Buddhism and Diplomacy in Tang China

Mayuko Kawakami

During the Tang dynasty, a number of Chinese Buddhist monks went to advanced kingdoms in the Buddhist world to study Buddhism, and many Buddhist monks of those kingdoms came to China to bring Sanskrit texts and so on to that country. In addition, many Buddhist monks mainly from East Asian kingdoms visited China in order to study Chinese Buddhism. Those monks needed financial and security support to carry out their quests. Therefore, some of them received various types of support from their kings at the outset, while others tried to get support from the kings on their way to the destination by means of holding Buddhist services, giving lectures on Buddhist texts, providing information, or sending messages on behalf of those kings. In other words, Buddhist monks who traveled Asia frequently assumed not only a religious but also a diplomatic role in traveling beyond their borders. This paper will focus on the latter role, those Buddhist monks’ involvement in diplomatic relationships, mainly in the Tang dynasty.¹

The earliest study of the role of Buddhism itself in diplomacy in the Tang era comes from Antonino Forte, who argues that, in the Empress Wu era (690-705), the international/universal and peaceful nature of the religion played a significant role in constructing the Tang-centered regional order. ² He also observed that, “during the first millennium of our era, Buddhism often played a considerable role in China’s internal and foreign policy. There was, however, a short period of about thirty years in the late seventh century and the early eighth century when its importance became even more marked.”³ In a similar vein, Tansen Sen points out the frequent diplomatic use of Buddhism in the Tang era; his study comprehensively examines the Tang-India relationship, in which the religion and monks played an important role.⁴ Furthermore, Han Sheng states that a similar relationship can be found in the post-Battle of Baekgang (百済の戦い) diplomacy between Tang and Japan; when Tang conquered Baekje 百済 and sent Guo Wucong 郭務悰 to Japan, the Japanese side chose a monk to receive the Chinese messenger, hoping to improve their relationship. Tang, on the other hand, responded to this action by erecting a Buddhist statue for the Japanese emperor.⁵ Those studies brought to light the crucial role of Buddhism in the diplomatic relationships between the Tang dynasty and surrounding kingdoms.

Drawing on this past research in the field, I have analyzed the tributes from Asian kingdoms to China with a strong emphasis on Buddhism during dynasties, examined the diplomatic policies from the Jin 晋 to Tang dynasties, in particular those envoys whose purpose was to bring diplomatic benefits, and clarified the role of the religion in the international negotiations between China and other Asian kingdoms.⁶ As a matter of course, Buddhist monks played major roles in those international negotiations. My study, therefore, examines the diplomatic roles of monks in terms of their two aspects: monks as messengers, and monks as quasi-official negotiators through their personal networks.⁷

Chapter 1: Monks as Messengers

During the Tang era, monks were frequently sent as official messengers. Of course, this role of the monks was not unprecedented. In the fourth year of Yongping 永平 (511), for instance, Ruru 蠕蠕 (Rouran Khaganate) sent a monk to Beiwei 北魏 (Northern Wei) to present an image of Buddha made of jade; in the second year of Yongming 永明 (484), an Indian monk visited Nanqi 南斆 (Southern Qi) as a messenger for Funan 扶南 (Cambodia) and presented a memorial from the kingdom, which praised China and the emperor with Buddhist rhetoric.⁸ But as will be seen below, monks were more frequently sent as messengers in the Tang period.

During the rule of Empress Wu 則天武后 (690-705), as previous studies have noted, the empress tried
to build an international network with Buddhism as the keynote. Envoys that emphasized Buddhism from the surrounding kingdoms followed her policy. For example, in the second year of Changshou 長寿 (693), as soon as Puti Liuzhi 菩提流志 (Dharmaruci) reached the capital, Empress Wu ordered him to translate *Baoyu jing* 宝雨経 (Sūtra of the Rain of Jewels Preached by the Buddha). The biography of Dharmaruci in *Kaiyuan shi jiao lu* 開元釈教録 (A Catalogue of Text Concerning Buddhist Teachings Compiled During the Kaiyuan Region Period) mentions that Fanmo 梵摩 (Brahmā), who had reached China as a member of the envoy that claimed to have come from Middle India, took part in this enterprise.

以長寿二年癸巳創達都邑，即以其年於仏授記寺訳宝雨経。中印度王使沙門梵摩同宣梵本。（T vol.55, 570 a 15-18）

In the second year of Changshou 長寿, the year of gaisi, [Dharmaruci] reached the capital for the first time. In the same year, [he] translated *Baoyu jing* at the Foshouji Monastery 仏授記寺. Shamen 沙門 (sramana)梵摩 (Brahmā), an ambassador of Zhongyindu 中印度 (Middle India), also enounced the Sanskrit original text.

Antonino Forte pointed out that *Baoyu jing* was interpolated with the intention of equating Empress Wu with Cakravartin as well as with Bodhisattva in order to legitimize her enthronement, and that the interpolation must be carried out in the Sanskrit text brought by Brahmā, who was the messenger-monk from Middle India. The whole process of the monk’s arrival, the interpolation of the text, and its translation were presumably based on the scenario to celebrate the enthronement of Empress Wu, and receiving the messengers from the birthplace of Buddhism must have been greatly significant for Empress Wu, whose legitimacy as ruler was supported by the religion.

