

ANCIENT INDIA  
AND ANCIENT CHINA  
TRADE AND RELIGIOUS EXCHANGES  
AD 1-600

XINRU LIU

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## FOREWORD

This is a study of trans-continental trade during the first half of the first millennium A.D. The trade under discussion links commercial centres from the Mediterranean across India and central Asia to China, although the focus is on Sino-Indian trade. The items exchanged were essentially luxury goods, the predominant products being Chinese silk and Indian precious stones. This might in part explain why this trade has often been more romanticized than factually analysed, involving as it did the rather inaccessible oasis cities of central Asia.

Xinru Liu attempts to integrate various aspects of this trade such as the routes, the commercial centres, the items, the people involved in the exchange and their religious expression and observes the trade from the two foci of Indian and Chinese interests. The expansion of Buddhism from India through central Asia to China coincided with the growth of this trade. Inevitably therefore any historical study of this trade has to examine the possible links between the nature of Buddhist institutions and ritual and the broader commercial activity of the times. This examination is a major focus of the study.

This study is important both in itself, in terms of the analysis made by the author, as also because it is among the first few studies relating to early Indian history made by Chinese historians in recent decades. Access to both the Indian and the Chinese data enriches the quality of the research and one hopes that this effort at integrating data from two different cultural traditions will be continued in future studies.

New Delhi 1987

Romila Thapar

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This is the first book to examine in detail the ancient commercial and religious traffic between India and China in the period before the sixth century AD. As a native of the People's Republic of China who has combined archival and field work in India and China with theoretical scholarship in the USA, Dr Xinru Liu is particularly well equipped to study the various connections that existed between two important civilizations of the ancient world.

The importance of this book lies in conclusively establishing the linkages between, on the one hand, the transmission of Buddhism from India to China, and, on the other, the trade in commercial items that went on between these two countries.

The first part of this volume analyses the effect of major historical events on trade by tracing shifts in trade routes as well as changes in urban life in north India and north China. In this part the author also examines the items exchanged in order to ascertain the nature and strength of Sino-Indian trade.

In the second part she examines theological and institutional developments within Buddhism, as well the relationship between Buddhist monasteries and the laity, in order to demonstrate the influence of commerce upon Buddhist theory and practice.

Finally, a study of Buddhist institutional expansion and ritual activity shows the significant role of Buddhism in stimulating Indo-Chinese trade.

This book will prove invaluable to people studying ancient India, ancient China, Buddhist theory and practice, and trade, urbanization and religion in the ancient world.

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