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# Tang Dynasty Buddhist monks and Proto-anthropology

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Abstract: What is the history of caring about “the other” before the emergence of the modern anthropological discipline in the 1800s? How did travelers and those interested in cultures, not their own conduct themselves? Who was interested in their works and why? What motivated them to seek out the experiences of those who lived just beyond their city walls, river valley, culture, or state? What compelled scholars, theologians, philosophers and learned people of the pre-modern world to travel for many years, in dangerous conditions, many times by foot, to acquire these insights about strange people in far-away-lands? These questions are of central importance to anthropology as a discipline, by understanding and mapping the history of this impulse, do we chart the core of our discipline. By studying the life and scholarship of two Tang Dynasty Buddhist monks, Xuanzang and Hyecho, we will answer this question. I contend that Xuanzang and Hyecho’s scholarship was firstly made possible by the frameworks and social positionality afforded by Buddhism. The social positionality of Buddhism and Buddhist monks within China as a “between” or “liminal” space between “the foreign” and “China”. That Hyecho and Xuanzang trod along well-traveled paths. Buddhism offered motivation and a drive to travel and understand, that was both personal for Hyecho and Xuanzang and socio-political for Buddhism in the Tang Dynasty as a whole.

## Introduction

The year is 629 CE, a Chinese monk by the name of Xuanzang escapes across the border of the southwestern regions of the Tang dynasty, in what is now Xinjiang. He moves under the cover of darkness, dissatisfied with what he considered missing pieces from the understanding of Buddhism in China. He would spend over 16 years abroad in India and Central Asia, collecting over 700 texts on Buddhism from India, and penning mountains of pages on local customs, languages, diets, material culture, religious practices, and mythologies of the people in these regions. Traveling on horseback and

foot over 50,000 Lli (or 10,000 miles). Upon his return, he would be welcomed by the emperor, and given a Pavilion in the imperial palace.

The year is 723 CE, a Korean monk by the name of Hyecho from the Kingdom of Silla in what is now South Korea embarks on a boat in the Canton region of southern China, he will land in a port near what is now Calcutta in 724. What brings him here is a mystery, some scholars posit it was to gather texts on tantric buddhism, which is lacking in Korea. He will spend the next three years traveling on foot, keeping a personal diary. detailing local monasteries and holy sites. This diary will be filled with poetry, personal observations, and details on local customs throughout India and Central Asia. He will make it as far as what is modern-day Northern Iran. Upon his return, he will fade into obscurity. With his Diary only being rediscovered in 1908.

Both of these men, Hyecho and Xuanzang, are fellow travelers in the art of organized and meticulous observation and pontificating on “the other”. One that deserve to be brought in out of the cold and integrated into the common scholarship of anthropology as a discipline. Both Hyecho and Xuanzang navigated many of the same issues of universalism, ethnocentrism, and cultural relativism (Eriksen 2013: pg 3). Firstly, By integrating Hyecho and Xuanzang, and indeed potentially Buddhist monks in totality into the history of the discipline we can better understand how they navigated these issues. Secondly, by understanding their work through an anthropological lens, that they are doing anthropology, we can chart out the unique frameworks and historical circumstances their scholarship existed within.

As a growing number of Anthropologists from non-western society take up the cause of ethnography and Anthropological inquiry our conception of the history of the field requires broadening.Especially in rapidly urbanizing countries like China, where anthropology is becoming a wider and wider field of practice (He Yu 2017). Mapping and finding the proto-anthropological will expand the common cultural “heritage” and universality of anthropology outside the Western canon. Xuanzang and Hyecho are great lightning rods to illuminate the larger social reality of Buddhist travels during this period, and potentially earlier and later periods. Both Hyecho and Xuanzang existed during the same hundred-year time span. Meaning, that discussions of Buddhism and Buddhist monk travel during this period can establish an easy intercontextuality. They were contemporaries.

I contend that Xuanzang and Hyecho’s scholarship was firstly made possible by the frameworks and social positionality afforded by Buddhism. The social positionality of Buddhism and Buddhist monks within China as a “between” or “liminal” space between “the foreign” and “China”. That Hyecho and Xuanzang trod along well-traveled paths. That Buddhism offered motivation and a drive to travel and understand, that was both personal for Hyecho and Xuanzang and socio-political for Buddhism in the Tang Dynasty as a whole.

# Buddhism In Tang Dynasty China

First, to begin our discussion on Xuanzang and Hyecho we must first understand the context and content of Buddhism in Tang Dynasty China. In his 1973 book

*Buddhism in China* Ch'en makes the case that it originally was brought to China through trade interactions in port cities.


Figure 1: Map of early Buddhist communities (Ch'en 1973: pg 43)

This map of recorded Buddhist communities in Han China by the turn of the millennium paints a clear picture. Along sea routes, trading routes, and at the border of Han Dynasty China, communities of Buddhists sprung up. Of note, Lo-Yang is recorded to have had a translation room, as Ch'en writes:

"in Lo-yang there was a translation center organized by foreign monks. Of these foreign monks living and working in Lo-yang, the most famous was also the earliest arrival in that center, An Shih-kao. An was a Parthian of royal lineage, his family bearing the name Arsacide or Arsakes, from which the Chinese designation for Parthia, An-hsi, was derived" (Ch'en 1973: pg 43)

Since Buddhism got its start in India, it had to arrive from outside in some capacity. This translation house demonstrates quite clearly not only Buddhism is known in China by the first century AD(Ch'en 1973: pg 43), but this community was well

developed, integrated into the local populace, and was hungry for texts from India to be translated and integrated into it's understanding of Buddhism.