The era of Zhongzong 中宗 (705-710), who took the throne from his mother Empress Wu, and the succeeding reign of Rui zong 睿宗 (710-712) did not leave any record of envoys with a Buddhist emphasis. It was not until the reign of Xuanzong 玄宗 (712-756) that monks frequently resumed visiting Tang as official ambassadors from Indian and West kingdoms. The era of Xuanzong saw the most monks as messengers throughout the Tang dynasty. The cases are as follows:

- The seventeenth year of Kaiyuan (729)

七月，吐火羅使僧難陀獻須那伽帝・伽麥等藥。（Cefu yuangui vol.971, 3850）

In the seventh month, a monk Nantuo 難陀, who was a messenger of Tuhuoluo 吐火羅 (Tukharistan), offered medicines including Xuna 須那, Qiedi 伽帝, and Shima 伽麥.

- The nineteenth year of Kaiyuan (731)

十九年十月，中天竺国王伊沙伏摩遣其大徳僧来朝貢。（Jiu Tang shu vol.198, 5309）

In the tenth month of the nineteenth year, Yishafumo 伊沙伏摩 (Īśānavarman), the king of Zhongtianzhuguo 中天竺国 (Middle India), dispatched an honorable monk Wuliduonian 物理多年来朝貢.

- The twenty-first year of Kaiyuan (733)

閏三月辛卯，箇失密王木多筆遣大德僧物理多年来献表。（Cefu yuangui vol.975, 3878）

The day of xinmao of the intercalary third month, Muduobi 木多筆 (Mu ktāpīḍa), the king of Geshimi 箇失密 (Kashmir), entrusted his memorial to an honorable monk Wuliduoian 物理多年. [The emperor] ordered Wuliduoian be allowed to enter a sanctum of the imperial palace, and gave him a banquet and five hundred bolts of silk. After a few days, [the emperor] let him go back to the barbaric kingdom.
The fourth year of Tianbao 天宝 (745)

July, (…) 又小勃律遣僧大德三藏伽罗密多来朝. (Cefu yuangui vol.971, 3852)

In the seventh month, (…) Xiaobolu 小勃律 (Gilgit) also sent Qieluomiduo 伽羅密多, an honorable monk who had mastered Sanzang 三藏 (Tripiṭaka), to make a pilgrimage [to the emperor].

The fifth year of Tianbao (746)

In the first month of the fifth year, Shiluomiqie 尸羅迷伽, the king of Shiziguo 師子国 (Sri Lanka), dispatched Amuqiebazheluo 阿目伽跋折羅 (Amoghavajra), a monk of Brahmin who is a master of Guanding 濃頂 (Abhisheka) and Sanzang 三蔵, to make a pilgrimage [to the emperor], and presented Yingluo 瑠珞 (necklace) of mother-of-pearl inlay, gold and jewels, one set of the Sanskrit manuscript of Dabore jing 大般若經 (Large Sūtra on the Perfection of Wisdom) written in Beiye 貝葉 (pattas), and forty cloths of cotton of fine thread.

The ninth year of Tianbao (750)

At that time, Jibinguo 總暴國 (Kapisi) wanted to be attached to Sacred Tang China and so he sent Sabo 薩波 Dagan 達幹 (Tarqan), the Great Chieftain, and Sheli Yuemo 舍利越魔, a Master of Sanzang 三蔵 of the kingdom, as ambassadors. In the ninth year of Tianbao, the year of gengyin, they came [to China] and visited the imperial court. Then, they sincerely requested a peaceful relationship, and asked for a Chinese mission to patrol and survey [around their kingdom]. Therefore, in the next year, the year of xinmao, Emperor Xuanzong ordered Zhang Taoguang 張韜光, Zhongshi 中使 (Imperial Commissioner), and Neishisheng Neisibo 內侍省内寺伯 (Senior Steward of the Department of the Palace Attendant), who were given a feiyudai 紅魚袋 (scarlet bag for the fish shaped admission tally), to bring an imperial letter and gifts.

Those kingdoms used monks for similar purposes. To consider the purposes of these envoys, Masumi Fujiyoshi and Takao Moriyasu provide key discussions.

In the eighth year of Kaiyuan (720), South India requested Tang to be given a name to a monastery the Indian kingdom had built for the Empire.

In the ninth month, Nantianzhushi 南天竺王尸利那羅僧伽宝多枝摩為国造寺, 上表乞寺額. 勅以歸化為名賜之. (Jiu Tang shu vol.198, 5309)

In the ninth month, Shilinaluosengjiebaoduozhimo 尸利那羅僧伽寶多枝摩 (Śrānarasiṃhapotavarman), the king of Nantianzhu 南天竺 (South India), built a monastery for Tang and presented a memorial to be granted a name and a tablet for that monastery. [The emperor] gave an edict, named the monastery Guihua 归化, and gave [the tablet on which its name was inscribed] to this kingdom.

