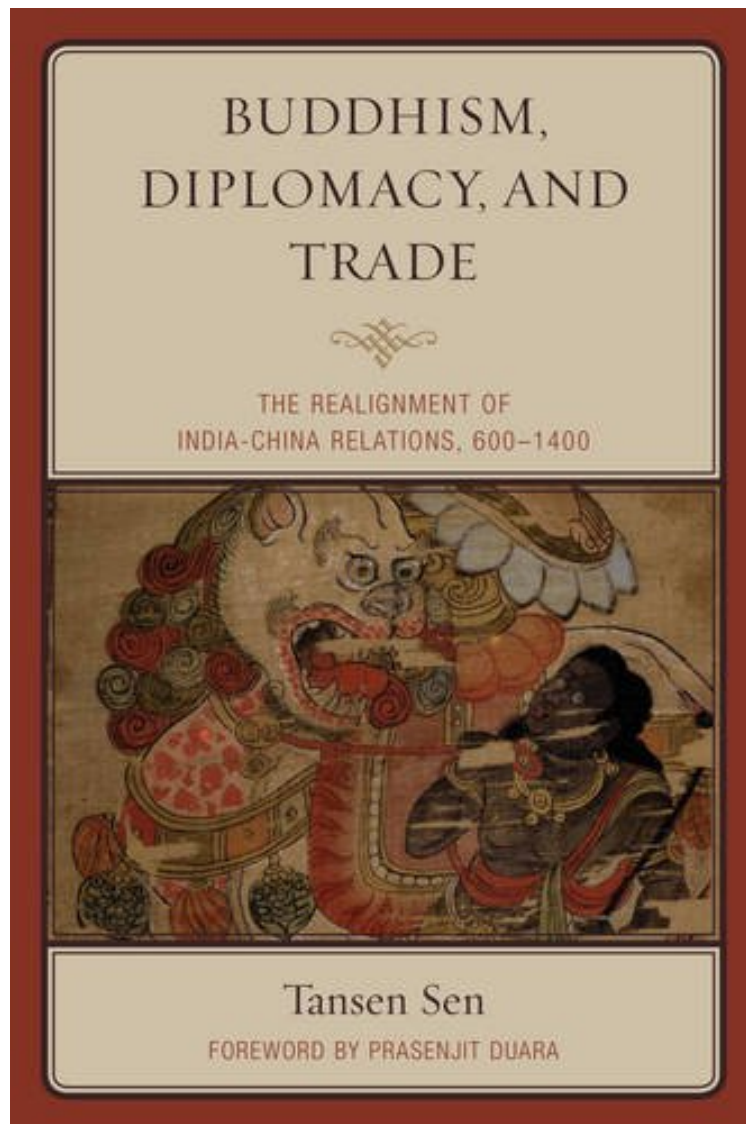


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Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of IndiaChina Relations, 6001400

Tansen Sen

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1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Serious studyBy Meow TomcatContrary to other studies, the author states that there was an explosion of commerce between China and India after the Tang Dynasty. This history of China

India relations covers the period 600 AD to 1400; that is, the Tang Dynasty, Five Dynasties Period, Song Dynasty and Yuan Dynasty. The thesis is that prior to this period sacred Buddhist sites in India were the pivot of Sino-Indian relations. Later the focus shifted to the lucrative markets of China and the expanding intercontinental commerce. The China India relationship changed from religious and spiritual to all business and commerce. Original research.

Relations between China and India underwent a dramatic transformation from Buddhist-dominated to commerce-centered exchanges in the seventh to fifteenth centuries. The unfolding of this transformation, its causes, and wider ramifications are examined in this masterful analysis of the changing patterns of the interaction between the two most important cultural spheres in Asia. Tansen Sen offers a new perspective on Sino-Indian relations during the Tang dynasty (618-907), arguing that the period is notable not only for religious and diplomatic exchanges but also for the process through which China emerged as a center of Buddhist learning, practice, and pilgrimage. Before the seventh century, the Chinese clergy given the spatial gap between the sacred Buddhist world of India and the peripheral China suffered from a borderland complex. A close look at the evolving practice of relic veneration in China (at Famen Monastery in particular), the exposition of Mount Wutai as an abode of the bodhisattva Majur, and the propagation of the idea of Maitreya's descent in China, however, reveals that by the eighth century China had overcome its complex and successfully established a Buddhist realm within its borders. The emergence of China as a center of Buddhism had profound implications on religious interactions between the two countries and is cited by Sen as one of the main causes for the weakening of China's spiritual attraction toward India. At the same time, the growth of indigenous Chinese Buddhist schools and teachings retrenched the need for doctrinal input from India. A detailed examination of the failure of Buddhist translations produced during the Song dynasty (960-1279), demonstrates that these developments were responsible for the unraveling of religious bonds between the two countries and the termination of the Buddhist phase of Sino-Indian relations. Sen proposes that changes in religious interactions were paralleled by changes in commercial exchanges. For most of the first millennium, trading activities between India and China were closely connected with and sustained through the transmission of Buddhist doctrines. The eleventh and twelfth centuries, however, witnessed dramatic changes in the patterns and structure of mercantile activity between the two countries. Secular bulk and luxury goods replaced Buddhist ritual items, maritime channels replaced the overland Silk Road as the most profitable conduits of commercial exchange, and many of the merchants involved were followers of Islam rather than Buddhism. Moreover, policies to encourage foreign trade instituted by the Chinese government and the Indian kingdoms contributed to the intensification of commercial activity between the two countries and transformed the China-India trading circuit into a key segment of cross-continental commerce.