Ch'en also writes that, by the 1st century BCE, central Asia was an intense hub of activity, trade, pilgrimages, and diplomatic envoys. Central Asia was more habitable during this period, with a greater concentration of cities, outposts, and fortifications dotting the landscape. Scholars attribute this to a higher prevalence of rivers and lakes that have long since dried up. This is attributed either to localized climate change over the course of centuries, or glaciers from the recent ice age slowly melting. It is believed that monks and merchants traveling throughout central Asia in the first century BCE traveled through Kashgar and eventually into China. (Ch'en 1973:pg 45)

Within China itself, various myths, folktales, and historical accounts (some believed to have been forged by later Chinese Buddhist monks) depict this exchange within wider narratives of mythology, politics, and superstructure.

While these historical accounts have been discredited by later Chinese scholars,they are still fascinating for the cultural image of Buddhism's origins in the Middle Kingdom. Mainly, Buddhism arose out of interactions with the Western "other". For example:

"Some Buddhist writers also argued that Chang Ch'ien, the Chinese envoy who traveled across Central Asia to Bactria in the second century B.C., heard about the Buddhist faith in his travels abroad and brought back to China some information concerning it. But only in Buddhist records of the Tang Dynasty was it indicated that Chang Ch'ien brought back such information. In the earlier sources, there is no record of his having mentioned the Buddha." (Ch'en 1973:pg 28)

And

"Another account tells us that the religion was already known in 317 B.C. when a foreign magician carrying a staff and begging bowl visited the court of Prince Chao of Yen and created a stupa three feet high on his finger tips." (Ch'en 1973:pg 28).

Countering this cultural image is one of Buddhism arising from within China. influential to this narrative is the story concerning a dream of Emperor Ming (A.D 58-75). As the story goes:

"One night in a dream Emperor Ming saw a golden deity flying in front of his palace. On the morrow he asked his ministers to explain the identity of this deity. One of them, Fu Yi, replied that he heard there was a sage in India who had attained salvation and was designated the Buddha, who was able to fly, and whose body was of a golden hue. He went on to say that the deity seen in the dream was this Buddha. The ruler accepted his explanation and dispatched envoys abroad to learn more about this sage and his teachings. The envoys returned bringing back with them the Sutra in Forty-two Sections, which was received by the emperor and deposited in a temple constructed outside the walls of the capital, Lo-yang." (Ch'en 1973:pg 29)

In that story, the source of Buddhism is self-generating, the Han Emperor envisions the Buddha and seeks him out. Buddhism is something *sought* by China, rather than something that *arrives* to China.

Within all of these tales, there exists the common thread of "that from outside China", that of the Western reaches being something worth seeking, that Buddhism and India contain a "storehouse" of Buddhism and enlightenment evidenced in texts, its people, and its landmarks. What's interesting about the Ming story is that the search for

Buddhism was mediated internally and by the emperor's divine will. Compared to, for example, the *Maotzu* (a text contemporary to the Ming tale) that demonstrates early Buddhist communities as existing in transitory spaces in Chinese society. places in China that most readily existed in contact with the outside world. The juxtaposition between the Ming tale and the Maotzu also demonstrates contradictions internal to Buddhism (sought/arrives) that are mediated in some way by seeking Buddhism elsewhere.

By the period of the Tang dynasty (618-907), Buddhism was widely popular amongst all segments of society. Especially amongst the Peasantry (Ch'en 1973: pg 213). The Tang dynasty, seeing itself as a cosmopolitan ruler of both China and of "the barbarians" sought a religious pluralist attitude (Ch'en 1973: pg 213). Frequently during this period, the main political struggles of Buddhism relied upon garnering the support of the Emperor, to continue the funding and expansion of temples and the patronage of Monks (Ch'en 1973:pg 214). The Tang dynasty period would also coincide with extreme Taoist and Confucian backlash to the religion grounded on its foreign roots. For example, in 621 the Taoist official Fu Yi penned "a memorial to Buddhism" which slandered it as fermenting "disloyalty" among other sins (Ch'en 1973:pg 215).

During this period also, Buddhism gained a large base of support among sailors and traders. In Donald Lopez's 2017 book *Hyecho's Journey*, a larger dialogue on Buddhism during the period using Hyecho as a lightning rod, the sea, and the sailor are prominent aspects of Buddhism. The sea itself featured within the Sutras themselves. Lopez writes:

"Sea travel- with its great rewards of riches and its great dangers of horrible death-appears often in Buddhist literature, including in the jätaka col-lections, the stories of the Buddha's past lives, where the future buddha is sometimes himself a sea captain, a "navigator of the oceans." Perhaps the most famous of these was the story of his birth as Suparaga,

"he who crosses easily to the other shore." Here is how he is described: Through knowing the movement of the stars, the Great One was never confused about the position of the directions. Well-versed in normal, incidental, and miraculous omens, he was skilled in the order of timely and untimely events and proficient in recognizing sections of the sea through clues such as fish, water-color, terrain, birds, and crags. Alert and in control of weariness and sleep, he could endure the exhaustion brought on by cold, heat, rain, and other afflictions. Vigilant and brave, he delivered merchandise to its destination through his skill in drawing into land, steering clear of obstacles, and other talents."

In the story, Suparaga, although old and blind, agrees to accompany some merchants on a sea voyage. Despite his blindness, he is able to guide them through uncharted seas and eventually saves them from falling off the ends of the earth." (Lopez 2017:pg 73)

Tales of the exploits of Buddhist monks at sea abound throughout the period. As Lopez writes:

"Indeed, by the early centuries of the Common Era, sea travel seems to have been so common among Buddhists that saving sailors had become a specialty of perhaps the most famous of all bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. In the twenty-fifth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, perhaps the most famous of

the Mahayana sutras, we read of the miraculous powers of Avalokitesvara (Guanyin in Chinese, Gwaneum in Korean):