Xuanzong responded to this request by giving it the name of Guihua, which means obedience to Tang China, to promote the edification and influence of the emperor. The Indian kingdom that was the birthplace of Buddha erected a monastery for Tang and asked the emperor to name it, and then it was permitted to obey Tang China:
South India undoubtedly aimed to win the favor of Xuanzong, and succeeded.

Fujiyoshi notes that South India, when asking for the name of their newly built monastery, also asked for a name for their troops in charge of subduing Arab Muslim and the Tibetan Empire. He goes on to argue that the kingdom sought a military as well as Buddhist alliance with Tang.

That is to say, the Indian kingdom that used to be the center of the Buddhist world recognized Chinese superiority in the Buddhist faith through requesting a name for the monastery from Tang. It yielded its position to Tang China, and tried to form a Buddhism-based military alliance with the Chinese Empire, in opposition to the spread of Arab Muslim and Tibetan forces.

On the other hand, Moriyasu points out that from around 710 to 730, various forces west of the Pamirs frequently dispatched messengers including the Great Mož, the highest clergyman of Manichaeism, who was sent from Jaghāniyān, and sent tributes to Tang China, which included the exile court of the Sassanid Dynasty or its remnants and a Nestorian Christian sect. He demonstrates that there was an anti-Arab Muslim alliance among the political forces of the Sogdian states, Turkish regimes, exiled Sassanid court, and closely tied religious forces of Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Nestorian Christianity, and Manichaeism.

To combine those two arguments, both the Indian and the Pamirs regions at that time were marked by anti-Tibet or anti-Arab Muslim envoys to Tang, which took on a Buddhist color among other religions. This would shed a new light on the cases of monks as messengers listed above.

Since Tukharistan sent Manichean monks to Tang in 719, it is clear that not only Manichean worship was widespread in the kingdom, it also exerted an influence on its diplomatic policy. Nevertheless, it has been proved that Buddhism was also popular in Tukharistan; in addition, Nantuo, who was sent to China as an envoy in 729, was presumably a Buddhist monk because his name, “難陀”, is also transcribed from the Sanskrit or Pali word for Nanda, which means rejoice. Tukharistan sent another envoy in 727 and requested the subdual of the forces of Arab Muslim that were expanding eastward; the same purpose was behind the following envoy in 729.

Fujiyoshi also points out the presence of an esoteric Buddhist monk from the Middle Indian royal family Jingangzhi (Vajrabodhi) in the 720 envoy from South India that was referenced above. This implies that the two kingdoms cooperated in forming an alliance with Tang in terms of warfare and religion. Furthermore, in the twenty-ninth year of Kaiyuan (741), the title of Youji Jiangjun (General of Flying) was given to the king of Middle India, who had sent an envoy to Tang, and Vajrabodhi was appointed as the return envoy. Those cases testify to the Buddhist and military characteristics of the Tang-Middle India relationship. The diplomatic policy of Middle India of constructing a firm alliance with Tang in both military and religious aspects became coherent after 720 and in 731, when “an honorable monk” was sent from the kingdom.

Xin Tang shu mentions a monk from Kashmir in 733 as follows:

天木死，弟木多筆立，遣使者物理多来朝，且言：“有国以来，並臣天可汗，受調發。国有象・馬・歩三種兵，臣身与中天竺王阻吐蕃五大道，禁出入，戰輒勝。有如天可汗兵至勃律者，雖衆二十万，能輸糧以助。又国有摩訶波多磨龍池，願為天可汗営祠。因丐王冊。”(Xin Tang shu vol.221, 6256)

Tianmu died, and his younger brother Muduobi was enthroned. He sent Wuliduo, as a messenger, to make a pilgrimage [to the emperor], saying, “Since the beginning of our kingdom, we have served Tiankehan as your subject, and have been requisitioned. Our kingdom has three kinds of troops, elephants, cavalry, and an army. I sacrificed myself in blocking the ‘Five Tibetan Roads’ with the king of Middle India, let no one pass, and won every battle [I waged]. When Tiankehan’s military forces arrive at Bolu, I will be able to support [your army]
by offering food grains. In addition, our kingdom also has the lake of Moheboduomolong 摩訶波多摩龍 (Mahāpadmasaras). I hope to build a shrine for Tiankehan.” Then he begged investiture as the king [of Kashmir].

Muktapida underlines his achievements in guarding the Five Tibetan Roads together with Middle India and promises his support for Tang with the provision of food, if the Chinese Empire would try to subdue Tibet. Then he goes on to offer to build a shrine on the edge of Mahāpadmasaras Lake and requests investiture from China. There was, in the kingdom, widespread worship of Nāga, who was said to dwell in the lake; moreover, it is known that Nāga worship in Kashmir was connected to Buddhist worship from its early years. Ayuwang zhuang 阿育王伝 (Asoka Sūtra) relates a story of Motiandijia 末田底迦 (Madhyantika), an Aluohan 阿羅漢 (Arhat) who converted the Nāga King of Kashmir, and in another story in Da Tang xiyu ji 大唐西域記 (Great Tang Records on the Western Regions), the Nāga King requested Arhat to hold a memorial service for monks. Therefore, it can be assumed that the honorable priest Wuliduonian, who Kashmir sent, was a Buddhist monk related to Nāga worship. It is clear that Kashmir certainly attempted to win the favor of the emperor through this envoy. The king of Kashmir, vigilant against the expansion of the Tibetan Empire, emphasized its anti-Tibet and pro-Tang foreign policy, which it shared with Middle India, and tried to build a firm relationship with Tang through the religion.

