

The social context provided by buddhism cultural studies essay



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Introduction (300)Silk Road is considered as one of the most crucial networks of connecting East, South, and Western Asia as well as the Mediterranean and European world, and some parts of North and East Africa (Vadime 2001). Trading along the Silk Road has presented the opportunities of exchanging different cultures among the countries. Introducing to new Religions, as one of the significant exchanges has impacted greatly on the involving countries and people. Buddhism is one of the three largest religions in the world which originally came from India, it was introduced to various countries including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Xinjiang (Chinese Turkistan), China, Korea and Japan (Silk Road Foundation nd), especially in china, the Buddhism has changed the lives of people tremendously . More specifically, the transmission of Buddhism among central Asia can be regarded as the medium of intercultural exchanges (Emmerick 1987). The spread of the Buddhism has not only convert the religious beliefs but also provided the diverse aspects and changes of cultures including art, literature and values. In terms of trading activities, to some extent, the merchants along the Silk Road had supported the spread of Buddhism. However, in return, the Buddhists contributed on earning a higher social status for merchants which had provided a solid foundation of trades. This essay will focus on analysing the social context which Buddhism provided for cultural exchange as well as trade and the influences of the spread of Buddhism along the Silk Road.

Relevant examples will be provided to support the analysis. Analysis

(700)SocialThe essential of the Buddhism is to rescue the masses from their suffering; it is also the reason of its emergence. Dating back to ancient India where the Caste and Slavery system keep manipulating and oppressing

people, which is similar to the social environment from late Spring and <https://assignbuster.com/the-social-context-provided-by-buddhism-cultural-studies-essay/>

Autumn Period to early Warring States Period in china; the class contradictions in India had caused the dissatisfaction of the prince called Siddhattha Gotama (565-486BC) born in northern area of India (now Nepal). He had reached the difficulties and sufferings, after which he was eager to find a way of releasing these pains of his people. He had visited many famous masters and learned their theories which thence created this religious belief that can eliminate the pain, anxiety, and fear. As the essence of Buddhism had laid the foundation for widely spread and more importantly soften the contradictions among the c lasses. CulturalAs a new ideology, it is more efficient and easier for Buddhism to integrate into local culture which soften the hardness of people and bring the peace; hence, it is more likely for the believers to absorb and reflect on newly coming ideas and traditions. For example, when Buddhism arrived in China, the characteristics of toleration provided the chance of syncretism of Buddhism and other religion. Most importantly, the process of exchanging cultures was counted as a vital component of society. It was the process that Buddhism gradually infiltrating into the Chinese culture that transformed the nature of society.

PoliticalPolitics in ancient times is crucial for running city-states. According to the political and national situation, it seems that wars became the most frequent way of gaining and reshaping the states. Unfortunately, wars, turbulences and disparity of human rights within classes formed unpleasant environment which impeded the evolution. However, Siddhattha Gotama (also known as Sakyamuni) was the one would inherit the throne; hence, the Buddhism was guarded by kingship that ensured the spread and development, therefore, the later activities including commercial trading and exchanging were encouraged and support by some of the kings or emperors.

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ArtBuddhism spread through the central Asia and has great impact on the art of the religious region. Gandhara located on the boundary of north-western India, and this area is geographically considered as the intersection and region of cultures exchange in Eurasia. The Gandhara Art (also known as Greco-Buddhist Art) is largely influenced by Ancient Greece, Rome as well as India and Buddhism. Originally, in 331B. C Alexander the Great had invaded and colonised India. In the following years, the place had controlled by countries such as Daxia, Kusha and Mathura. The Gandhara Art is known by its sculptures which themed by Buddhism but represented in a Hellenistic way and widely spread mainly to China, Tibet, Japan and Korea by Mahayana (one of the branches of Buddhism); significantly affected the art of sculpture and the style of Grottos, Mogao Grotto is the best example of the syncretism of eastern and western cultural exchange. EconomicBuddhism has not only provided the spiritual strength for people, but in another way, offered the opportunities and environment of trading. The temples, sculptures, paintings and the relevant religious commodities had broadened the market and support the trades of luxuries along the Silk Road. Buddhists' religiosity (100)The Buddhism in china officially introduced by a monk named Xuanzang (602-664 CE) through his translation works of literature, scriptures and art works during the sixteen-year pilgrimage to India (Lee 2004). The pious journey of Xuanzang then had turned into one of the four greatly-valued classical folk novels called Journey to the West. The religious spirit of Xuanzang and the Buddhism itself had caused the radical changes among the new believers. The religiosity of the believers support the rise and the spread of Buddhism, more specifically, the missionaries preached Buddhism mainly by translating the scriptures and spreading to locals during the Silk

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Road. The famous translators of the Silk Road contributed tremendously on cultural exchanges such as An Shigao (?-168 AD), Fotudeng (231-349 CE) and Kumārajīva (334-413 CE). The efforts of the believers initiated the upsurge of cultural exchange religiously during the Silk Road. Due to the spread of the Buddhism beliefs, the people along the route embodied these cultural exchanges. The various influences of the spread of Buddhism.

(300)The spread of Buddhism had tremendously influenced the religious areas. Overall, it had stimulated the economy of countries or city-states along the Silk Road. Trading had not only significantly promoted the development of certain states but offered the opportunity to attract the foreign investment along the Silk Road. On the other hand, the pilgrims and merchants did despite the warfare and political obstructions, continued trading and considered as sacred devotion to Buddhism. It is the pious spirit that counted as crucial element in enduring period of Silk Road. Followed by the rise of economy, the progresses of civilization were facilitated during the period. Furthermore, social structures and regime were modified in some areas. Social stability was increased after the active and thorough spread of Buddhism. For example, in china, several emperors were converted to Buddhism either temporarily or permanently; the Hongwu Emperor Chu Yuan-chang (1328-1398) of Ming dynasty and the Empress Consort Wu Wu Zetian (625 - 705) of Tang Dynasty were both have devoted in temple for a period of time. These Buddhist experience have motivated the rulers to dedicate to their people. The widely spread Buddhism had also promoted the cultural attainment. Paintings, poems and music embodied the spirits and wonders of the Buddhism. Praises and yearns were mostly themed as expressing their thought. To a certain extent, these highly valued

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masterpieces helped educating and inheriting the following generations encouragingly. Conclusion (200). To conclude, the main reason that b. can spread in eastern countries is that the theory and philosophy are compatible with eastern cultures. The active spread of Buddhism had provided context of social, cultural, political, art and economic which laid the foundation for development of religion. Additionally, these progresses played an important role in cultural exchanges and commercial trade that characterized Silk Road as an essential and efficient event for civilization. The spread of Buddhism along Silk Road influenced religious areas of both economy and civilization. Consequent influences have reshaped the states; the spread of religious beliefs had stimulated the development of economy by trading which propelled the progress of civilization. In addition, the philosophy of Buddhism altered the way of emperors in approaching the nations; the decline of warfare had strengthened the social stability. Lastly, the profound deposits of literature, art and music had shaped the people distinguishingly. XINRU LIU, The Silk Road. Overland Trade and Cultural Interactions in Eurasia, Washington D. C., American Historical Association, 1998, pp. 9-14; 19-22 <http://www.iep.utm.edu/xuanzang/> <http://www.historyhaven.com/APWH/commerce%20and%20culture.pdf> <http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/dl/free/0073534536/374107/benCh09.pdf>