched halls were built, the one for the Buddha images, the other to house the vast assemblage. At dawn of the day the debates were to begin, a huge elephant, richly and elaborately caprisoned, carried a splendid howdah in which was a large gold statue of Buddha flanked by the two kings, Harsha holding the white chowry [whisk], the symbol of the Lord Indra, and Kumara, holding the precious parasol of the Lord Brahma. Both were crowned like celestial beings and were wreathed with flowers and streamers of jeweled ribbons. Two other large elephants walked solemnly behind, from which flowers were strewn behind the Buddha statue, and behind them was an elephant carrying Tripitaka and the king's principal officers. The great procession had some three hundred more elephants, also picked for their outstanding size, carrying the vassal kings and distinguished visitors from abroad. The principal monks

brought together from the entire kingdom rode in a double file on each side of the procession, chanting their praises as they moved. When they approached the Buddha Hall, elephants and men knelt while the golden image was carefully lifted down and installed inside, and then the kings with Tripitaka advanced to make their reverential offerings. When the sacred nature of the convocation had been established, Harsha gave a state banquet for the vassal princes, for the most renowned scholars—a thousand monks from all the Buddhist sects—for five hundred famous Brahmans and Jains, and for about two hundred foreign officials. His lavish hospitality included presenting the guests with golden dishes and bowls, purses filled with coins, and the finest cotton cloths. Food was liberally provided for those outside the hall.

When the ceremonial gift-giving was over, Harsha had a special chair brought in for Tripitaka to sit in while he presided over the assembly. First, the Master of the Law presented the case for the Mahayanists, directing his argument against the doctrines of the Hinayanists; as he was speaking, a Nalanda monk read Tripitaka's speech aloud for the thousands gathered outside, beyond the reach of his voice. In addition, a copy of Tripitaka's argument was posted where it could be read and studied by all present. So true and unanswerable did Tripitaka feel his position to be that he ordered a placard placed under the text: "If anyone can find a single word in the text contrary to reason or a single argument that can be refuted, I will forfeit my head." And so the debate got under way.

For five days the assembly met, each beginning with the elaborate procession and offerings to Buddha; for those five days not a single opponent spoke out to refute Tripitaka. Whether Harsha would have recognized the Hinayanist arguments or permitted any criticism of Tripitaka is dubious; but

many of them who had traveled far to attend the debate were ignored, and scorned. They seethed with fury; Hui-li says that they plotted to kill Tripitaka.

The eighteen days of the assembly's duration passed. On the last evening, Harsha, elated and filled with enthusiasm, showered gifts on Tripitaka—10,000 pieces of gold, 30,000 pieces of silver, and 100 garments of exquisite cotton—and each of the vassal kings presented him with precious jewels. But he declined everything. Then the king wanted Tripitaka—as was customary for the winner of a public debate—to ride through the city in the howdah of a great elephant so that the people could see and applaud him. This, too, Tripitaka refused. He finally agreed to let one of his garments be carried in a procession that proclaimed his victory in establishing the doctrine of the Great Vehicle.

Tripitaka said farewell to the Nalanda monks who had brought him his books and statues; then he went to the king to pay his respects before starting on his homeward journey. The king's reply was to urge Tripitaka to delay his departure briefly so that he might witness the King's Great Almsgiving, a ceremony to which Harsha was deeply committed. Held every five years—this would be the sixth in his thirty-year reign—the *Pancavarsha* took place at the Arena of Charitable Offerings, a large field, flat and smooth as a mirror, located at the junction of the Ganges and Jumna rivers. It attracted all the monks and Brahmans of his kingdom, and from far and wide the orphaned and the destitute, ordinary beggars and religious mendicants. There is a tradition that it is more advantageous to give one mite in charity in that spot than a thousand in any other. Tripitaka accompanied the king there. The arena, a square a thousand paces to a side, was hedged in by bamboo. Within were many thatched buildings, each one to hold one kind of treasure to be distributed—one

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for gold, for silver, fine pearls, red glass, mother-of-pearl, silk and cotton garments, gold and silver coins, and so forth. Outside the hedge were booths for eating and covered sheds where the throngs could rest. When Harsha's entourage arrived in an impressive procession of elephants and a flotilla of barges, he found half a million persons gathered, an unusually large number, for many of the people who had traveled to attend the Great Debate went on to attend the Great Alms-giving. It lasted seventy-five days. On the first day, the image of Buddha was installed in a building inside the field of charity. They distributed precious articles and the finest clothing; they offered delicacies while they scattered flowers to the sound of music. On the second day they installed the image of the Hindu Sun God, the traditional divine protector of Harsha's family, and offered the same kind of articles as before but only half the amount.