In 745, an honorable monk who mastered Sanzang, whom Gilgit had sent, entered Tang. After the twenty-fifth year of Kaiyuan (737), a conflict over Gilgit between Tang and Tibet continued; in the first year of Tianbao (740), Gilgit went under the umbrella of the Tibetan Empire with the marriage between its king and a princess from Tibet. Tang took the situation seriously, and dispatched an army three times between 737 and 747 (the sixth year of Tianbao) in an effort to re-incorporate Gilgit within the power of the empire. Gilgit, struggling for its continuance between the two conflicting powers of Tang and Tibet, intended to mend the relationship with Tang by sending a monk as the official envoy, although his more specific mission is unclear — the kingdom might have judged that a monk could travel to Tang relatively safely, otherwise the monk-ambassador was supposed to contact the network of Chinese monks there, through which he could work with Xuanzong on improving the relationship with his kingdom.

That Gilgit had high expectations of monks in the improvement of its relationship with Tang China is evident in the case of the sixth year of Tianbao (747), when the king, defeated by the Tang army led by Gao xianzhi 高仙芝, was brought to China with his queen by the Chinese army as it returned home. A notable fact in this capture is that the king was accompanied by Qieluomiduo, the monk whom the king had sent to Tang three years prior to the battle. It can be assumed, therefore, that the king, who had become the target of the Chinese punitive force because Gilgit had been subjugated by the Tibetan Empire, tried to improve the situation and retain his kingdom through the mediation of the monk.

A monk of Brahmin that Sri Lanka had sent in 742 was in fact Bukong 不空 (Amoghavajra), an esoteric Buddhist monk. He was treated as a Sri Lankan ambassador on his return to Tang.

In the fifth year of Tianbao, [Bukong] came back [to Tang China] and went to the capital to present a memorial from Shiluomiqie 尸羅迷伽, the king of Shiziguo 師子国 (Sri Lanka), a golden yingluo 瑠珞 (necklace), a Sanskrit manuscript of Bore 般若 (Large Sūtra on the Perfection of Wisdom), various treasures, cottons, and so on. An edict ordered him to stay at Honglusi 鴻臚寺 (the court of the State Ceremonial) temporarily.

Bukong was appointed to replace his master 金刚智 (Vajrabodhi), who had been selected as a return envoy to
Middle India, but died before his departure. As stated above, Middle India at that time strived to form a military and religious alliance with Tang, which explains why Xuanzong appointed Vajrabodhi as the envoy to respond to the Middle Indian envoy in 741 and also gave the name of Youji Jiangjun 遊撃將軍 (General of Flying) to the king. If we suppose that this Tang-Middle India relationship exerted a certain influence on the one between Tang and Sri Lanka, there is a possibility that the Sri Lankan envoy was ordered under the former relationship.

In 750, Kapisi sent the Great Chieftain and a Master of Sanzang to ask for an inspecting envoy from Tang. Xuanzong sent Zhang Taoguang and granted the imperial letter and gifts to the kingdom in answer to its request. At that time, Kapisi was in the midst of a fierce tug-of-war with the forces of Arab Muslim; the envoy to Tang that asked for the inspection by the Chinese Empire is therefore inseparable from such a political situation.

To draw a conclusion from those cases, it can be said that those areas that were threatened by foreign forces in the Xuanzong era – Tibet and Arab Muslim – sent monks-as-messengers to build close relationships with Tang and, hopefully, to induce the empire to intervene in their warfare.

The Xuanzong era witnessed the establishment of the Chinese imperial power and its increasing influence on international relationships. On the other hand, Arab Muslim and Tibetan powers expanded in Central Asia. In this situation, the smaller kingdoms exposed to the expansion of Arab Muslim and Tibet were frequently led to send envoys with an emphasis on Buddhism and other religions to Tang; their purpose was to form or maintain stable relationships with the Chinese Empire through the religions and, hopefully, to bring a military intervention into the concerned regions.

Chapter 2: Monks as quasi-official negotiators through their personal networks

The activities of those monks that we have looked at above were played out on the “main stage” of international negotiations. On the other hand, relationships between master and disciples, as well as those between fellow students, enabled unofficial negotiations without the direct involvement, at least ostensibly, of the state.

