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This issue features Anthony Yu's keynote addresses and more papers  
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**Keynote Address** *The Real Tripitaka: International Religion and National Politics* Anthony C. Yu, The University of Chicago

**Plenary Session** *Liberal Arts Colleges in the 21st Century: Their Future and That of Asian Studies* Panel: Thomas Coburn, St. Lawrence University; Marianna McJimsey, The Colorado College; Toby Volkman, The Ford Foundation; Thomas Benson, Green Mountain College

**Panel Presentation** Jung Soon Shim, Soongsil University

**Keynote Address**  
***The Real Tripitaka Revisited:***  
***International Religion and National Politics***  
**Anthony C. Yu**  
**The University of Chicago**

Title:

The Real  
Xuanzang

#### **INTRODUCTION: THE STORY OF XUANZANG**

In year 627 of the Common Era, a twenty-six-year-old Chinese Buddhist monk put on a wig to hide his clean-shaven head, took off his clerical garb and donned some secular clothing, and, under the cover of nocturnal darkness, slipped out of the heavily-guarded gates of the imperial capital Chang'an (Everlasting Peace).<sup>1</sup> He joined a caravan of merchants leaving central China and headed northwestward on the famous "silk route." Eventually, he would make it past five more fortified watchtowers, go through the well-known Jade-Gate Pass (*Yumen guan*) on the Great Wall, and embark on one of the most famous journeys undertaken by a Chinese in all of that civilization's long history.

This monk was none other than Chen Xuanzang, who left China because he was troubled even as a teenager both by the lack of certain authentic Buddhist scriptures and by what he considered to be poor translations of crucial texts. Eventually, he made a vow to serve Buddha and China by going to India, the land of his faith, to acquire the needed scripts. Sustaining appalling hardships and dangers along the long trek from central China, through the rugged and desolate plains of northwest China, Tibet, and Central Asia, up the towering peaks of the Himalayas, he finally reached his destination—but only after he had been robbed, beaten several times, and encountered numerous near-death experiences induced by starvation, thirst, exposure, exhaustion, and loneliness.

After he reached India, he eventually took up resi-

dence at the famous Nalanda Monastery and criss-crossed the Indian continent at least five times. Not only did he master the difficult languages of his faith, principally Sanskrit and Pali, so that he could read with expertise the sacred writings, but he became so fluent in other Indian languages as well that he could debate native princes and priests. When he preached and expounded the Law, according to his biographers, even brigands and thieves were so moved that they converted to Buddhism. To this day, shrines and numerous memorabilia of Xuanzang's visits are preserved in various locales in India.

Although Xuanzang was not the only cleric, Chinese or foreign, who had made a trip from China to either India or some part of Central Asia to seek Buddhist writings or a deeper understanding of Buddhist doctrines (history tells us that there were over seven hundred of these men spanning nearly six centuries of such activities), his exploits were certainly the most celebrated and the most admired. He departed China a fugitive, for reasons I will make clear in due course, but he returned 16 years later virtually a hero, bringing home with him in the year 645 some 657 volumes (*bu*) of Buddhist writings.<sup>2</sup> The second emperor of the Tang Dynasty, Taizong, received him in the capital and quickly showered him with generous royal protection and patronage so that he could devote the rest of his life to serving Buddhism by translating the scriptures he brought back. Receiving allegedly a handwritten "Preface to the Holy Teachings (*Shengjiao xu*)" from the emperor extolling both his virtue

and Buddhist scriptures, he was then installed in the Great Wild Goose Pagoda, an edifice still standing today and seen probably by many of my audience who have visited the city Xi'an, the modern Chang'an. After his death, the life and deeds of Xuanzang swiftly metamorphosed from history to myth, and his story went through repeated and variegated tellings by mouth, brush, drama, poetry, painting, and iconography for nearly a thousand years. In the late sixteenth century, a one-hundred-chapter novel was published celebrating this beloved tale of scripture-seeking, and overnight, *Xiyouji* or *The Journey to the West* became the most popular novel of all time. Because my own work has helped to introduce this novel in its complete form to the entire English-reading world, my readers may think that I am going to talk about the story. Instead, however, what I choose to do here is to use the inspired example of the historical monk to make a few observations about the unusual historical setting and background of this pilgrimage, the significance of Xuanzang's activities, and the meaning of his achievement both for him and for us today in the context of national politics and international religion.

