



Xuanzang: A Buddhist Pilgrim On The Silk Road

Sally Wiggins

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The saga of the seventh-century Chinese monk Xuanzang, who completed an epic sixteen-year journey to discover the heart of Buddhism at its source in India, is a splendid story of human struggle and triumph. One of China's great heroes, Xuanzang is introduced here for the first time to Western readers in this richly illustrated book. Sally Wriggins, who journeyed in Xuanzang's footsteps, brings to life a man who transcended common experience. Eight centuries before Columbus, this intrepid pilgrim—against the wishes of his emperor—traveled on the Silk Road through Central Asia on his way to India. Before his journey ended, he had met most of Asia's important leaders and traversed 10,000 miles in search of Buddhist scriptures. He was both a mountain climber who scaled three of Asia's highest mountain ranges and a desert survivor who nearly died of thirst on the brutal flats; a philosopher and metaphysician; a diplomat who established China's ties to Central Asian and Indian kings; and above all a devout and courageous Buddhist who personally nurtured the growth of Buddhism in China by disseminating the nearly 600 scriptures he carried back from India. Wriggins gives us vivid descriptions of the perils Xuanzang faced, the monasteries he visited (many still standing today), and the eight places of Buddhist pilgrimage in India. Detailed maps and color photographs provide striking evidence of the vast distances involved and the appalling dangers Xuanzang endured; reproductions of Buddhist art from museums around the world capture the glories of this world religion while revealing a cosmopolitan era in which pilgrims were both adventurers and ambassadors of goodwill. An engaging introduction to Buddhism and Buddhist art, this unique book takes the reader on a rousing adventure that also gives a compelling view of Asian history and civilization.

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