In the third year of Empress Jitō 持統天皇 (689), during the time when the Japanese kingdom hardened its attitude toward Silla after the Korean kingdom annexed “Koguryo-Minor Kingdom” 小高句麗国, the messenger of Silla had visited Japan in order to pay his respects to the late Emperor Tenmu 天武天皇, who had passed away in 686. While Japan accused the messenger of expressing condolence to Silla, at the same time bestowed a large amount of Imperial gifts upon “the master and disciples of Silla” when Japanese monks such as Myōsō 明聡 and Kanchi 観智, who had studied Buddhism in Silla, came back to Japan with the messenger of the kingdom.

In order to explain this contradictory move on the part of the Japanese, Nakabayashi Takayuki argues that “Japan resorted to the ‘master-disciple relationship,’ an independent and friendly religious community, as a buffer in the international relation; the kingdom indicated its political compromise of confirming the new situation in the peninsula.” Moreover, he mentions cases in which the religious interaction, at the heart of which monks played a vital role, assured “good-neighbor policies” among East Asian kingdoms; these arguments led him to conclude that “multilayered relationships consisting of monks, worshippers, state, and aristocrats were formed across the borders based on the common religious code of Buddhism. These diverse relationships mediated diplomacy, forming a part of an international channel that sought the easing of tension, building peace, and maintaining good-neighbor relationships.”

Despite the crucial importance of his argument, it should be noted that he also acknowledges that the shared religious-cultural code of Buddhism is not confined to East Asia, although he discusses cases exclusively
in that limited region. Monks who traveled from their kingdoms to other ones to interact with foreign monks, worshippers, aristocrats, and kings are found widely in Asia, and cases in which international negotiations were presumably facilitated by them are also common in the whole region.  

Therefore, this chapter collects some pan-Asian cases of international negotiations through Buddhism-based relationships during the Tang era.

During the Tang dynasty, many East Asian kingdoms sent monks to China to be international students. And Silla sent more monks than any other kingdom. During the reign of Taizong 太宗 (626-649), Jajang 慈藏 entered Tang China in 638 from Silla.

Shi Jajang 釈慈蔵, whose surname was Kim 金, came from Silla. (...) In the twelfth year of Zhengguan 貞観 (643), he led a little more than ten disciples, including Sengshi 僧実, left from the eastern kingdom (Silla), and entered the [Chinese] capital. (...) Then, on entering the capital, they were warmly welcomed with an imperial edict and given two hundred bolts of silk. In the seventeenth year of Zhengguan, he asked a permission to return to the kingdom. (...) Therefore, he held the great ceremony for Tang in Hongfusi 弘福寺. Honorable monks attended [the ceremony], and [the emperor forgave] eight persons for becoming Buddhist priests. (...) Then Jajang [was dissatisfied that] Silla did not possess complete Buddhist texts and Buddhist images, so Jajang was given the complete collection of Buddhist texts, the exquisite Buddhist images, the patākā, as well as the beautiful canopy that would be excellent enough for bringing spiritual benefits to his people, and went back home with them.

Depending on the biography, it is clear that over the course of five years Jajang built a close relationship with honorable Chinese monks and the emperor.

According to the biography of Shi Fachang of Tang 唐釈法常伝 of Xu Gaoseng zhuan, Jajang received Bodhisattva Precepts from Fachang 法常, who had given Bodhisattva Precepts to the crown prince Chengqian 承乾, at that time.

Silla’s prince Kim Jajang thought little of his high rank, renounced the world, and became a monk. Having heard [about Fachang 法常, Jajang] esteemed [Fachang] in his distant kingdom, and it inspired him to ask [for this monk’s] instruction; and he went a great distance, climbing over mountains and sailing through an ocean, and finally reached the Chinese capital. (...) There, he received Bodhisattva Precepts [from Fachang], and became disciple of this [monk] (Fachang) very courteously.

After going back to Silla, Jajang gave a lecture on Pusajieben 菩薩戒本 (the text of Bodhisattva Precepts) to the king of Silla in 643.

Lo Shu Ping Shang, yu a bu de chu de du shi yu de tuo, yi tuo de guo. Wai yi de kao, de tu de gong. (Fayuan zhulin vol.64, 1940)

In the seventeenth year, [Jajang] went back to his kingdom. [Even in his kingdom,] he carefully...
practiced according to the teachings of Buddha just the same as in the great kingdom (China). Then the king asked him to give a lecture about *Pusajieben* at the Hwangnyongsan Monastery 皇龍寺.

Lee Sungsi focuses on the fact that in the third month of 643, the envoy of Silla asked the permission to accompany Jajang back to his kingdom and after six month, Silla offered a memorial, probably involving Jajang, that requested the Tang army to subdue Baekje 百済 and Goguryeo 高句麗, and argues that Silla expected Jajang, a member of the royal family, to play a diplomatic role through his personal channel while the kingdom was threatened by Baekje and Goguryeo. Facing a critical phase losing many bases by the invasion of two kingdoms, the king of Silla expected the monk to find a means of survival and Jajang tried to comply with the expectation to proceed with pro-Tang policy by introducing a Chinese clothing system as well as the name of the era. Furthermore, as seen above, the king at the same time ordered Jajang, who was the disciple of Fachang, the Precepts master of the crown prince of Tang, to give a lecture on the Bodhisattva Precepts; this must have had something to do with its diplomatic purpose. Therefore, it follows that Silla also aimed to establish a close relationship with Tang through expressing its Buddhist worship following the Chinese Dynasty.

