

Spread of buddhism

[Religion](#), [Buddhism](#)



Keith Secon AP World Spread of Buddhism DBQ Responses to the Spread of Buddhism Following Buddhism's introduction into China in the first and second centuries, C. E. , the religion was received in different ways, reflecting the progression of China's history. Chinese scholars, Confucian Government Officials, and Buddhists viewed Buddhism through their unique perspectives, sometimes agreeing and sometimes disagreeing on the role it played in Chinese life. Chinese scholars generally saw Buddhism as a positive influence because it provided hope for an afterlife. Buddhists naturally embraced the rise of Buddhism and saw it as salvation.

Confucian government officials were suspicious of Buddhism and saw it as a negative influence that challenged their already proven authority from Confucianism. Ultimately, the groups response to Buddhism differed depending on how tightly centralized the established Confucian dynasty was at the time, and by how much each group's position in society would be benefitted or harmed. Chinese Scholars viewed Buddhism from an intellectual standpoint which lead them to receive it as ultimately positive because they had no special interest, as did the religious or government leaders.

As stated by Zhi Dun, " whosoever in China [...] serves the Buddha and correctly observes the commandments [...] he will behold the Buddha and be enlightened in his spirit, and then he will enter Nirvana. "(Doc 2) This shows that Zhi Dun supported Buddhism and saw it as a way to achieve the highest state of spiritual being because reaching Nirvana meant that one could escape the terrible cycle of reincarnation. This document is biased due to the fact that where Zhi Dun was living at this time, in Northern China was being

invaded by barbaric nomads which led him to need something to believe in and Buddhism filled that void.

A document that would have been helpful in reputing Zhi Dun's statement would have been a diary entry from a scholar in Southern China where there were no foreign invaders and the government was still strong. In *The Disposition of Error*, an anonymous scholar in 500 ce questioned both Confucianism and Buddhism when he wrote, " All written works need not necessarily be the words of Confucius [...] even if the Buddha isn't mentioned in them, What occasion is there for suspicion? (Doc 3) This scholar's statements reflect the political chaos and turmoil of the time as they demonstrate Confucianism and Buddhism are neither good nor bad but they fill a necessary part in people's lives. The bias in this document stems from his anonymity because it seems as if he is almost too scared to publicly share his ideas and name. In this case a diary entry or public statement from a Daoist would be very helpful to contrast this scholar's claim. From the point of view of a Daoist the reader would have been better able to understand the writer's loyalties on the statement.

Buddhists positively responded to the Spread of Buddhism because they obviously believed in the values of Buddhism and they wanted to share their beliefs with others. Buddha in " The Four Noble Truths" lays out the basic guidelines to Buddhism and the way for converts to live their lives (Doc 1). Following the noble truths outlined by Siddhartha Gautama will eventually lead to the stopping of sorrow. The bias in the document lays in the fact that it is a sermon which has the sole purpose to try to convert people to the faith being preached.

To argue the Buddha's guidelines of life, the Four Noble Truths, a scientific based study by an Educator or Scholar would be helpful as it could clear up some of the unknowns in the Buddha's statement. A scientific study would have been helpful due to fact that the Buddha was mainly preaching to the uneducated lower-class. The leading Buddhist scholar, Zong Mi, in his essay " On the Nature of Man" wrote, " Confucius, Laozi, and the Buddha were perfect sages[...] all three teachings lead to the creation of an orderly society and for this they must be observed with respect"(Doc 5).

This shows that Zong Mi was impartial if not pro-Buddhist because he showed respect for Buddhism, as well as the other philosophies, because he believed they all could provide stability and happiness for the people. This document is biased because the scholar is Buddhist and probably wealthy which led him to promote Buddhism because if more people converted to it, it would have only benefited him more. In this case a diary entry from a Confucian Scholar would be helpful in debasing Buddhism because Confucianism was specifically against Buddhism.

Confucian government officials were vehemently opposed to Buddhism because they believed it openly challenged their power and authority. Han Yu, a leading Confucian scholar and official at the Tang imperial, in " Memorial on Buddhism" states, " Buddhism is no more than a cult of the barbarian peoples spread to China"(Doc 4) Han Yu was clearly against Buddhism, thinking that it had a negative effect because the people who worshiped it were barbarians and not like the educated scholars of his social class.

Han Yu also opposed Buddhism because he was rooted in his own Confucian beliefs and the power it bestowed upon his government. This document is dripping with bias because a Confucian scholar wrote it during a highly centralized time of political stability. The political stability led to the peasants and the masses not needing a higher belief so they digressed back to the standard Confucian bureaucracy. A diary entry from a Buddhist monk or convert would be helpful as it would defend the ways of Buddhism and living one's life to the fullest instead of letting the state control you.

Emperor Wu, of the Tang Dynasty, in his “ Edict of Buddhism” states, “ now if even one man fails to work the fields, someone must go hungry [...] At present there are an inestimable number of monks and nuns in the empire, all of them waiting for the farmers to feed them”(Doc 6). The previous statement shows that Emperor Wu was very opposed to Buddhism because it took away the maximum productivity that his empire was capable of due to the fact the Buddhists lead ascetic lives and depended on others for goods and food.

This document is biased because Emperor Wu didn't have a first hand experience of what the masses had to deal with because he was a wealthy aristocrat and didn't understand the need for a religion like Buddhism. A recorded conversation between two farmers would be helpful for determining if it puts that much economic strain on the farmers to produce more for others, since more production leads to more wealth.

The conflict between Buddhism and Confucianism was due to the changing political state of China throughout its history of dynasties. When a dynasty wasn't strong or when China was in a period of decentralization, it allowed

new philosophies and religions to become prominent but when China was stable and centralized the people regressed to the normalcy of Confucianism. In dark times, when political turmoil flourishes, new religions arise to the forefront of society by offering hope and structure and common values.

This is true at many points in history throughout various civilizations, such as during medieval times in Europe, the new religion of Christianity took hold in peasants' lives during the time of political unsteadiness. As times change, new religions are created and others are pushed to the back burner. People must remember through these changing times not to become too invested in one religion as it will only lead to disappointment, and in some extreme cases, persecution.