### THE EXCHANGE OF CULTURES

Let me, then, call your attention first to the fact that Xuanzang's accomplishments, no less than countless other stories about the memorable deeds—real or imaginary—of Buddhist priests and laypersons, of individuals and communities, all belong to the history of that religious tradition in China. For nearly two millennia, that entire history itself, sustained by both mercantile and religious traffic, represents the most momentous and consequential meeting of two already highly developed civilizations, each possessive of immense cultural sophistication and achievement. When Buddhism reached China in the second century, that nation already had a literate and bookish culture for over a thousand years, but Indian Buddhism brought with it a language and a new world of writings that, in sheer scope and volume, both elicited tremendous response from the Chinese and produced profound changes in the receiving culture.

Earlier in this century, the famous scholar, philosopher, and diplomat, Hu Shi(h), had opined that Indian literary forms and inventiveness directly and decisively influenced Chinese culture in the development of imaginative fiction, in contrast to ancient Chinese fictive writings that began as anecdotal legends and episodic variations of historiographic prose.<sup>3</sup> Major themes and topics such as the "rabbit in the moon (*yuetu*)," the use of the watermark on a boat to weigh an elephant, the belief in the dragon (*naga*) as the parent of the horse, and certain myths about sweet dew (*ganlu*) and deathless liquids (*bust shui*) that Chinese frequently take for granted as native ideas are, according to the well-known research by Chinese scholars in China and elsewhere, actually imported materials from India. In that regard, Sanskrit as the most authoritative, classical literary language of India has had such a profound and far-reaching impact on China that its full effect has yet to be adequately studied and understood. In terms of formal features, San-

skrit is probably the most different from Chinese, because the Indian language is characterized by extremely complex grammar and morphology, whereas Chinese, an essentially monosyllabic and non-morphological language, is virtually its diametrical opposite.

When these two mighty linguistic systems collided, astonishing results occurred. Long before China's contacts with the tongues and scripts of Europe and America, the encounter with Indian writing and speech produced an undertaking in translation such that, in sheer volume, scope, and magnitude, the civilized world had never seen hitherto. Apart from the thousands of titles that form the body of Buddhist scriptures, the Chinese canon also contains important volumes on lexicography, the science of translation, grammar, and linguistics that lamentably too few Chinese scholars have studied. It was estimated by Liang Qichao, the reformer and modern scholar, that Indian languages, directly or indirectly, had helped to enlarge Chinese vocabulary by at least 35,000 words, surpassing the thirty-some-odd thousand that Shakespeare bequeathed to the English language.<sup>4</sup> The impact of Sanskrit on Chinese culture, moreover, extends beyond translation and diction, for the recent investigations by Professors Rao Zongyi (Hong Kong), Tsu-lin Mei (Cornell), and Victor Mair (University of Pennsylvania) have demonstrated conclusively that tonal metrics (*sheng lü*), the exceedingly complicated scheme of prosody built on the juxtaposition of different tones that govern most forms of pre-modern Chinese poetry such as regulated verse (*lüshi*), lyric (*ci*), and song (*qu*), all derived from the earnest attempt of the Chinese to imitate certain phonetic properties of the Sanskrit language. Those immortal lines of poetry by Li Bo, Du Fu, Bo Juyi, and Su Shi—and one could name any famous or obscure poet between the fifth and twentieth century which the Chinese people cherish and want to teach their school-age children to recite—could not have been written in the forms that they have now come to love without the direct stimulus of certain foreign linguistic features.<sup>5</sup>

If this brief account seems too monothematic, I should point out that Indian influence on Chinese culture extends far beyond language. Many spices and varieties of food, including such ordinary items as black and white pepper and carrots or more exotic items like ghee-butter, cheeses, and kumiss, were introduced to China from "the West," meaning in early medieval time the regions of India and Central Asia. Indian culture contributed to Chinese development of many facets of technology, encompassing some techniques of surgery, the medical use of certain analgesic or anesthetic ingredients, and the enlargement of herbal medications. The importation of new forms of dance, music, and instruments, an all-too-familiar topic in Chinese literary history, directly helped develop an entirely new poetic form, the lyric or *ci*, in the seventh and eighth centuries. Evangelistic efforts of Buddhist communities sped up dramatically in the Tang dynasty the use of paper and printing as well, just as monastic education, according to contemporary scholars, significantly modified even certain aspects of the imperial educational system.<sup>6</sup>

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This is the historical context in which we must locate the story of Xuanzang's journey, for the event did not come about as a freak accident any more than he was living in a socio-cultural vacuum. The historical monk, along with well over one million residents in the capital of Chang'an of his time (with thousands of these being foreigners who came from as far away as Persia and modern Turkey), was already living in an environment that could justly be labeled multicultural or pluralistic.<sup>7</sup> Without the direct impact of a genuinely foreign culture and its undeniable religious appeal, there would have been no such undertaking as going to India to seek more scriptures.