"If innumerable hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of sentient beings who experience suffering hear of bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and wholeheartedly chant his name, bodhisattva Avalokitesvara will immediately perceive their voices and free them from their suffering. Even if those who hold to the name of bodhisattva Avalokitesvara were to enter a great fire, because of this bodhisattva's transcendent power, the fire would not be able to burn them. If they were adrift on the great waters, by chanting his name they would reach the shallows. There are hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of sentient beings who enter the great ocean to seek such treasures as gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, agate, coral, amber, and pearl. Even if a cyclone were to blow the ship of one of these toward the land of räksasa demons, they would all become free from the danger of those räks asa demons if there were even a single person among them who chanted the name of bodhisattva Avalokites-vara. For this reason, he is called Avalokitesvara" (Lopez 2017: pg 75)

Trade relationships, and engendering themselves to sailors and merchants, engendered Buddhism to make cross-cultural dialogue possible that wouldn't be possible in Hinduism or Taoism alone. Hindu Brahmins perceived the ocean as a place of great spiritual pollution, with sailors being considered a class of people to be shunned (Lopex 2017: pg 76)

In a similar vein, Hyecho and Xuanzang weren't the first to write about their experiences in India. For example, the monk Fa-Hsien. Fa-Hsien is considered the first Chinese Buddhist pilgrim to leave an account of his travels to India. Leaving in 399 A.D, Fa-Hsien travels through the Gobi Desert, and across the Pamir and Kush mountains to eventually reach northern India. Specific locations visited are *Kapilavastu*, the place of the Buddha's Birth, *Bodhgaya*, the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, *Sarnath*, the place of the Buddha's first sermon, and *Kusingara,* the place of the Buddha's death and final liberation (modern Nepal, Bihar India, and Utter Pradesh India for the last two respectively). (Yang 1984:pg 7). Of special importance is Fa-hsien's motivation. Yang Han-Sung in the 1984 translation of *Hye'cho's diary* writes: "After his novitiate, Fa-hsien developed the desire to go to India to search for books of the Vinaya pitaka, the monastic rules of Buddhism." (Yang 1984:pg 7)

Buddhism, as a potential source of Proto-anthropological inquiry, wasn't only engendered by its relationship to trade. Buddhism as a framework contains universal aspects conducive to inquiry. For example, as long as someone is within the cycle of rebirth (all living things) then we are all suffering and in misery *together*. All living things contain within them Karma from previous lives. As such, we all share this baseline of commonality in suffering. For example, as Ch'en writes:

"Once a woman came to the Buddha and asked him to restore to life her child who had just died. The Buddha consented, on condition that she obtain a mustard seed from a family which had not endured the suffering of death. The woman went out feeling hopeful, but as she went from family to family, she found that they all had experienced such suffering at one time or another. The universality of suffering now dawned upon her, whereupon she returned to the Blessed One and asked to be taken into the order of nuns"(Ch'en 1973:pg 7).

Buddhism in China existed as a peripheral space between cultures. As a current that different schools of river-bound fish could swim between to their respective ponds. Buddhism's unique social position made it possible for these cross-cultural exchanges to happen. Confucianism and Taoism, being tied to The Emperor and China more intimately (Ch'en 1973:pg 21), were unable to conduct these cross-cultural exchanges.

# Motivations

Now that we've established the baseline, let us begin delving into the motivations Hyecho and Xuanzang had for traveling. Establishing Xuanzang and Hyecho's motivations for traveling is essential to drawing a throughline to anthropological inquiry. To delineate tourism from an experience approaching the scientific. Beyond merely proving their proto-anthropological nature, delving into their motivations will give us fascinating and poignant insights into *how* they traveled, *why,* and what frameworks they situated their insights within.

In Xuanzang's case:

"Xuanzang was conscious of the example of Fa-hsien before him. Like Fa-Hsien, Xuanzang was concerned about the incomplete and misinterpreted nature of the Buddhist scriptures that reached China. The introduction of Chang-yuch to Xuanzang record summarizes this idea common among the Chinese Buddhist Pilgrims when it says Now Buddha having been born in the western regions and his religion having spread eastwards, the sounds of the words translated have been often mistaken, the phrases of the different regions have been misunderstood on account of the wrong sounds, and thus the sense has been lost. The words being wrong, the idea has been perverted." (Yang 1984:11).

In the case of Hyecho, no concrete reason can be ascertained, due to the scarcity of information. The primary theory, forwarded by scholars, is that Hyecho left at a period of intense growth of the Tantric school of Buddhism, a new school arriving from central Asia (Yang 1984:18). It's hypothesized that Hye'cho traveled to India to acquire knowledge and texts on tantric Buddhism, to make up for inadequacies in Northern Chinese monasteries (Yang 1984:19). In all these cases, there's a clear understanding that:

1: There is currently something dysfunctional or missing in how we practice Buddhism

2: This cannot be fixed by knowledge present in ourselves and in our society

3: India, and the Buddhist temples, sacred landmarks, and texts within (The Other) are the source of Buddhism, and traveling and interacting with the people there, transcribing works found there, will allow us to better practice Buddhism

Specific to Hyecho's framework of Buddhism, is the *Lotus Sutra*. The *Lotus Sutra* is considered one of the most important Sutras to Mahayana Buddhism (Lopez 2017:pg 101), which Hyecho was a practitioner of. It is here that the Buddha revealed that *all* beings have within them Buddha nature, and will eventually become Buddhas. In the Sutra, the current Buddha meets all the former and future Buddhas from uncountable other universes within a giant suspended Stupa (Lopez 2017: pg 106).

This gives Hyecho and Xuanzang a framework that allows them to conduct something approaching anthropology. If we understand Buddhism's universalism as:

1: all people are united in suffering and have a Buddha nature.

2: within the lands of India exist both the origins of the Buddha and the keys to being better Buddhists

Both Hyecho and Xuanzang traveled under great distress, traveling alone and for most of the journey on foot. Xuanzang snuck across the border to begin his travels, while Hyecho left in a political environment conducive to isolationism and insularity (Lopez 2017: pg 63). Beyond Buddhism operating as a metaphorical chemical base that allowed cross-cultural dialogue, it gave powerful motivation to travel that transcended personal danger, material gain, and prestige. There was a higher purpose to the knowledge gathered that served a particular spiritual purpose. I'd argue that this is analogous in function but not form to the modern scientific and academic overtures of the modern university system.

