

Buddhism in east asian culture history essay



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Buddhism is a mixture between a religion and a philosophy compromised of various beliefs, practices, and traditions. Although Buddhism had originally derived from India, it has come to be more associated with East Asian cultures, mainly China and Korea. Nevertheless, these two countries do not completely share the same doctrines; they are not identical. Each region received and accepted Buddhism in a different manner, as they already had their own religion deeply rooted. For instance, the Chinese had embraced the principles of Confucianism and Daoism, and the Koreans believed in Shamanism, the indigenous religion that emphasized spiritual rites and nature. Therefore, it was inevitable that the introduction of Buddhism to these three East Asian countries were not accepted at once. Nevertheless, China and Korea gradually coalesced and adopted Buddhism with their native religious faiths and ethical beliefs. The contributions of Buddhism resulted in overall advancements in both China and Korea. In spite of the conflict that was encountered by the introduction of Buddhism into the already dynamic religions, the principles of Buddhism ultimately conglomerated with the preexisting religions to produce enhancements in China and Korea in various aspects such as _____.

Buddhism was born in India. It first spread to China, and then to Korea. It is said that it is uncertain when or how the Chinese first came into contact with Buddhism, but according to the official tradition, Buddhism seems to have reached China by 100 C. E. (de Bary, 415 & 420). Therefore, it can be surmised that the religion was first introduced when Buddhist worshipers came into China from India. Then, Buddhism made its way across China and to the Three Kingdoms of Korea. And because Koguryo is closes to China and

is actually bordered by China, it was naturally the first kingdom introduced to Buddhism in 372 C. E. For the same reason of geographical locations, Paekche received Buddhism second in 384 C. E., and finally Silla, much later in 527 C. E. (Lee, 34). Both China and Korea were influenced by the receiving of Buddhism from India; yet because the time period in which they received it, and the order they received it differs,

In China, Buddhism was not easily accepted for it met opposition with firm believers of Confucianism and Daoism. It was ultimately acknowledged after having found a mutual premise, and was considered one of the Three Religions among Confucianism and Daoism. However, it was not easy for Buddhism to wrestle against the prevailing religions. For instance, for the conservative and orthodox Chinese, they could not understand why they had to shave their heads and conform to these foreign ways. "The Confucians held that the body is the gift of one's parents and that to harm it is to be disrespectful toward them." (de Bary 423). It was one of the requirements for all members of the Buddhist clergy to shave their heads; however, it was met with aversion from the Chinese for they believed that they should not injure any parts of their body. Certain ideas of Buddhism such as the practice of shaving heads were seen as too different for the Chinese to adhere to.

Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, Buddhism was eventually adopted by the Chinese. The turning points of these oppositions were the works of Mouzi, a Chinese author who believed that "it was possible to be a good Chinese and a good Buddhist at the same time, that there is no fundamental conflict between the two ways of life, and that the great truths preached by Buddhism are preached, if in somewhat different language, by Confucianism

and Daoism as well.” (de Bary 422). He claimed that people should not have to decide on one religion, but that certain aspects of both sides can be drawn and implemented together. Mouzi also stated that the Chinese should not reject Buddhism for its differences, but rather embrace the ideas that do not conflict with their own. (de Bary 425). Additionally, he discovered that there are similarities between the Three Religions regarding their practices and beliefs. For instance, when asked about the concept of Immortality and how to achieve it, Mouzi explained:

“ Talk to immortality is superstitious and unfounded; it is not the word of the sages. Laozi said, ‘ Even Heaven and Earth cannot last forever. How much less can human beings!’ Confucius said, ‘ The wise man leaves the world, but humaneness and filial piety last forever.’... Yao died; Shun had his [place of burial at] Mount Cangwu; Yu has his tomb on Kuaiji... To speak of immortality, is this not a great error?” (de Bary 426).

Mouzi gave examples of the teachings of each religious leader, and proved how immortality in all aspects of religions does not exist. He had replied that neither Buddhism nor Daoism nor any other great leader can provide the route to immortality. With his philosophies, Mouzi was able to slowly connect the Buddhist doctrine to the indigenous, traditional ways of Confucianism and Daoism. The people of China ultimately accepted Buddhism after all of the obstacles and resistance.

In Korea, Buddhism was introduced by a Chinese monk to each of the three Kingdoms: first to Koguryu, then to Paekche, then finally to Silla. The Buddhist religion was not received easily by the Koreans, but was met with

less hostility than the Chinese. The kingdom of Silla was the most isolated region of the three, and was not yet prepared to accept Buddhist doctrine. The people of Silla held strongly onto their original values and ways of life. (Lee 42). For instance, the twenty-third king of Silla was a monk named Popkong who wanted to spread Buddhism throughout his kingdom. However, his suggestion was greeted by dispute and discrepancy by his ministers. His ministers were against the idea of erecting a building for a monastery when the kingdom of Silla was undergoing hardships due to the lack of crop production and the ongoing battles with neighboring states. (Lee 42). Eventually King Popkong got his wish, Buddhist dieties were spread, and the first monastery was established during King Popkong's reign. However, this obstacle was overcome with great sacrifice by the Grand Secretary, who put his life at risk to try to prove to the ministers of Buddhism as the eternal religion. (Lee 42). After the Grand Secretary sacrificed himself, strange things began to happen in the heavens. "The sun darkened, wonderful flowers rained from heaven, and the earth trembled violently..." (Lee, 43). And with these signs, the king and his officials decided to take an oath to worship the Buddha. Buddhism eventually spread to the three Kingdoms and coalesced with Shamanism, which was Korea's deeply rooted religion, in order to construct a novel belief system that connected the Buddhist idols and the Shamanism's Holy Mother. (Lee, 51). For instance, "trees in the Forest of the Heavenly Mirror felled in order to build a monastery." (Lee, 43). The quote above perfectly exemplifies how room was finally made for this new religion called Buddhism in Korean culture in which the trees represent Shamanism, and the monastery represents Buddhism. Overall, the integration of Buddhism into Korean religion happened more abruptly than in <https://assignbuster.com/buddhism-in-east-asian-culture-history-essay/>

China for the leaders of Korea had legally established Buddhism as its state religion.

After struggles, Buddhism finally won the hearts of _____. After Buddhist beliefs have been accepted by the Chinese, Buddhism seemed to have impacted the Chinese in various ways. The coming of Buddhism to China was “an event of far-reaching importance in the development of Chinese thought and culture and of Buddhism itself” (de Bary 415). First of all, Buddhism brought forth to China a new way of thinking, and opened the minds of its people as it gave the Chinese different perspectives. Also, the influence of Buddhism was great during the unification of northern and southern China. Buddhism played an important role in influencing the Chinese people, and had affected their ways and beliefs in areas such as aesthetics, literature, medicine, and philosophy.

Buddhism had a great impact on China through its acceptance in Korea, for China

The message of Chinese Buddhism to Korea was _____. Buddhism played an important role in influencing the Korean people, and had affected their ways and beliefs in areas such as aesthetics, literature, medicine, and philosophy.

Although Silla was the latest recipient, Silla prospered the most from Buddhist doctrine

It is important to understand the

What contributions did Buddhism make to East Asian culture? What obstacles did it have to overcome, and how did the “ native” culture respond?