## THE CONFLICT OF CULTURES

I have emphasized this element of cultural diversity in the historical and social setting of Xuanzang's life and time because I think it may offer us some valuable issues to ponder, both about the monk personally and about certain aspects of historical Chinese culture generally. Despite this century's exponential increase in scholarly knowledge of the varied constituents that have gone into the making of Chinese civilization in any particular period, the conviction that historical Chinese culture is something that has always remained stable, unified, and monolithic persists in large domains of native and non-native Sinology. Because Indian Buddhism has already been part of China's total culture for so long, it is difficult for Chinese to think of it as a foreign religion. Indeed, even among the Asian students on American campuses today, it would not surprise me to learn that there are quite a few who may be adherents to one of the several schools or divisions of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or Tibetan Buddhism largely because of familial influence. To acknowledge, however, the age of the Chinese Buddhist tradition or its continuous vitality even among contemporary Chinese believers is not the same as saying that Buddhism, now or historically, is a fully integrated part of Chinese culture, however defined. On the contrary, it is my contention—and that of other scholars as well—that Buddhism, since its first arrival in northeast Asia, has always been in tension, and frequently in conflict, with the dominant, official tradition of China. Despite the many changes or modifications of both doctrine and ritual that various forms of Buddhism had instituted over the centuries to accommodate the reality of Chinese society, Buddhist belief remains at odds with the traditional Chinese understanding of the state and the family, both institutions, as they surely are even to this day, imbued with Confucian notions and values. The evidence of conflict may be detected not merely in, for example, the famous "Memorial Against the Buddha's Relics (*Jian ying fogu biao*)" penned by the famous Tang poet and Confucian statesman, Han Yu (768-824), a treatise still frequently studied by Chinese school children, but also more vividly in the widespread turmoil in Taiwan localities during 1996 and 1997, when monasteries and clerics were accused of harming or destroying familial structures and values by seducing young men and women to enter religious orders.

Seen from the perspective of stringent Chinese cul-

tural nationalism, Xuanzang and all Buddhist followers past and present are actually subscribing to a foreign ideology, a system of beliefs and practices hardly compatible with prevalent indigenous values. As the famous anti-Buddhist polemicist Fu Yi (555-639), a contemporary of our monk, had contended in his series of proposals for suppression of Buddhism (621-24) only years before the monk embarked on his journey, that religion's alleged deleterious impact affected virtually all aspects of Chinese society—economics, politics, national identity and self-esteem, socio-psychological orientation, and intellectual integrity.<sup>8</sup> For to think, as Xuanzang the young Buddhist zealot obviously did, that Buddhist writings were necessary to the welfare and fulfillment of the Chinese people is in essence to deny the self-sufficiency or adequacy of indigenous wisdom and thought, and to identify one's deepest norms and values with something regarded as non-Chinese. To affirm that the Buddhist sangha should supercede the obligations of one's family, as the young teenager Xuanzang also maintained when he sought ordination at the Luoyang monastery (FSZ 5. 2-3), is to tear apart the ties of kinship that Chinese have valued since time immemorial. Finally, to insist that such objects of one's religious veneration (e.g., Buddhist scriptures and teachings) as something to be acquired despite express legal and political prohibition is to incur the risk of treason.

In the light of Buddhism's inherent conflict with Chinese culture, Xuanzang's religious devotion and commitment—and not merely scholarly zeal, as Chinese savants past and present would like to describe his motivation—cannot be doubted. What is remarkable is how such commitment apparently has the tacit approbation and support of his family. In this matter, both the utterance and silence of textual sources may speak volumes.

It should be apparent to anyone familiar with the priest's biographical writings that he came from a rather unusual family. According to the FSZ 1, his grandfather Chen Kang, by excellence in scholarship, was appointed Erudite in the School for the Sons of the State (*guozhi boshi*), a moderately high rank.<sup>9</sup> His father Chen Hui was said to have mastered the classics at an early age and loved to be recognized as a Confucian scholar (*hao ruzhe zhi rong*). As the Sui declined, the father buried himself in books, refusing all offers of official appointments and duties. Despite this withdrawal from public service, the paternal devotion to familial instruction in the Confucian manner never let up, and the FSZ singled out one incident to praise the sensitive piety of the young Xuanzang. While reciting the paradigmatic *Classic on Filial Piety* before his father, the eight-year old suddenly rose to his feet to tidy his clothes. When asked for the reason for his abrupt action, the boy replied: "Master Zeng [Confucius's disciple] heard the voice of his teacher and arose from his mat. How could Xuanzang sit still when he hears his father's teachings?"