# Compare and Contrast Hyecho and Xuanzang

Of particular note is Hye Cho's Diary. written on his travels through Northern India starting in 723, arriving by a southern sea route, and is believed to have landed in a port somewhere in modern-day Bangladesh by 724 (Yang1984:pg 14). Since the diary is fragmented, and many parts of it missing, his date of arrival was retroactively calculated using the date of his return to the T'ang empire's frontier post of Kucha (in the northern part of modern-day Xinjiang) in 727. (Yang, 1984: pg 15). From this date of return, and the ordering of cities, kingdoms, and regions mentioned in the diary, historians are then able to calculate a relative route, speed, and journey map.

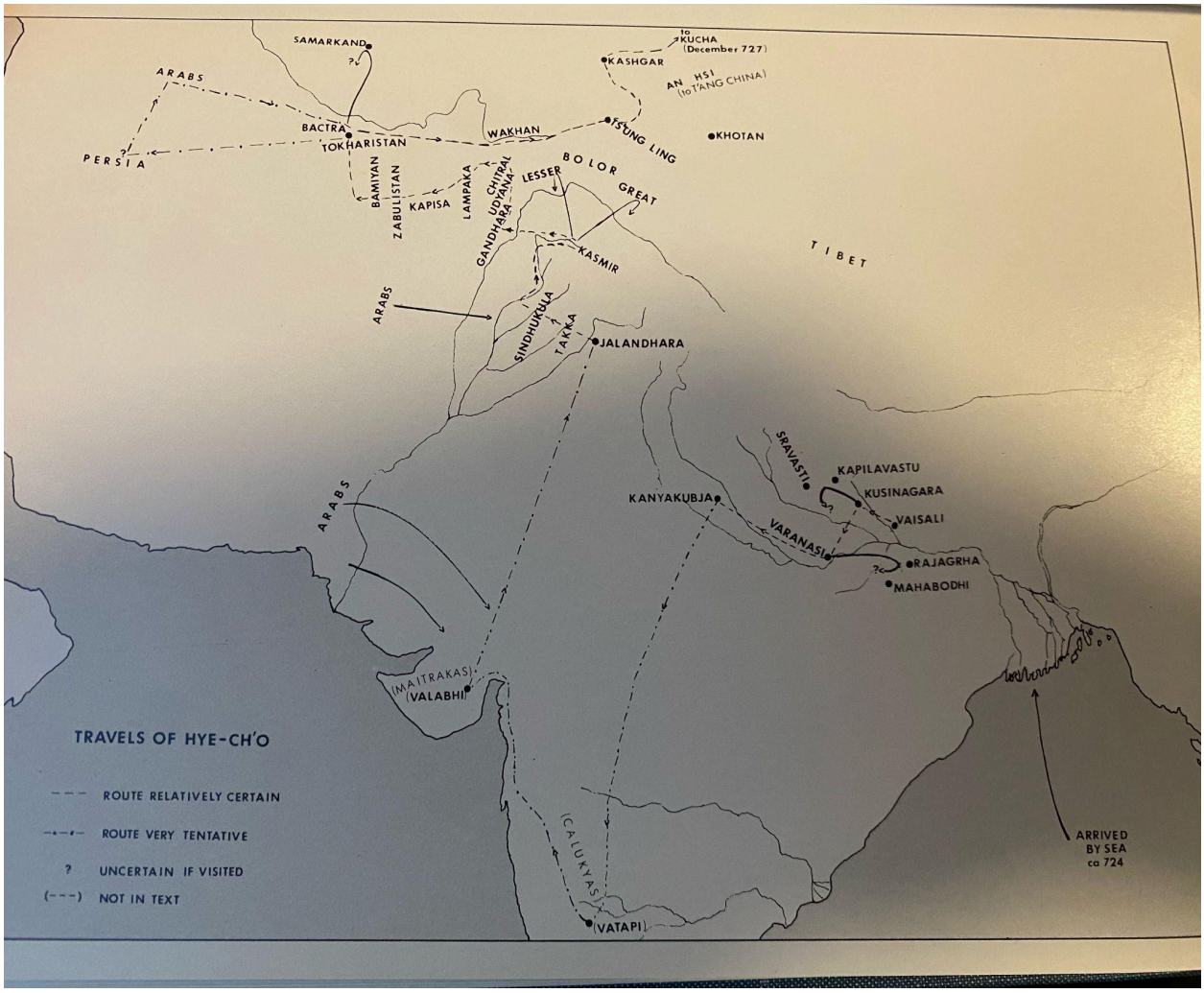


Figure 2: The extent of Hyecho's Journey (Yang 1984: pg 4)

Hyecho was eventually able to make it as far as modern-day Northern Iran.

Hye Cho's writing style, in contrast with that of Xuanzang, is a series of quick bullet points. While Hye'cho doesn't shy away from personal *I*, the majority of the diary's observations are written in a documentary observational style. By way of example:

"1. Vaisali[1] (?)

[... they do not honor the Three] Jewels[2].

and naked. The non-believers do not wear clothes

.. They go barefoot

They eat at any

time because they do not observe *uposatha*[3]. The land is completely flat.