During the Dezong 德宗 era (789–805), in the eleventh month of the eleventh year of Zhenyuan 贞元 (795), the king of Wuchaguo 烏茶国 (Orissa) presented a transcription of the Sanskrit text of the 40- fascicle *Yanhua jing* 华厳経 (*Flower Garland Sūtra*) with his memorial. The memorial is recorded as follows:

南天竺烏茶国，深信最勝善逝法者，修行最勝大乘行者，吉祥自在作清浄師子王，上献摩訶支那大唐国大吉祥天子大自在師子王中大王。手自書写大方広仏花厳経百千偈中所説，善財童子親近承事仏刹極微塵数善知識行中五十五聖者善知識入不思議解脱境界普賢行願品，謹奉進上。1 伏願大国聖王，福聚高大，超須弥山，智慧深廣，過四大海，方國国土，通為一家。2 書此經功德，願集彼無量福聚，等虚空界一切世界海無盡衆生界一切，皆如善財童子，得仏正見。2

The king of Lion in Wuchaguo 烏茶国 (Orissa) of Nantianzhu 南天竺 (South India), who deeply believes the most superior Law of Sugata, who practices the most superior Act of Mahayana, who is the auspicious and fortunate king of great command, and who practices pure Acts, presents [this memorial] to Tianzi 天子 (Son of Heaven) of Maha Zhina 摩訶支那 (China), the Great Tang Empire, who is the incomparably auspicious and fortunate king of perfect command, the grate king of the kings of Lion. I transcribed by my own hands the chapter of Puxianxingyuan 普賢行願 (Samantabhadra), one of the numberless Acts of Shanzhishi 善知識 (spiritual friendship) filling the Buddha Land, which Sangcaitongzi 善財童子 (Child of Wealth) received firsthand from fifty-five Sages, all of whom being spiritual friends, and entered the inexpressible stage of deliverance; the chapter is a part of hundreds of thousands of gaathaa in *Dafangguangfuhuayan jing* 大方広仏花厳経 (*The Great Vaipulya Sūtra of the Buddha's Flower Garland*); and I humbly present it. 1) I bow low in supplication for my holy king of the great kingdom to gather a higher and bigger heap of happiness than Sumeru, to make your wisdom deeper and broader than the Four Great Oceans, and to make all kingdoms of the ten directions ally themselves under your Kingdom like a family. 2) By merit of transcribing this sūtra, I wish to gather infinite happiness and distribute this happiness equally to all creatures which fill Xukongjie 虚空界 (realm of infinite) and the numberless world of all living things in the seas of all the worlds, encourage them to gain the right view of Buddha like Sudhanakumāra, (...) and to accomplish the best acts and wishes of the pure Puxianpusa 普賢菩薩 (Samantabhadra). 3) I bend right down in supplication and I hope, by merit of transcribing this Mahayana sūtra and of offering it [to the emperor], when Cishi Rulai 慈氏如来 Maitreya Buddha
attains nirvana, to have an audience with the greatly holy Tianwang (Heavenly King) at the Longhuahui (the preaching ceremony held by Maitreya Buddha), to gain knowledge of previous existence, to perceive upaya by worshipping his person, to be given a prophecy for attaining Buddhahood with you, to let all living things of the future filling the Fajie (realm of Truth) as well as the realm of infinite promptly enter Nirvana.

Here, the king praises the Chinese emperor as the Son of heaven who is the incomparably auspicious and fortunate king of perfect command, the great king of the kings of Lion and, and at the same time, makes three petitions: 1) To make all kingdoms of the ten directions ally themselves under Tang China like a family, 2) By merit of transcribing this sūtra to make all living things accomplish the best acts and wishes of the pure Samantabhadra, 3) By merit of transcribing this Mahayana sūtra and offering it to the emperor, to have an audience with the emperor at the ceremony, be given a prophecy for attaining Buddhahood together, and make all living things of the future enter deliverance promptly. Song Gaoseng zhuan also relates that the Buddhist texts were offered by South India:

Shi Lianhua’s origin was Zhongyindu (Middle India). In the first year of Xingyuan (784), he [came to China] to have an audience with Dezong with a mace, and asked to bring a bell back to India and ring it there. [The emperor] gave an edict to Li Fu 李復, Guangzhou-Jiedushi (Military Commissioner of Guangzhou), to cast [the bell] and after its completion, send it to the Jindui Monastery 金廬寺 of Nantianzhu 南天竺 (South India). Then, Lianhua enshrined the bell around a stupa for Vairocana 毘盧遮那 in Baojunguo 宝軍国. Thereafter, the Sanskrit text of Yanhuahoufen 華厳後分 (the latter half of Flower Garland Sutra) was sent by ship as a token of its good faith. Thereafter Bore 般若 (Prajñā), who was a master of Sansang 三藏 translated [the text] into the 40-fascicle in Chongfusi 崇福寺. Someone said that the Sanskrit text was transcribed by the king of Wutuguo 烏荼国 (Orissa) of south India himself and presented to Tianzi (Son of Heaven) of Zhina 脂那 (China). (...) And it happened in the eleventh year of Zhenyuan.