This anecdotal exemplum, intended unmistakably to magnify the elite orthodoxy of both father and son, may serve at the same time as an unintended and ironic commentary of familial ethos. Given the Confucian heritage identi-

fied with ancestor, great-grandfather, grandfather, and father duly rehearsed in the biography, one would have thought that the text would proceed to provide more encomium on the acumen and achievement of the subject at hand. Xuanzang, let us notice, was indeed said to have also mastered the Confucian classics at an early age, but the account of his prodigious intelligence and love of learning becomes a mere pretext to display his astounding decision to seek "holy orders," as it were, at age thirteen. What is even more astonishing is the fact that he had an elder brother who by this time was already an ordained Buddhist priest. Of the four sons belonging to the Chen household, therefore, at least two apparently had entered the sangha while they were very young.

To this unusual phenomenon, the biographical text by its amazing silence implied no familial opposition. Given the strict vow of celibacy that Chinese Buddhism had always demanded of its clergy, this silence meant that the family no less than the young men themselves was willing to incur the risk of not providing a male heir for familial lineage, a failure that, according to the words of Mencius, was the greatest form of unfiliality. Xuanzang's family, in other words, could be one of those which, while fully participatory (as far as we could learn from history) in all aspects of Chinese life of their time, was also subscribing to a form of cultural diversity. They were unafraid to embrace a system of values that, in many respects, was critical of, or at odds with, their native tradition. Once the young Xuanzang had entered the Gate of Emptiness in formal commitment, we learn from the biography that he and his brother traveled widely not merely between the two Tang capitals of Chang'an and Luoyang, but also to far away Sichuan in quest of further learning and teachings from erudite priests. Apparently, these activities during the dangerous and tumultuous period of transition between the Sui and the Tang were tacitly supported by the family.

Although history tells of the considerable popularity of Buddhism in the Sui and early Tang, this religion's widespread influence was not met with universal acceptance, as we have just noted. Even in the person of Taizong, whose own career eventually entailed such intimate involvement with this particular monk no less than with the larger monastic and lay communities, the emperor's attitude towards Buddhism was marked more by manipulations of opportunistic politics than by the urgent promptings of faith.<sup>10</sup> This contrast of attitude and behavior towards religion on the part of emperor and subject may betoken not merely the idiosyncratic difference of two individuals but also the wider phenomenon of reception or resistance. In the accounts of Xuanzang's early life and already assertive engagement with Buddhist studies and preaching in fraternal company, could we not detect perhaps the family's basic and genial regard for this religion? Might not such familial hospitality, in turn, deepen his commitment to the extent of undertaking not merely the daunting pilgrimage of sixteen years but also the task of a reversed missionary throughout the land of his faith when he participated liberally in doctrinal disputations and

evangelistic preaching? Finally, and most significantly, could such familial support furnish him with the needed courage and confidence to embark on his journey against imperial prohibition, thus transforming a religious pilgrimage into also an act of religious defiance against the Chinese state?

### THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM

Let me hasten to add that such questions on possible influence of familial setting are acknowledgeably rhetorical and speculative. What we know with certainty, however, was the fact that Xuanzang departed Tang territory furtively, for "at this time," declares the FSZ (1. 7), "the state's governance was new and its frontiers did not reach far. The people were prohibited from going to foreign domains." The transgressive act of the monk thus earned him a contemporary biographer's justifiable observation that he left Tang China "with a warrant on his head,"<sup>11</sup> but Sally Wriggins's remark only inferred the severity of his crime. The textualized accounts of his early biographers revealed more intensely his religious convictions.

The initial petition for permission to go West for scriptures and doctrinal clarification, according to FSZ 1.6, was submitted by Xuanzang and other Buddhist clerics. "When the imperial rescript denied it, all the others retreated, but the Master of the Law refused to bend (*bu qu*). Because he then resolved to travel alone and the road to the West was both difficult and dangerous, he had to interrogate his mind-and-heart on the matter. Since he had been able to bear and overcome so many afflictions of humankind already, he could not retreat from his present duty. Only then did he enter a stupa to make known his firm resolve, begging in prayer for the various Saints' secret benediction so that his journey and return might be unimpeded."

This depiction of the priest's resolve not only narrates the deliberateness of his motivation but also the steadfastness in his resolve. The biographies tell us that during the process of leaving Chinese territory, Xuanzang was warned twice about his incriminating action. The FSZ (1. 6-7) had only the briefest mention of one Li Daliang, Regional Military Commander (*dudu*)<sup>12</sup> of Liangzhou, who, upon learning of the priest's desired project, simply urged him to turn back. In the *Obituary of Xuanzang* composed by the disciple Mingxiang most likely in 664 and thus the earliest biography of the priest, a slightly longer anecdote detailed the incident of a nameless barbarian hired to sneak the pilgrim past the five signal-fire ramparts strung out beyond the Jade-Gate Pass.