They have [no] slaves.3 The crime of selling people is not different from that of murder" (39)

[1] Modern day Bihar India

[2] The three jewels is a foundational concept in Buddhism, centered around Buddha (original nature) Sangha (Community) and Dharma (compassionate teaching)

[3] Buddhist Holy day

I have chosen this specific entry as a quite extreme example to highlight some of the difficulties in the work and positioning it within proto-anthropological ethnographic inquiry. Many of the entries are quite short, and Hye'cho doesn't make clear delineation from observed, told, and inferred. Despite this, much can be inferred and imponderabilia collected even if its accuracy might be dubious. For example, the people of Vaisali:

- Walk Barefoot
- Non-Buddhist don't wear clothes
- Don't partake in Uposatha

These are observations/commentary on the people themselves, while others are larger societal observations, for example Vaisali:

- Has no slavery
- It is a crime to sell people
- By the comparison to the crime of murder, who can infer selling slaves carries harsh punishment

There are aspects of this that remind me of Herodotus' work. Even if the observations are short. For example, the adherence to the Three Jewels, the Prohibition of slavery, and its punishment as akin to murder are all customs and commands. Operating neatly within Nomoi. While walking barefoot is an aspect of material culture or Diaita. Despite living in different periods, and even traveling along different routes, many similarities emerge in both Hyecho's writing and Xuanzang's.

In both Xuanzang and Hyecho diaries, there is great attention paid to garments and particularly clothes. In both the cases of Hyecho and Xuanzang, there is also much attention paid to what *type* of material the clothes are made out of. For example, as Xuanzang writes:

"the people have rough written records, which are read vertically and are transmitted from teacher to pupil without interruption. They dress in felt and hempen clothes and put on fur and cotton garments. Both their undergarments and their upper clothes fit tightly." (Rongxi 1996:pg 20).

In Hyecho's case, he writes: "The Dress includes furs, cotton shirts, boots, and trousers" (Yang 1984:pg 49). These paragraphs also highlight differences between my own ethnographic work, other modern ethnographic works, and Hyecho/Xuanzang.

For example, within my field sites, I have never once taken notice of what *material* the clothes on peoples backs are made out of. I take great notice of what is *depicted* on people's clothes (Logos, media franchises, designs, etc etc), but material is never something that has particularly crossed my mind. This could be due to the vast differences in the conditions and frameworks of labor between 7th-8th century Central Asia/India/China and modern industrial societies. As noted in *China's Golden Age,* 80-90% of people within the Tang Society were Farmers (Benn 2004:pg 32). Specifically, these peasants were not only tied to specific plots of land, but within families there existed a strict hierarchy of gendered labor. Wives and Daughters were expected to create and maintain textiles and garments for the entire household, using the materials they directly had access to or could acquire raw (Benn 2004:pg 32-33). When Xuanzang and Hyecho directly mention what clothes were made out of, they were making direct statements *also* about what type of labor these people performed and what resources they had locally available. Compared to the conditions at my field

site of Gamer's Haunt, where the automation and specialization brought about by industrial capital has abstracted the correlation between labor, materials, and goods.

Another example from Xuanzang's writing, on the country of Tukhara, is "They use more cotton than hemp in making clothes" (Rongxi 1996:pg 26). Of course, since both the rhetorical conventions of the piece and the lack of formally written methodology, we don't know how both Hyecho and Xuanzang acquired this knowledge. Was it from observing women at work? Just being able to intrinsically notice the cloth: hemp ratio in clothes? Asking them? We don't know.

This also brings to a second running theme, products. Hyecho and Xuanzang both make notes of what products a specific country or region produces. For example, Xuanzang writes

"It produces gold, silver, and brass and it is suitable for rearing cattle, sheep, camels, mules, and other domestic animals. The camels are small in size and have only one hump. It produces plenty of red salt, the color of red rock, while its white and black salt and white rock salt are used as medicine by people in distant foreign countries." (Rongxi 1996:pg 305)

in reference to the country of Gurjara. In Hyecho's case, he writes "The products of this land cotton cloth, silver, elephants, horses, sheep, and cows." (Yang 1984:pg 43) in reference to what Hyecho titled West India. In a similar vein to garments, these imply something about the people in these regions. For example, that this land produces gold and silver implies the existence of gold miners. In both the cases of Garments and products and irrespective of how intentional this is on the part of Hyecho and Xuanzang, they are saying something *quantifiable* about these regions. While, of course, there can be arguments about what constitutes "plenty" for instance, there is less imposition of the personal.

Which brings me to my next point. While Hyecho and Xuanzang discuss products and garments at length, it is inconsistent. Some regions, indeed many regions, will go without mention of garments or products at all. Even something as essential as language may go unmentioned for several countries. In such cases, Hyecho and Xuanzang will mostly articulate that the language is or isn't different than its neighbors. In some instances, more in-depth investigation of language and even written words is gleaned. These are only from the works of Xuanzang, who compared to Hyecho ( Lopex 2017:pg 15) is more studied in local languages and has a better grasp on Chinese. For example, in relation to the country Kuci Xuanzang writes "their writing is taken from that of India but with minor alterations." (Rongxi 1996: pg 16) or in reference to the country of Tukhara Xuanzang writes "Here are twenty-five letters in their alphabet, by which various words are formed to express all things. Their writing is horizontal, from left to right, and their records have been gradually increased until they exceed those of Suli in number." (Rongxi 1996:pg 26). This is where both the personal perspective of Xuanzang and Hyecho begin to crop up in the work.

Their works are practically overflowing with statements pertaining to the character of peoples, many times without modifiers or further explanation. In Xuanzang's case, where these appear quite frequently, words like "harsh", "rude" and "abusive" are attached to languages or attitudes. For example, in reference to the country of Feihan Xuanzang writes "Their language is different from those of other countries, and their features are ugly and misshapen." (Rongxi 1996:pg 23). Xuanzang

just unequivocally calls a group of people ugly, it's bluntness and its lack of qualification is both an insertion of authorial voice and is quite different to modern ethnographic inquiry.