On the third day, Siva, the mighty Hindu deity, was installed; he, too, received only half the amount that Buddha had.

On the fourth day, the royal largesse was distributed to 10,000 monks; each one received 100 pieces of gold, one pearl, one cotton garment, drink and meat, flowers and incense.

On the fifth day began a similar bestowal of gifts on the Brahmans—this took twenty days to accomplish.

After the Brahmans, it was the turn of the Jains; they took ten days. The next category was those who came from distant regions to ask for charity; this lasted ten days. Finally, it was the turn of the poor, the orphans, and the destitute; this went on for a month.

When this was over, the treasure and goods accumulated in five years had been exhausted. Except for horses, elephants, and the military stores—Harsha's striking power—nothing remained. In addition, the king gave away his own gems and goods, his personal adornments—necklaces, earrings, bracelets,

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route he desired and offered, if he wanted the southern sea route from the Bengal coast to Canton, to provide him with ships and attendants. "I will return by the northern road," Tripitaka said, relating the king of Turfan's generosity in making his outward journey safe and easy, and his promise to visit him on his return. [By 640, Turfan had been engulfed in the Chinese emperor's "forward policy" to the West and had become part of the Chinese Empire. The king of Turfan, harassed and powerless, had died just before the arrival of the Chinese army.]

Harsha, acquiescent to the will and wishes of his guest, asked what provisions he would require. Tripitaka replied, "I require nothing." But Harsha was not to be denied his feelings of generosity. "It is impossible to permit you to go thus." But even though Harsha and Kumara offered Tripitaka gifts of money and every kind of valuable, he would only allow them to furnish him with a coat of pressed buffalo down which he thought would protect him from the rain while on the road. At last, when he bade farewell to the kings they could not keep back their tears and expressions of grief. His books and images were entrusted to the care of a homeward-bound North Indian king. To speed his journey Harsha sent a great elephant that could carry his entire precious cargo as well as 3000 gold pieces and 10,000 pieces of silver given to defray his expenses along the way. ["A large elephant,"

on fine white cotton stuff and sealed with red wax were letters that commanded the rulers of the countries through which Tripitaka would pass to furnish him with carriages and relays of escorts. As far as it lay within his power, he tendered his help to the western borders of China.

Keeping a path toward the northwest, Tripitaka reached a monastery where he met two fellow students from Nalanda whose doctrinal beliefs he had attacked. Despite their disagreements, they were delighted to meet again, and Tripitaka stayed with them for two months, studying and discoursing. Passing through various countries he arrived at Jalandhara, the royal city of North India [Punjab]. There the king with whom he had traveled left him, but Tripitaka's party was augmented by a hundred monks, who, homeward bound, also laden with texts and statues, sought the protection of Tripitaka's escort through the robber-infested mountain passes. To safeguard the holy treasures from hurt or theft, Tripitaka regularly sent a monk on ahead who was told to say, if he was held up, "We have traveled a great distance to seek the Law. Our baggage contains only Scriptures, images, and holy relics. We pray you protect us and do not do us violence." Hui-li was convinced that this prevented their being harmed by the brigands they encountered. When they came to the borders of Kashmir, the king sent messengers inviting Tripitaka to visit his capital. Unavoidable delays and the slow pace set by their heavily laden elephants made it inadvisable to accept the cordial invitation.

Pushing on, they came to the fast-flowing, mile-wide Indus River. Tripitaka bravely forded it in the back of his elephant. The large party of monks with their books and statues and Tripitaka's collection of Indian flower seeds were ferried over by boat; one of the men was told to look after the precious cargo. As the boat was in midstream, it was caught in a sud-

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den, violent storm; the water was whipped into high waves and the boat, pitching and rolling, was tossed helplessly about. The guardian of the books and flower seeds, paralyzed by fear, was thrown into the swirling water. While the passengers were hauling him aboard, fifty manuscripts and the flower seeds were washed overboard and swept away. Safe on the other shore, they congratulated themselves that everything else was saved. The king of Kapisi had come from his winter capital to pay his respects. His first words were, "You say that you lost many sacred books in the river. Did you happen to be bringing flower seeds from India?" "I did," said Tripitaka. "Ah," said the king, "that is the cause of your misfortune. Whoever tries to cross the river with flower seeds suffers the same accident." Tripitaka went with the king to his city. To replace some lost manuscripts, Tripitaka sent to Uddyana for new copies. After two months they arrived. While he was waiting, the king of Kashmir made the long journey to visit him. When he left, the king of Kapisi personally escorted him as far as the Hindukush, and then provided him with an official to guide him and oversee the one hundred porters needed to transport the provisions for the men and hay for the elephant. Thus they began the difficult passage over the Snowy Mountains.