In the middle of the night [while they were sleeping by a riverbank], the barbarian arose and walked toward the Master of the Law with a drawn knife and the intent to kill him. Whereupon the Master of the Law rose up and began immediately to recite the name of Buddha and a sutra. The barbarian sat down again, only to stand up once

more after a little while. He said to the priest:

"According to the Law of the State, it is a most serious crime to go to a foreign state on your private wish. When you pass through the road beneath those five signal-fires, you will be caught for certain. Once you are arrested, you are a dead man! Since your student still has family obligations, how could I take this on myself? Imperial Law cannot be breached. Let me go back with the Master."

The Master of the Law replied, "Xuanzang can only die facing the West, but I vow I shall not return East and live. If my patron cannot do this, he is free to turn back. Let Xuanzang proceed by himself."<sup>13</sup>

Though flavored perhaps with the hyperbolic accent of hagiography, this short tale also rings true at another level with dramatic irony. For the priest stubbornly committed to his journey to the west, it took a barbarian (*hu*) to remind a Tang subject of his own social reality to which both of them were subject, and to point out both the nature and risk of his illicit action. The word I translated as "private wish" is *si*, a word as old as the *Classic of Documents* (*Shujing*) that stretches through Warring States texts (e.g., *Analects*, *Laozi*, *Mencius*, *Lüshi chunqiu*) and the Han *Compendium of Ritual* (*Liji*) to denote all that is personal, self-regarding, self-directed, and self-motivated.<sup>14</sup> In pre-modern China's rigid taxonomy of both social structures and human affects, whatever outside the domain of state governance and power (*gong*) is *si*, including even clan or household kin (e.g., *Zuo Commentary*, Duke Xuan 17). Whatever human motive or action not originating from state or, in a household or clan, parental authority is *si*, and thus private desire and personal possession—inclusive of space and time—always exist in the parlous potential of selfishness. This predominantly negative assessment of the personal, in fact, is what led eventually to the escalating debate on *gong* and *si* among many Ming-Qing Confucian elites when they began to question, ever so cautiously, the origin, maintenance, and limit of imperial power.<sup>15</sup> To the Tang barbarian, however, Xuanzang's act of seeking the Dharma in the West, however noble, still falls within the realm of the private, and thus violates the law of state that brooks no rivalry.

Against the state's initial refusal of travel permission and the specific warning by the barbarian recounted in the two biographies, Xuanzang's resistance is portrayed in a language normally reserved in Chinese writings for exemplary political subjects. The FSZ says that the priest refused to bow or bend (*bu qu*), a phrase recalling the defiant stance of countless patriots celebrated for their undying loyalism. His own words represented in the *Obituary* indicates that he was clearly ready to pay the supreme sacrifice for the deci-

sion of seeking scripture.

It is of great interest to me as I re-read the story of Xuanzang today that he did not attempt to justify his undertaking in terms of what great boon he was hoping to obtain for his nation or even his people. His passionate commitment to his long, hazardous pilgrimage and its stupendous achievements, in any final assessment, must be honored and recognized first and foremost as an act of religious devotion. In the twentieth century, Hu Shi(h) has called Xuanzang "China's first oversea student (*di yi ge Zhongguo liuxue sheng*)," and this epithet has been invoked many times since.<sup>16</sup> Although I have no wish to belittle the priest's intellectual and scholastic accomplishments, I must emphasize that to treat him only as a scholar is to miss both the power of his personality and the significance of his undertaking. Trained first in Confucian ethics and politics to revere without reservation both sovereign and the state, Xuanzang nonetheless by his action indicated his belief that there was a demand, an obligation, and a law that were higher than any norm or form of authority sanctioned by his native tradition. His thoughts, words, and deeds recorded in those early segments of his biographies were as "scandalous" as the sixth-century Parthian dumping all his wealth into a river after he heard Buddhist preaching, for neither motivation could find adequate explanation in strictly secular terms.<sup>17</sup> Xuanzang had to go to India because his religion compelled him, and because he regarded those missing scriptures and unclarified teachings as a supreme good for his own people. When the imperial court said no, he disobeyed. The disobedience, in Chinese understanding, was already political rebellion, but such an act for Xuanzang clearly had its own justification that, at the same time, was indisputably at odds with the most cherished ideals of his native culture. Like the early Christians refusal to worship Caesar because of their faith in the assertion, "*Kyrios Christos* or Christ is Lord," Xuanzang's actions, from his youthful dedication, through secret defiance of royal command, to prolonged endurance of hardships on his journey, were wrought and sustained by religious zeal.