These personal asides, even if written in an authoritative voice, are inconsistent. Which brings me to another point of similarity. Without fail, across every entry, there is some reference to how these places relate to *Buddhism*. This connects them back to their initial religious motivations, and how the larger ethnographic content is an outcropping of that initial mustard seed. Throughout Hyecho's diary for instance, differing countries are mapped on if they follow Buddhism, if so which type, if they honor the three jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha; IE, In Hyecho's view, do they follow Buddhism "correctly"), if they don't follow Buddhism, and if they have no knowledge of it. Xuanzang doesn't mention the three jewels, but he does mention specific temples, the size of local monk populations, local buddhist festivals, and customs. For example, Xuanzang writes:

"over twenty li to the west of the city there is a large, beautifully constructed monastery consisting of many lofty and spacious buildings adorned with exquisite carvings. The holy images and statues are made in a most stately manner. There are several hundred monks who study the teachings of the Saṃmitīya sect; several myriads of laypeople, attendants of the monks, live in their houses beside the monastery." (Rongxi 1996:pg 118)

in reference to the country of Kapitha. In a similar vein, Hyecho writes "The King, the chiefs[4], and the common people highly revere the Three Jewels. There are many monasteries and monks. Both Mahayana and Hinayana are practiced" (Ynag 1984:pg 43) in reference to the region of South India. As discussed earlier, Pilgrimage formed an essential part of how Buddhism functioned outside of India. The Belief systems central role in both Hyecho and Xuanzang's writing almost feels akin to the types of research *questions* I am asked to construct and answer in modern ethnography. In the same way that Buddhist practice forms the center and main thrust of both Pilgrims writing, in which all other details are work to reinforce the central observations about Buddhism in these regions. For example, in my fieldsite currently, I'm wanting to work with Ray Oldenbergs conception of Third Place, and as such the types of observations I am doing, type of questions I'm asking, and the type of notes I'm taking seek to reinforce that

It should also be noted that both writers were prone to ethnocentrism or stereotyping in many cases. For example, Xuanzang writes "The people are cruel and fierce; their language is coarse and rude" (Rongxi 1996:pg 118) in relation to the people of Kapisa. One immediately asks, well, how are you qualifying that Xuanzang? Or, for example, Hyecho says Turks do not "distinguish between good and bad" (Yang, Han-Sung: pg 55). How are those terms being defined Hyecho?

This leads me into a quite novel point of divergence between Hyecho and Xuanzang. Hyecho and Xuanzang have different authorial voices and intended audiences. Xuanzang uses "one" quite a lot in his writing. Mainly, to refer to an abstract "other" that would also be traveling along these routes. Like an instruction guide.

[4] I desperately wanted to investigate more on Xuanzang's and Hyecho's understanding of what makes someone a "chief" or a "king", since europeans assigning "chief" to the leaders and administrators of local groups has a storied past in the history (and ongoing existence) of modern colonialism, I just don't have enough time or pages.

For example, he writes:

“whenever they passed by the rat holes they alighted from their horses and carriages to worship the rats and offer clothing, bows, and arrows or fragrant flowers and delicious food to them, so as to pray for happiness. Because they did so with sincerity they gained benefit in most cases. If no sacrifice was offered one might meet with calamity.” (Rongxi pg 336).

While both Xuanzang and Hyecho also engage in uses of the I pronoun (usually referring to travel distances) Hyecho doesn’t use “one” to refer to an abstract other. This makes sense, Xuanzang’s *Records* were compiled and published (with the help of a personal biographer, Bianji) after the fact. These records were compiled and edited, with a specific audience in mind. Speaking to this fact is the insertion of local Myths and pieces of folklore. These, in many cases, help frame a specific place within the wider imagination. Xuanzang sometimes frames these stories as stories and other times weaves them into the observations directly. For example, the country of Kuci gets two such stories. Xuanzang writes:

“In front of a deva temple to the north of a city in the eastern part of the country, there is a big dragon pond. The dragons of the pond often changed their form to mate with mares and gave birth to dragon colts, which were fierce and unruly, but the offspring of the dragon colts were tamable. That is why plenty of good horses are bred in this country” (Rongxi 1996:pg 17).

Both Hyecho and Xuanzang are engaging in ethnographic observations, and in novel ways that differ from other proto-anthropologists and modern ethnographers. This makes Hyecho and Xuanzang no less fellow travelers and bearers of the impulse to travel, to know and be curious about what a group not-ones-own is up to. Religious frameworks being conducive to pre-modern scientific exploration is not a novel concept, even in anthropology (Eriksen 2013:pg 6). This is an expansion of that net to encompass the Buddhist world of the Tang Dynasty and Southeast Asia.

# Synthesis.

As discussed previously, both Hyecho and Xuanzang were conducting work in the pre-modern period, before the emergence of Anthropology as a discipline. The term used by the anthropologists Thomas Erikson and Finn Neilson to define this period is *Proto-anthropology*. In their 2013 work *A History of Anthropology*, the anthropologists Thomas Eriksen and Finn Nielsen defines proto-anthropology as the period wherein anthropology is primarily composed of “travel writing or social philosophy” (Eriksen 2013 10). Proto-anthropology accounts for pieces of writing and scholarship that held kernels of anthropological inquiry before the emergence of the modern discipline in the 1800s (Eriksen 2013 1) . The primary characteristics of modern anthropology are contained therein: “It is only when these aspects of anthropological inquiry [traveling writing and social philosophy] are fused, that is when data and theory are brought together, that anthropology appears.” (Eriksen 2013:pg 11).

A great deal of ink is spent specifically on the Greek Scholar Herodotus in Eriksen and Neilson's discussion of proto-anthropology. Writing:

“Herodotus’ descriptions of language, dress, political and judicial institutions, crafts, and economics are highly readable today. Although he sometimes clearly got the

facts wrong, he was a meticulous scholar, whose books are often the only written sources we have about peoples of a distant past."(Eriksen 2013:pg 3)

Herodotus is treated as the "gold standard" of proto-anthropology inquiry. By comparison to Herodotus we can explore this concept of proto-anthropology further, and understand firstly that Hyecho and Xuanzang as well as Herodotus are all fellow travelers in the discipline, and that through this comparison of methods, positionality, and motivations, we can reveal more about how Xuanzang and Hyecho are unique.