According to the above, Lianhua entered into Tang China in 784 and afterward made an audience with Dezong, asking to bring a bell back to India. Dezong ordered Li Fu to cast the bell and send it to the Jindui Monastery in South India, and Lianhua enshrined the bell in the stupa for Vairocana Buddha in Baojunguo kingdom. There is no historical record that mentions details about the stupa and Baojunguo kingdom. Given the fact that the bell was sent to South India and was enshrined in the kingdom, it can be said that the stupa was in the South Indian region. Thereafter, in the eleventh year of Zhenyuan, the Sanskrit transcription of the latter half of the sūtra concerning Vairocana was sent to Tang from South India, as a token of his good faith.

Now, it is fairly evident that the two records, the biography of Lianhua, and Zhenyuan xinding Shijiao mulu refer to the same event. This is to say, before South India presented the transcription, Tang had offered the bell to South India according to the request of Lianhua. It can be assumed that the Indian monk intermediated the Buddhist-based negotiation between South India and Tang China.

The reason for the actions on both sides lies in the diplomatic policy of Dezong. In 787, Li Bi 李泌, the Grand Councilors, proposed a policy of isolating Tibet by forming alliances with Uyghur Khaganate,
Yunnan 雲南, Arab Muslim, and India, which was approved by the emperor. On Li Bi’s advice, in the fourth year of Zhenyuan (788), Dezong sent his own daughter to Uyghur to marry the emperor of Uyghur Khaganate, and made peace with the empire; then, in the sixth year of Zhenyuan (790), he sent Bore 般若 (Prajñā), who was a master of Sanzang 三蔵, to Jiashimiguo 迦湿蜜国 (Kashmir) in North India as a messenger. Moreover, the empire began to win over Nanzhao 南詔 through Wei Gao 韋皋, Military Commissioner of Jiannan 剣南, which led to the investiture of Nanzhao in the tenth year of Zhenyuan (794). Considering these activities, the fact that Tang offered the bell to South India must have been part of the Chinese diplomatic policy aiming at isolating Tibet. The South Indian king, on the other hand, sent the transcription as a token of his good faith to Tang, expressing his anti-Tibet and pro-Tang position. The phrase in his memorial that all kingdoms of the ten directions place themselves under the umbrella of Tang like a family found is based on the Chinese traditional idea that the son of heaven places all four seas under a single roof of the empire (天子四海為家), but at the same time it indicates the formation of such an alliance.

In the ninth century, many monks visited Tang from the Guiyi Army of the Zhang regime 張氏帰義軍 in Dunhuang 敦煌, which had become independent from Tibet, and interacted with Chinese Buddhist society in a political context, beginning with Wuzhen 悟真, who arrived in Tang in the fifth year of Dazhong 大中 (851).

A royal edict to Hongbian 浮弁 of Shimen 釈門 (sramana), Dousengtong 都僧統 (the highest Buddhist controller) in Hexi 河西 (the West of the River) district, who is Sheshazhou Sengzhengfalu 摂沙州僧政法律 (the chief priest of the temple administrators of Shazhou) and the hierarch of Sanxue 三学 (Threefold Training), and Wuzhen 悟真 of Shenzhou, an ambassador making a pilgrimage [to the emperor], who is Yixue Doufashi 義學都法師 (the head priest of Masters of the Law and studying Buddhism dogmas): [The emperor] has certainly heard that the people of Dunhuang 敦煌, Chinese in origin, have become a clan of queue hairstyle these years, for the Garrison of Gua 瓜 [province] had fallen. Although you were born in such a western barbaric society, you devoted yourselves to Buddhism and kept the teachings in your minds, therefore you succeeded in correcting the hearts of those who had gone astray [in Dunhuang] by the Law of Kongwang 空王 (the king of Śūnyatā, namely Buddha).

A royal edict to Seng Huiwan 慧苑, 都監察僧正 Doujiancha Sengzheng (the chief of supervisory priests) of Shimen of the Dunhuang area, and Zhouxue Boshi 州学博士 (the erudite of the province): Dunhuang was a great domain, which had fallen into the hands of barbarians for a long time. Because their disposition and customs were different [from barbarians], a distinguished monk appeared. However, this Shangren 上人 (a great monk with wisdom) was born in the Eastern area; he was gifted [with understanding the Law] and followed the teachings of Buddha, and had a thorough knowledge of Ru 儒 (Confucianism) with energy to spare.