To recognize the fideistic character of this Chinese monk's person and deed is also to put his intellectual and scholastic achievements in the proper context and perspective. Xuanzang, let me emphasize again, did not take on such enormous risk and suffering incurred by that lengthy journey to India merely for material gain, for himself or for his family. Indeed, his entire vocation, we should remember, placed no emphasis on that aspect of his existence, for he had to take a vow of poverty along with that of celibacy. Although history has firmly recorded the fact that he received abundant imperial favor and even was named a "national treasure (*guo bao*)" by the emperor upon his return, one could hardly assert that such reception and outcome were his expectation during his furtive flight from China.

Although immersed in the Confucian ideals of his own heritage, Xuanzang did not aspire to serve China through officialdom, through the rigors and rewards of either civil or military service. He did not go to India because he wanted

more knowledge of statecraft or commerce. His mental and educational pursuits, from the time of his early teens, were singularly focused on studying some of the most abstruse and abstract texts in the Buddhist canon. The so-called Consciousness-Only School of Buddhism (*weishi zong*) to which he had been attracted at an early age has been understood, in his time and ours, as philosophically one of the most demanding divisions of that religion. The complexity of both text and doctrine, in fact, makes apparent the reason why such writings were not available in any significant amount through translation in Tang China. To seek out the most venerated writings of his denomination with a hope eventually to make them available to his own people, he accepted the arduous task of mastering one of the world's most difficult languages. His success enabled him to give to the Chinese people in their own script 75 volumes or 1,341 scrolls of Buddhist writings, surpassing the accomplishment of any scriptural translator in previous Chinese history. Those specimens of his intellect not only represented some of the best translations of Buddhist texts up to his time and beyond, but they also bequeathed to posterity instructive examples of how Indo-European languages were studied and understood in medieval China, including the invaluable knowledge of grammar, syntax, and phonology. Finally, the record of his protracted travel that he wrote down on the so-called Western territories (*Da Tang xiyu ji*) not only won him deserved recognition from the throne as a master savant of other lands and peoples; the work itself also has justly been hailed as the first authentic work of geography authored by a Chinese.

For these monumental achievements, Xuanzang had won numberless accolades from his own people, but I wonder how many Chinese admirers even today would completely reckon with the momentous implication of the priest's initial resolve. That single act of almost reckless daring represented nothing less than an audacious challenge to imperial power by a solitary youthful monk, while the single-mindedness of purpose that sustained the sixteen years of his itinerant quest and beyond bespoke total devotion to his faith. Anyone familiar with the history of Chinese Buddhism knows, of course, that the Tang pilgrim was hardly the first Buddhist lawbreaker, for thoughtful and faithful believers from even the early stage of Chinese Buddhism had felt obliged to advance stringent critiques of their own political culture and ideals. Already in the Wei-Jin period, according to a modern scholar, it was unquestionably assumed that the "Chinese Emperor . . . was . . . the Vicar of Heaven and Earth, the rightful source of all temporal authority. If certain persons failed to recognize that authority, it was through ignorance or out of malice, but it was never justifiable. Consequently the Chinese traditionalist could recognize no class of beings that is in the world but not of it. For such a person the Buddhist monk on Chinese soil was an intolerable anomaly."<sup>18</sup>

When the historical Xuanzang returned to China in 645 and found imperial favor almost immediately, it was to the credit of Emperor Taizong, then at the zenith of his power, that he did not find the monk's person and accomplishments

an anomaly. On the other hand, Xuanzang throughout his sojourn, as his biographers represented him, was careful to pay the most glowing tribute to his own sovereign.<sup>19</sup> After emperor and monk had made acquaintance, the subject for the rest of his life always treated his ruler and the royal house with the greatest tact and circumspection, and the series of exchanged imperial rescripts and priestly memorials preserved in the second half of the FSZ fully revealed the intelligence and persuasive power of the monk's rhetoric. Nonetheless, Xuanzang also was bold to acknowledge in his first memorial to the throne, seeking imperial pardon before he dared set foot again on Tang soil, that, "braving the transgression of the articles of law, he had departed for India on his own authority (si)" (FSZ 5. 126). That single act of admission undoubtedly represents candor and prudence, but it would also give the lie to myopic chauvinism that for the Chinese people, their sense of ultimate allegiance is likely always to derive from the comfort of communal sanction, the familiar ballast of family and state that is uniquely Chinese.