Herodotus was born in 484 BCE in the Greek colony of Halicarnassus, on the western coast of what is now Turkey (Eriksen 2013:pg 3). What's unique about Herodotus' upbringing is that in comparison to the Greeks in the Metropole/Athens, Herodotus and the Greeks of Halicarnassus were in much closer contact with non-greeks. Herodotus himself accounts that the city had pioneered trade relations with the Egyptians (Herodotus 425 BCE: pg 178). Herodotus would have also been a Persian subject at birth (Kia 2016:pg 161).

I was quite shocked by how moments in *An Account of Egypt* mirrors modern ethnographic work. The account of Egypt, as opposed to Xuanzang or Hyecho work, was intended to be orally recorded. As the translator G. C. Macaulay notes:

"Herodotus is not a mere teller of strange tales. However credulous he may appear to a modern judgment, he takes care to keep separate what he knows by his own observation from what he has merely inferred and from what he has been told. He is candid about acknowledging ignorance, and when versions differ he gives both. Thus the modern scientific historian, with other means of corroboration, can sometimes learn from Herodotus more than Herodotus himself knew." (Herodotus 425BCE: pg 1)

This observation is backed up throughout the work. For instance, Herodotus uses the personal *I* at least 234 times. There is, and as Herodotus notes a desire, within the work to rely on the words of Egyptian Priests. In many ways, these work as his key informants. For example:

"The priests of the Theban Zeus told me that two women in the service of the temple had been carried away from Thebes by Phenicians and that they had heard that one of them had been sold to go into Libya and the other to the Hellenes; and these women, they said, were they who first founded the prophetic seats among the nations which have been named: and when I inquired whence they knew so perfectly of this tale which they told, they said in reply that a great search had been made by the priests after these women and that they had not been able to find them, but they had heard afterwards this tale about them which they were telling. This I heard from the priests at Thebes, and what follows is said by the prophetesses of Dodona."(Herodotus 425BCE:pg 1)

Of course, Herodotus isn't just blindly recapitulating the words of the priests, many times he disagrees with them, or inquires further (as in the passage above). In moments where there are two competing interpretations, he provides both, labeling which one is the priests and which one is another group (or himself).

A wonderful example of Herodotus' attention to the details of the lived existence of Egyptians emerges in the second book. Herodotus writes (or, I guess, spoke):

"The Egyptians in agreement with their climate, which is unlike any other, and with the river, which shows a nature different from all other rivers, established for

themselves manners and customs in a way opposite to other men in almost all matters: for among them the women frequent the market and carry on trade, while the men remain at home and weave; and whereas others weave pushing the woof upwards, the Egyptians push it downwards: the men carry their burdens upon their heads and the women upon their shoulders: the women make water standing up and the men crouching down: they ease themselves in their houses and they eat without in the streets". This passage continues on, noting small mannerism and rituals that deviate from "all other men". (Herodotus 425BCE:pg 1)

Herodotus' motivation for scholarship is a quite stark contrast to Xuanzang's and Hyecho's, Herodotus traveling with the intent to capture a overtly "secular" theory of history. In *Herodotus, the Tourist,* James Redfield makes the argument that Herodotus is attempting to navigate Greece through an "intermediate" period in its history. Herodotus was born in 484 and died in 425. During the tail ends of the greco-persian wars, and before the Peloponnesian Wars (Redfield 1985:pg 115). Redfield understands and contextualizes Herodotus' attempts at navigating this period, or rather, articulating *how* Greece should navigate this period by dividing his understandings of cultures into "hard" and "soft". Redfield writes:

"Egypt and Scythia are here classed with other peoples; the contrast between them is a specific case of a generic contrast, of great importance in Herodotus: the contrast between soft peoples and hard peoples…Soft peoples are characterized by luxury, the division of labor, and complexity of nomoi, especially in the sphere of religion; hard peoples are simple, harsh, and fierce. Among soft peoples market-exchange proliferates; hard peoples rely on gift and theft, the heroic modes of exchange. Soft peoples centralize resources through taxation, build monuments, are literate and organized; their politics tend toward tyranny" (Redfield 1985:pg 110)."

Herodotus therefore is conducting anthropological inquiry with the intent of understanding the characteristics of distinct "peoples" as evidence for his overarching theory of history. both Xuanzang/Hyecho traveled with the intent of knowledge, with the intent of knowing. Similarly, so did Herodotus. Herodotus collected the details of daily life to support his semi-secular histographic theory of Hard and Soft peoples. Xuanzang and Hyecho went and observed the religious practices and daily existence of those in India/Central Asia to better understand the birthplace/origins of Buddhism. There was a motivation to expand the knowledge pool and find out what others are doing "over there", to better understand what we are doing "here".

What's fascinating about both Xuanzang and Herodotus is their inclusion of myth. For example, Herodotus creates a falsified story where the Persian king invites Greek elders to eat their dead, in which said Elders are disgusted/offended. Which is contrasted with the Persian king offering to burn the dead (the burial practice of ancient Greeks) of a northern Indian group, who respond in offense as well (Redfield 1985:pg 116). This event, and the Northern indian group, is falsified. It was written with the intent of proving a deeper theoretical point. Herodotus is quite aware of this. For example, he says "I do not believe this notion that there are one-eyed people in nature, having the rest of their nature like that of other people. But the ends of the earth, as they surround the rest of the world, are likely to have in them those things which seem to us finest and most rare" (Redfield 1985:pg 110). Herodotus is clearly aware in this instance the metaphorical use of myth.