Tripitaka remained there to await the messengers he had sent back to Kucha and Kashgar where he hoped to be able to replace the manuscripts lost when crossing the Indus. He had hardly settled down when the unexpected appearance of a young Turfanese traveling to China with a caravan of merchants made it possible for Tripitaka to send a letter announcing his impending return. In his letter he outlined his search for Buddhist learning—the marvelous words of the three Pitakas, which are able to liberate us from the delusions of the world, and the extent of his travels, over 50,000 *li*. He ended by mentioning that “since the mighty elephant was drowned, I have not succeeded in obtaining suitable transport for the many texts which I am bringing back. But despite this difficulty, I propose at once to go forward and visit Your Majesty.”

Tripitaka might well be apprehensive about his reception in China; he had done worse than absenting himself without permission: he had gone in defiance of an edict forbidding him! The emperor's reply [which he received some seven months later], gracious and to the point, reassured him: “When I heard that you who had gone to distant lands to study Buddhism and to seek for religious texts were now returning, I was delighted. I pray you come quickly so that I may personally hear your report. I have already instructed Khotan [then subject to China] and the other places along the route to furnish you with their best guides and all the transport you may

require. The officials at Tun-huang are to go out to meet you so as to guide you through the desert of shifting sands, and I have desired the Shan-shan [Charkhlik] officials likewise to go to Cherchen to meet you." [When the T'ang Dynasty took power in 618, China for three hundred years had been constantly subjected to invasions. As their capital was in the northwest on the road to Central Asia and India, it was imperative to protect it from attacks mounted in Turkestan. So Turfan was annexed in 640, Kucha in 648, and that same year Khotan yielded to propaganda pressure about the "majesty and magic" of the T'ang, and submitted.]

As soon as Tripitaka received this welcome, he started. Well mounted and amply provisioned by the king of Khotan, the party covered the long desert route, their journey eased by help furnished at every oasis along the way. Without incident or accident they reached Tun-huang, at the western border. Tripitaka contrasted his homeward passage, free from fears and ordeals, with what he had suffered when, all alone, he had crossed the desert of burning sands where demons ruled over a lifeless, waterless wasteland. From Tun-huang he sent back the horses and camels Khotan had supplied—nor would the guides and porters accept any recompense for their work.

From Tun-huang he again wrote the emperor, and then hurried to Ch'ang-an to report to him in person. But the emperor had left his capital [to "inquire into the misdeeds on the banks of the Liao," as his punitive expedition against Liao-tung in Manchuria was referred to]; before setting out the emperor had ordered a high official to arrange a suitable reception for Tripitaka. With such speed did Tripitaka push forward, he arrived outside the city while the official reception was still in its planning stage. He had come by way of the canal to make time, and news of his homecoming ran before him and the streets were filled with the people, who came to see him

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and pay their respects. He spent the night on the canal outside the city's walls.

The following day, with flags flying and banners waving, Tripitaka was escorted to the Monastery of Extensive Happiness. Here he deposited the treasures he had brought back with him—relics, one hundred and fifty particles of Buddha's flesh, six statues of Buddha in various holy acts, and 657 distinct volumes carried on twenty horses.

It seems, and it may well be true, that relations between India and China were started by King Harsha soon after his meeting with Tripitaka. Certainly, the Indian monarch made the first overture, sending an envoy to Ch'ang-an. Among the presents he brought was a broad-leaved ilex unknown in China. A return mission went to Magadha in 643. One of its younger members, a fervent Buddhist, erected a commemorative inscription on Vulture Peak and at the Monastery of the Great Enlightenment. There were commercial as well as diplomatic rewards; the Chinese secured the Indian recipe for making sugar, and soon the sugar refined at Yangchow, the sugar-cane center, was said to be superior to that made in India.