Wuzhen, who appears on the first record, is considered as one of the members of the ten envoys that departed from Dunhuang in 848; Huiwan in the second record presumably entered Tang accompanied by an envoy that presented maps of the eleven provinces including Gua 瓜, Sha 沙, Yi 伊, and Su 肅. These two
sources, presumably issued almost simultaneously, testify to the important role Buddhism and monks played in the independence of Dunhuang and its submission to Tang.\(^4\)\(^0\)

Of this two envoys, it has been clarified that the first one was carried out in order to prepare the groundwork for approval of installing the Guiyijun army with “宗教外交 religious diplomacy” through the “文化使者 cultural envoy.”\(^4\)\(^1\) Considering this, the same background can be inferred in the second envoy. That is, Zhang Yichao 張義潮, the governor of the Guiyi Army of Dunhuang, sent these envoys to make Tang confirm that the Zhang clan virtually ruled the territory of The West of the River, which had once belonged to the Chinese Empire. In this process, he attempted to facilitate the negotiation by stressing their religious submission to Tang, the center of Buddhism for them. It is fair to conclude that Zhang Yichao sent the monks with envoys who praised Tang in terms of the Buddhist faith for the purpose of building and maintaining a friendly relationship with the empire.\(^4\)\(^2\)

**Conclusion**

Chapter 1 focused on the existence of monks as messengers, therefore making it clear that during the Tang dynasty, Asian kingdoms sent monks as envoys in order to bring out diplomatic benefits. Furthermore, especially during the reign of Xuanzong, the kingdoms of west and south of the Pamir sent monks as ambassadors against the forces of Arab Muslim and the Tibetan empire, where the acceptance of Buddhism fell far behind Tang. Many kingdoms appointed monks as messengers, possibly because the monks were expected to contact networks of Chinese monks, through which they could work on the emperor to improve the relationships with their kingdoms or negotiate directly with the emperor, who reigned at the center of Buddhism.

On the other hand, monks were expected to be quasi-official negotiators through their personal networks. Chapter 2 of this paper collected some cases of international negotiations through Buddhism-based channels during the Tang era for forming military alliances or peaceful relationships.

In conclusion, monks with the aim of building up advantageous diplomatic relations played a significant role throughout the Tang dynasty. The diplomatic role of monks is more dynamic than we have so far assumed. The Chinese Empire and its periphery sought to form a cooperative network based on Buddhism. This fact reveals a new aspect of the Tang dynasty, which has been previously considered as a Taoist empire that had expansive inclinations.

---

1. In India from BC300 to AD 300, Buddhist temples retained a close relationship with trading and dynasties, as is seen in the fact that temples and related facilities were built the politically and economically important cities (Heitzman, James. “Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire.” *Studies in the Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology of South Asia*. Eds. Kennedy, Kenneth and Possehl, Gregory. New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1984). The spread of the religion was inseparable from the political and economic situation of each region (Ji Xianlin 季羡林. “Shangren yu Fojiao,” 商人与仏教 (Merchants and Buddhism), 1987. Ji Xianlin, et. al. eds. *Ji Xianlin wen ji diqijuan Fojiao 季羡林文集 第七巻 仏教 (Collection of Papers of Ji Xianlin vol. 7: Buddhism), Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe 江西教育出版社, 1998, pp.179-180).


5. Han Sheng 韓昇. *Dongya shijie xingcheng shi lun* 東亜世界形成史論 (Study on the History of Formation of East Asia),
Shanghai: Fudan UP, 2009, pp.204-205.


7 Historical records that are used in this paper are listed as follows:

- *Taishō shinshū daiō kyō* 大正新修大藏経 The Buddhist Canon, New Compilation of the Taishō Era, Tokyo: Taishō issai kyō kankōkai 大正一切経刊行会, 1924-1932. In this paper, 大正新修大蔵経 is abbreviated to “T,” and there columns on the page are referred to as “a,” “b,” and “c,” respectively.

8 Kawakami, 2011.


10 *Jiu Tang shu* vol.198, 5309.


15 *Cefu yangui* vol. 999, pp.4040-4041.


17 Fujiyoshi, 2013, p.379.


19 Sekine Akio, 2013, p.379.

13
40 Fujieda Akira 藤枝晃. “Sashū kigigun setsudoshi shimatu (1)” 沙州帰義軍節度使始末 (1) (A history of the regime of the Kigigun at Dunhuang), Tōhō Gakuhō 東方學報 (Journal of Oriental studies)12-3, 1941.
41 Yang Baoyu・Wu Liyu 揚宝玉・呉麗娯. “Dazhong wunian Dunhuang gaoseng Wuzhen de fengshi ruzao ji qi dui Changan fosi de xunli” 大中五年敦煌高僧悟真的奉使入奏及其對長安仏寺的巡禮 (Receiving the Role of Ambassador and Presenting a Memorial by Wuzhen, a Priest of Great Sanctity of Dunhuang in the Fifth Year of Dazhong, and His Pilgrimage through Monasteries in Changan), in Zeng Qin 鄭勤 (eds.) Changan Fojiao xueshu yantaohui lunwenji 4 長安仏教學術研討會論文集四 (Collections of Academic Papers of the Conference on Changan Buddhism 4), Changan: Changan Fojiaoxuexu yantaohuichoubei weiyuanhui 長安仏教學術研討會籌備委員會, 2009, p.255.
42 Kawakami, 2011.