In a similar vein, Xuanzang relies on myth as well. In Buddhism, all teachings and new practices must relate back to the Buddha (Lopez 2017:pg 105). Weaving tales and sutras from the time of the Buddha, or mythologies from that region around the time of the Buddha, has a similar effect. The morality tale of a species of Dragon-human hybrids, drunk on their own power becoming disloyal has the same effect as a mythological Persian invasion of Scythia. They are metaphors that are instructional to a larger point that speaks to a wider "truth" about a place.

Hyecho's diary by contrast doesn't include local Mythologies. Hyecho's diary *does* include personal poems and occasional glimpses to the writers emotional state. Despite being on the other side of the tallest mountain range in the world, across an ocean and (according to the supplementary material) not well versed in local language at all Hye'cho sometimes expresses profound feelings of community with monks in India. For example, upon hearing in his travels a local monk also on pilgrims dies hundreds of miles from his home, Hye'Cho pens this quite beautiful poem, he writes

"The Lamp at your home village has no owner
The Jewel tree fell in another country
Where does the spirit go
The precious countenance has turned into ashes
Pondering this my sorrow is deep
I grieve that your wish was not fulfilled
Who knows the road to his native land
Nothing to be seen but white clouds returning" (Yang, Han-Sung 1984:pg 46)"

Hyecho's entries are also shorter, while the longest of Xuanzang's observations take up several pages, the longest entry by Hyecho takes up a single one. Herodotus observations, by contrast, are paragraphs wedged between historical accounts and tales This makes sense, as Hyecho's diary was intended for personal reading and record keeping, while Xuanzang's was instead a edited and compiled work. In the same sense, Herodotus' work was intended for oral performance. The difference between one's research notes, one's final ethnography, and presentation if I was to draw a modern comparison.

This is all to say that, while Eriksen and Neilsen are correct about the inaccurate and falsified nature of proto-anthropological writings (Eriksen 2013 11), more attention should be paid to what those inaccuracies say about the writer. Furthermore, all three writers rarely outline their methods or how they conducted the analysis. It can be inferred how they came to know something, or Herodotus will in many cases say if he observed or was told something. Despite this, regardless of if they were told or observed, *how* they observed a community/country and what questions they asked are for us to ponder. There isn't a clear outline of methodological practice. The comparisons between Herodotus, Xuanzang, and Hyecho are only surface level and a study of the results of inquiry. I can only compare motivation and the work produced, I can't critique their methods.

How did Xuanzang arrive at the conclusion that the people of Carpisa were cruel and fierce? How did Herodotus analysis the nature of Egyptian men and women? To compare their characteristics and attitudes? With Herodotus, we are given the three categories of course, but the collection method of observation is not recounted.

According to pioneering Ethnographer Bronislaw Malinowski, these are essential aspects of Anthropological inquiry. He writes in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*:

"Before proceeding to the account of the Kula, it will be well to give a description of the methods used in the collecting of the ethnographic material. The results of scientific research in any branch of learning ought to be presented in a manner absolutely candid and above board. No one would dream of making an experimental contribution to physical or chemical science, without giving a detailed account of all the arrangements of the experiments; an exact description of the apparatus used; of the manner in which the observations were conducted; of their number; of the length of time devoted to them, and of the degree of approximation with which each measurement was made. In less exact sciences, as in biology or geology, [3]this cannot be done as rigorously, but every student will do his best to bring home to the reader all the conditions in which the experiment or the observations were made. In Ethnography, where a candid account of such data is perhaps even more necessary, it has unfortunately in the past not always been supplied with sufficient generosity, and many writers do not ply the full searchlight of methodic sincerity, as they move among their facts and produce them before us out of complete obscurity." (Bronislaw Malinowski 1922: pg 1)

With Xuanzang, Herodotus, and Hyecho we are left without these frameworks. Similarly, the actual ethnographic content in each work is quite short. Hyecho's diary only spends a few lines on each nation, Xuanzang breezes past whole regions in several pages, and the ethnographic content in Herodotus' work is wedged between larger historical narratives.

This clearly then situates Xuanzang and Hyecho within proto-anthropology. They both clearly traveled with an intent to do more than just sightseeing (travel logs), they traveled with an intent of expanding a knowledge base using the social reality of those observed. To answer burning questions of their own culture. But, their lack of outlined methods of observations, insertion of myth/falsification in the gray area between reality and fiction, and short nature of their observations clearly demarks them from modern ethnographic inquiry.

# Conclusion

Xuanzang and Hyecho's scholarship and travels reveal much about the common impulse to travel and study those in far-off-lands. Xuanzang and Hyecho's scholarship was motivated by something larger than personal gain, something that motivated them to travel 1000s of miles by foot, in a foreign land, for decades. It inspired Hyecho to travel and record despite the overarching isolationism of his home, it inspired Xuanzang to sneak across the border and live many years abroad. While these motivations are religious in nature, that doesn't prevent them from being a framework scholarship can be situated within. In a similar vein, anthropology's modern secular framework is no less of an overarching motivation for scholars to live abroad in strange lands for many years. In this way, Hyecho and Xuanzang form pillars in the long temple of anthropological inquiry. As fellow curious travelers.

It should be noted that Xuanzang and Hyecho made use of and existed at the intersection of trade networks. The Silk Road and Chinese southern ports carried Xuanzang and Hyecho to their destinations. Similarly, Buddhism sprung up in communities, ports, and cities that existed along these routes. Further scholarship should look to trade as a catalyst that facilitates this scholarly fascination with The Other in the pre-modern world. Moving beyond mere interactions with The Other, but an organized effort to understand them. It's no surprise that Marco Polo emerged during a period of increasing European trade connections with "The East" (Eriksen 2013; pg 5)

Xuanzang and Hyecho illuminate the path forward to not only expanding the scope of what we consider the history of anthropology but with it the opening of new ways to understand how anthropological scholarship also helped constitute the field of history. By understanding the common impulse to know about "The Other" in broader historical contexts, we can therefore be equipped with a larger arsenal of tools in the modern discipline.

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