We now live in a disturbing moment of history when, in its determined efforts to modernize, the world's most populous nation also has made it its constitutional requirement that any religious community or organization seeking legitimacy in its domain must first be certified as "patriotic." The freedom to practice religion is guaranteed indeed, but only to those totally subservient to the state. Crossing the national border today, even if only in thought or in print, may prove to be just as risky and transgressive as our pilgrim's secretive exit from his homeland. I wonder what the Chinese on the mainland and in diaspora globally, who find so many "anomalies" in the followers of Falun Gong, or Rebiya Kadeer, an Islamic woman just sentenced to eight years of prison for sending back copies of local newspapers to her exiled husband,<sup>20</sup> would think of Xuanzang, our passionate pilgrim.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The dates of the monk's birth, departure for India, and death have been subjects of endless controversy in modern Chinese scholarship. I follow the conclusion reached by Liang Qichao, supported by Luo Xianglin and, more recently, by Master Yinshun. Their studies have been collected conveniently in the two volumes (8 and 16) devoted to Xuanzang. See *Xuangzang dashi yanjiu* [Studies in Master Xuangzang], in the series *Xiandai foxue congkan* [Series on contemporary Buddhist scholarship], ed., Zhang Mantao (Taipei: Dasheng [Mahayana] chubanshe, 1977). More debates on these dates are included in Vol. 16. Hereafter, the two volumes will be cited as XZYJ. The problem with the early date, however, is that it directly contradicts the statement of Xuanzang himself in his memorial to the Emperor Taizong during the final stage of his return journey: "in the fourth month of the third year of the Zhengguan reign period [i.e., 630], braving the transgression of the articles of law, I departed for India on my own authority." The memorial, if



genuine, is preserved in Book 5, the first half of his biography compiled by Huili, generally regarded as the more reliable section of the work. See the modern critical edition of the *Da Tang Da Ci'ensi Sanzang Fashi zhuan* [Biography of Tripitaka, Master of the Law in the Great Ci'en Temple of the Great Tang], collected in *Tang Xuanzang Sanzang zhuan shi huibian* [Collected Materials on Biographies and Histories of Tripitaka Xuanzang of the Tang], ed., Master Guangzhong (Taipei: Dongda, 1988), p. 127. Hereafter, the work will be cited in the text as FSZ, with book and page numbers following. The discrepancy between the traditional date and the reconstructed one is usually explained on the basis of calligraphic similarity between the character for original/first (*yuán*), as in the "first year of the Zhengguan period," and the one for three/third (*sān*), thereby inducing mistranscription or misreading.

<sup>2</sup> Luo Xianglin, "Jiu Tangshu Seng Xuanzang zhuan jiangshu [Explicatory Commentary on the Biography of the Monk Xuanzang in the Jiu Tangshu]," in XZYJ, 16: 270.

<sup>3</sup> See "Fojiao di fanyyi wenxue [Translated Literatures of Buddhism]," in *Baihua wenxue shi* [A History of Vernacular Literature] (Taipei: Qiming, 1957), pp. 157-215.

<sup>4</sup> The estimation is based on vocabulary count in the *Taishō shinshū dai-zōkyō* (The Tripitaka), 85 Vols., ed., Takausu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaikyoku (Tokyo: Daizō shuppan kabushiki gaisha, 1934). See Liang Qichao, "Fanyi wenxue yu fodian [Literature of Translation and the Buddhist Canon]," in *Foxue yanjiu shiba pian* [Eighteen Essays of Buddhist Studies] (Taipei: Zhonghua, 1966, rpt. of 1936 edition), p. 27 (N.B., page numbers refer to individual essays collected in the volume).

<sup>5</sup> For Indian literary references and themes in Chinese writings, see *Zhong-Yin wenxue guanxi yuanti* [On Sources of Sino-Indian Literary Relations], ed. Yu Longyu (Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1987). On language and linguistic issues, see Rao Zongyi, *Zhong-Yin wenhua guanxishi lunji, yuwen pian* [On Language and Writing in the History of Sino-Indian Cultural Relations] (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1990); Victor H. Mair and Tsulin Mei, "The Sanskrit Origins of Recent Style Prosody," in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51/2 (December, 1991): 375-470; and Victor H. Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages," in *Journal of Asian Studies* 53/3 (August, 1994): 707-51.

<sup>6</sup> For numerous transfers of both knowledge and materials from India to China—from astronomy and mathematics, through metallurgy, printing, and medicine, to various agricultural techniques and the method of crystallizing sugar—one should consult the encyclopedic accounts in Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China*, 18+ Vols. For Buddhism's contribution to education in medieval China, see Erik Zürcher, "Buddhism and Education in T'ang Times," in *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage*, eds. Wm. Theodore de Bary and John W. Chaffee (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 19-56. For Indian influences of Chinese religious beliefs, practices, symbolisms,

and institutions both within and beyond Buddhism, see Stephen Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994); Valerie Hansen, "Gods on Walls: A Case of Indian Influence on Chinese Lay Religion?" in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, eds. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), pp. 75-114.

