

When Asia Was The World Chapter Summaries

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Stewart Gordon is an expert historian who specializes in Asian history. He is a Senior Research Scholar at the Center for South Asian Studies at the University of Michigan and has authored three different books on Asia. Gordon's *When Asia Was The World* uses the narratives of several different men to explore The Golden Age of medieval Asia. The fact that this book is based on the travels and experiences of the everyday lives of real people gives the reader a feeling of actually experiencing the history. Gordon's work reveals to the reader that while the Europeans were trapped in the dark ages, Asia was prosperous, bursting with culture, and widely connected by trade. This book serves to teach readers about the varieties of cultures, social...[...show more content...](#)

One of those men is Xuanzang. Under his brother's training he grew up a young monk and entered monastery in Luoyang at 13. It was there that Xuanzang studied, learned, & meditated about Buddhism. In 623, defying his older brother Xuanzang left their monastery to travel and hear oral teachings. He traveled through Henan, preaching and gaining fame. However by age 26, after listening to many oral teachings, he became unsatisfied because there were so many schools of thought and he did not know which doctrine to follow. He decided to travel to the center of Buddhism to find answers but the quest faced difficulties in the beginning as the Tang government forbade commoners to travel west, so his journey was illegal and a warrant for arrest circulated. Luckily for him a Buddhist

sympathizer gave him passage and provisions at a government tower. Xuanzang received a royal escort from King Qu-wentai and he became known as a notable teacher wherever he traveled, leaving his mark. He returned to China to explain what he had learned. He brought back many books, relics, statues, plants, and seeds. Xuanzang received the emperor's forgiveness and even a royal escort home. Xuanzang's trek sparked many pilgrimages between China and India, opening possibly trade for both. As for Xuanzang, he chose to stay a Buddhist monk and supervised a team of [...show more content...](#) Gordon accurately depicts the varied and vibrant Asian culture, by showing the reader this world instead of simply describing it. Each of the men whom Gordon uses to tell the story undertakes expeditions which are mixed with hardships and triumphs. The varied spectrum of Asian cultures is covered. Readers will find Gordon's take on tackling this topic fresh and straightforward. One strength found in Gordon's book is the fact that these are the personal memoirs of these travelers and therefore allows the readers to connect on a more personal level. This personal connection causes the reader to be more invested in the story and therefore truly strive to understand the world portrayed instead of just shallowly absorbing the setting. This is a strength because it gave the reader unique outlook on the Asian cultures because the audience feels personally involved in these situations. There are a few weaknesses in the book. I think perhaps, by putting the audience in these men's shoes you cause them develop a bias. The reader will possibly have an emotional tie to the characters and because of this not see straight facts of history. The book is highly recommended to readers interested in pre-modern history, the book is a good look into the eastern world especially if one lacks research experience with that part of the world and its

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