Tansen Sen's success in melding two disciplinary approaches, that of social history and the study of Buddhism, make this a seminal work in understanding the very complicated relation between the spread of religious beliefs and economic expansion. Little scholarly attention has been paid to the connections between the two great, vibrant neighboring civilizations that deeply influenced all of Asia in part because of the necessity of dealing with inaccessible texts written in very different languages, but Sen shows himself a master of a vast range of material. That it has seventy pages of bibliographic notes is an indication that *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade* is a work of formidable scholarship. In showing how, in the period he is studying, the relationship between these two cultures is secularized and transformed, Sen opens up new vistas in both economic and religious history for specialists in Indian and Chinese studies and also for teachers in world history courses.--Ainslee T. Embree, professor emeritus of history, Columbia University

Tansen Sen's book lifts Buddhist exchanges from the confines of the individual national histories of India and China and places them squarely in a broader regional context. Earlier generations of scholars who focused on the history of Buddhism in either India or China described a decline in the years after 1000, but Sen depicts a thriving Buddhist world with trade between India and China before 1000 and little after, Sen shows conclusively that the trade continued, though in the hands of Arab middlemen. His world is much more interesting as a result.--Valerie Hansen, Yale University

Tansen Sen's work offers the most thorough overview to date of Sino-Indian relations in the period between the seventh and fifteenth centuries. Forcefully argued, well-documented, and clearly written, it will be of interest to scholars specializing in the history of Buddhism, Chinese and Indian military history, foreign relations of India and China, and economic history in pre-modern Asia, and will also prove helpful to world historians and scholars interested in the roots of modern relations between the two countries.--John Kieschnick, *Academia Sinica*

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studies and also for teachers in world history courses.--Ainslee T. Embree, professor emeritus of history, Columbia University)Tansen Sen's book lifts Buddhist exchanges from the confines of the individual national histories of India and China and places them squarely in a broader regional context. Earlier generations of scholars who focused on the history of Buddhism in either India or China described a decline in the years after 1000, but Sen depicts a thriving Buddhist world with trade between India and China before 1000 and little after, Sen shows conclusively that the trade continued, though in the hands of Arab middlemen. His world is much more interesting as a result.--Valerie Hansen, Yale University)Tansen Sen's work offers the most thorough overview to date of Sino-Indian relations in the period between the seventh and fifteenth centuries. Forcefully argued, well-documented, and clearly written, it will be of interest to scholars specializing in the history of Buddhism, Chinese and Indian military history, foreign relations of India and China, and economic history in pre-modern Asia, and will also prove helpful to world historians and scholars interested in the roots of modern relations between the two countries.--John Kieschnick, Academia Sinica)Tansen Sen's success in melding two disciplinary approaches, that of social history and the study of Buddhism, make this a seminal work in understanding the very complicated relation between the spread of religious beliefs and economic expansion. Little scholarly attention has been paid to the connections between the two great, vibrant neighboring civilizations that deeply influenced all of Asia in part because of the necessity of dealing with inaccessible texts written in very different languages, but Sen shows himself a master of a vast range of material. That it has seventy pages of bibliographic notes is an indication that Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade is a work of formidable scholarship. In showing how, in the period he is studying, the relationship between these two cultures is secularized and transformed, Sen opens up new vistas in both economic and religious history for specialists in Indian and Chinese studies and also for teachers in world history courses. (Ainslee T. Embree, professor emeritus of history, Columbia University)Tansen Sen's book lifts Buddhist exchanges from the confines of the individual national histories of India and China and places them squarely in a broader regional context. Earlier generations of scholars who focused on the history of Buddhism in either India or China described a decline in the years after 1000, but Sen depicts a thriving Buddhist world with trade between India and China before 1000 and little after, Sen shows conclusively that the trade continued, though in the hands of Arab middlemen. His world is much more interesting as a result. (Valerie Hansen, Yale University)Tansen Sen's work offers the most thorough overview to date of Sino-Indian relations in the period between the seventh and fifteenth centuries. Forcefully argued, well-documented, and clearly written, it will be of interest to scholars specializing in the history of Buddhism, Chinese and Indian military history, foreign relations of India and China, and economic history in pre-modern Asia, and will also prove helpful to world historians and scholars interested in the roots of modern relations between the two countries. (John Kieschnick, Academia Sinica)About the AuthorTansen Sen is professor in the department of history at Baruch College, CUNY.