<sup>7</sup> In the year 742, according to Peter Hopkirk, the capital's population was "close to two million (according to the census of 754, China had a total population of fifty-two million, and contained some twenty-five cities with over half a million inhabitants). Ch'ang-an which had served as the capital of the Chou, Ch'in and Han dynasties, had grown in a metropolis measuring six miles by five, . . . Foreigners were welcome, and some five thousand of them lived there. Nestorians, Manichaeans, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Jews were freely permitted to build and worship in their own churches, temples and synagogues." See *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), p. 28. Even this estimation of foreigners may be too small, for as early as 630, when the Tang Emperor Taizong assumed the title Heavenly Qaghan (*tian kehan*) at the request of China's north-western peoples, thereby vanquishing the Eastern Turks who had been for centuries marauders of the country, the eventual imperial policy was to resettle them in Chinese territory. Of the some 100,000 Turks "placed along the Chinese frontier from Ho-pei to Shensi," about "ten thousand eventually came to live in Ch'ang-an, and several of their tribal leaders received commissions as generals in the T'ang army." See Howard J. Wechsler, "The founding of the T'ang dynasty: Kao-tsu (reign 618-26)," in *The Cambridge History of China*, eds. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, Vol. 3, Sui and T'ang China, 589-906, Part I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 223.

<sup>8</sup> See Arthur F. Wright, "Fu I and the Rejection of Buddhism," in *Studies in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Robert M. Summers (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 112-24. In *The Journey to the West*, these proposals were compressed and fictionalized into statements made in a debate with the ardent Buddhist official Xiao Yu (574-647) before the Tang Emperor Taizong, resulting in his commission of Xuanzang as the scripture pilgrim. Xiao Yu, incidentally, was thought by Arthur Waley as the official responsible for withholding the historical monk's request for a passport to begin his quest in 627. See *The Real Tripitaka and Other Pieces* (New York: Macmillan, 1952). For the fictionalized account, see *The Journey to the West*, trans. Anthony C. Yu, 4 Vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977-83), 1: 262.

<sup>9</sup> In translation of official titles, I follow Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 389.

<sup>10</sup> See Arthur F. Wright, "T'ang T'ai-tung and Buddhism," in *Perspectives on the T'ang*, eds. Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 239-64.

<sup>11</sup> Sally Hovey Wriggins, *Xuanzang, A Buddhist Pilgrim on the Silk Road* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Hucker, p. 544.

<sup>13</sup> *Da Tang gu Sanzang Xuanzang Fashi xingzhuang* [Obituary of Xuanzang Master of the Law, the late Tripitaka of the Great Tang], in *zhuan shi huibian*, p. 289.

<sup>14</sup> Exhorting his appointed officials, the king in the *Classic of Documents* said: "Oh! All you virtuous officials that I have, honor your charges, and be careful with the decrees you issue. Once issued, they must be executed and not retracted. When you use that which is public (*gong*) to eliminate that which is personal (*si*), the people will be gladly obedient." See "Zhou guan (Zhou Officials)," in *Shangshu jishi* [Classic of Documents Collectively Annotated], ed. Qu Wanli (Taipei: Lianjing, 1983), p. 325. Although this passage is likely apocryphal and dates to the Warring States period, the injunction to "use that which is public to eliminate the private (*yi gong mie si*)" has become an entrenched slogan from antiquity to the present.

<sup>15</sup> See Yu Yingshi, *Xiandai Yuxue lun* [On Contemporary

Confucianism] (River Edge, New Jersey: Global Publishing Co., Inc., 1996), chaps. 1, 2, 4, 5. For a study of Confucianism's problematic relations to the modern theory of universal human rights, see my "Enduring Change: Confucianism and the Prospect of Human Rights," to be published by the *Lingnan Journal of Chinese Studies*, 2 (October, 2000).  
<sup>16</sup> See, for example, the essay by Li Dongfang in *XZYJ*, Vol. 16.

<sup>17</sup> See Jacques Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the Fifth to the Tenth Centuries*, trans. Franciscus Verellen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. xiii-xvii.

<sup>18</sup> Leon Hurvitz, "'Render Unto Caesar' in Early Chinese Buddhism," *Liebethal Festschrift, Sino-Indian Studies* 5:3-4 (1957), p. 81.

<sup>19</sup> One oft-cited example of Xuanzang's tribute to Taizong was the latter's brief discourse on Chinese imperial virtues and accomplishments for King Harsha, the last of the great Buddhist rulers in India prior to Hindu and Islamic conquest (FSZ 5. 107).

<sup>20</sup> The verdict on her crime was given as "revealing state intelligence" abroad, the "illegally giving of information across the border." See *The New York Times*, Friday, April 28, 2000, A8.



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