

## DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints  
in Primary Source Documents

# Buddha's Travels

## A Case of East Asian Cultural Diffusion

*One culture's religio-philosophical system spread and was eventually adapted by other cultures.*



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## *Debating* the DOCUMENTS

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in Primary Source Documents

# Buddha's Travels

## A Case of East Asian Cultural Diffusion

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The 2017 World History Course and Exam Description of the College Board Advanced Placement Program\* lists five themes that it urges teachers to use in organizing their teaching. Each World History *Debating the Documents* booklet focuses on one or two of these five themes.

### *The Five Themes*

- 1. Interaction between humans and the environment.** (demography and disease; migration; patterns of settlement; technology)
- 2. Development and interaction of cultures.** (religions; belief systems, philosophies, and ideologies; science and technology; the arts and architecture)
- 3. State-building, expansion, and conflict.** (political structures and forms of governance; empires; nations and nationalism; revolts and revolutions; regional, transregional, and global structures and organizations)
- 4. Creation, expansion, and interaction of economic systems.** (agricultural and pastoral production; trade and commerce; labor systems; industrialization; capitalism and socialism)
- 5. Development and transformation of social structures.** (gender roles and relations; family and kinship; racial and ethnic constructions; social and economic classes)

### *This Booklet's Main Theme:*

**2** Development and interaction of cultures.

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# Teacher Introduction

## ★ Using Primary Sources

Primary sources are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their “secondary” accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it's because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. *Debating the Documents* helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



*“Multiple,  
conflicting  
perspectives are  
among the truths  
of history.  
No single  
objective or  
universal account  
could ever put an  
end to this endless  
creative dialogue  
within and  
between the past  
and the present.”*

From the 2011 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

## INTRODUCTION

### ★ *The Debating the Documents Series*

Each *Debating the Documents* booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

#### **Each *Debating the Documents* Booklet Includes**

- **Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay.** The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- **Two Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents.** In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. *Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way.* (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- **Three Worksheets for Each Document Group.** Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- **One DBQ.** On page 20, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.

### ★ *How to Use This Booklet*

#### **1. Have students read “Suggestions for the Student” and the Introductory Essay.**

Give them copies of pages 5–7. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

#### **2. Have students do the worksheets.**

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources digitally.

NOTE: If you are using these materials with an AP world history class, an honors class, or some other group of advanced and/or more knowledgeable students, you may want to make more written sources available to them on this topic. Do a basic Internet search for sources that provide additional perspectives and then add to the sources provided here.

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**3. “Debate the documents” as a class.**

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source's point of view.

**4. Have students do the final DBQ.**

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 20 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

**The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 20):**

Buddhism began in India. However, it did not remain confined to India. It spread to many other, very different cultures in Asia and elsewhere. Why do you think it was able to do this?

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay's thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

## INTRODUCTION

### ★ *Complete DBQ Scoring Guide*

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

#### **Excellent Essay**

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

#### **Good Essay**

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

#### **Fair Essay**

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

#### **Poor Essay**

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in "laundry list" style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.

# Suggestions to the Student

## ★ *Using Primary Sources*

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This *Debating the Documents* lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.

## ★ *How to Use This Booklet*

### 1. Read the one-page introductory essay.

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



### 2. Study the primary source documents for this lesson.

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals, others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image’s “content” (its subject matter) but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image’s meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source’s author, that author’s reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These considerations give you clues as to the source’s historical value.

### 3. Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the “Study the Document” worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the “Comparing the Documents” worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

### 4. As a class, debate the documents.

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

### 5. Do the final DBQ.

“DBQ” means “document-based question.” A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge.

## ***Buddha's Travels***

According to tradition, Buddhism began sometime in the fifth century BCE. That was when Siddhartha Gautama supposedly attained spiritual enlightenment and began to show others the way to the truth he had discovered. From that time on, he was called “the Buddha,” or “the enlightened one.”

Siddhartha Gautama was born to a princely family in a part of India that is now Nepal. He gave up his life of protected luxury to seek a deeper and more permanent liberation. To Buddha, the things of this world are illusions. Our desires trap us in powerful attachments to these things and to our own individual selves. Buddha taught that if we overcome desire and illusion, we can attain a higher happiness or enlightenment, a calmness free of suffering. This higher state Buddha called “nirvana.”

To reach this enlightenment, Buddha preached a life of wisdom, mental discipline, and moral living he called “the Middle Way.” As this name suggests, it was a path between extreme self-indulgence and sensual pleasure on the one hand, and strict self-denial on the other. The practice of this Middle Way was to guide Buddhists throughout their lives.

At least at first, Buddhism was not a “theocratic religion.” That is, Buddha was a teacher and a spiritual wise man, not a god. This did not remain the view of all Buddhists. Buddhism was to take many forms as it grew and spread. The sources in this booklet will give you just a start in understanding and appreciating the many forms Buddhism took.

Buddhism soon split into various schools, and it spread throughout India in the centuries following Buddha's death. Buddhist monks and others also carried it to many other lands outside of India. Some took it up into Central Asia and then to China along the “Silk Road” trade routes north of the Himalayan Mountains. It later found its way

into Korea and Japan as well. Buddhism was also carried to Burma and some parts of Southeast Asia. Later, one form of it moved from Sri Lanka to other parts of Southeast Asia.

Buddhism in India flowered during the reign of Ashoka in the third century BCE. Within India, Buddhism attracted people in part because of their discontent with Hindu priests and rituals and with the social divisions of India's caste system. Buddhism preached that all could attain enlightenment no matter how low their caste. In time, Hinduism itself reformed and even made Buddha one form of the Hindu god Vishnu. Buddhism itself tended to fade in importance in India. Later, Muslim invaders took over parts of India and further weakened Buddhism's hold there.

The movement of Buddhism into other societies is an example of what historians call “cultural diffusion.” Cultural diffusion is the transfer of ideas, art forms, goods, technology, etc., from one culture to another. It is a key theme of world history, and it is more complicated than it may seem. No item is simply taken from one culture to another. It must be adapted by the receiving culture. When this happens, it is often changed in major ways to fit with the receiving culture's overall patterns.

For example, when Buddhism entered China, it had to adapt to China's more centralized imperial system and to Confucianism, with its emphasis on family, respect for ancestors, and the stability of the social order. Certain forms of Buddhism did better in China than others—for instance, Pure Land Buddhism or Chan (Zen) Buddhism. The sources here include examples of Pure Land Buddhism. These sources and the others will help you begin to understand and discuss the cultural diffusion of Buddhism. The sources deal with this diffusion throughout Asia in the 1,500 years or so after the birth of Siddhartha Gautama.

# The Spread of Buddhism Time Line

**560 BCE**

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Possible date for Siddhartha Gautama's birth. (Some research suggests his actual birth date is about 70 years later than this.)

**528 BCE**

• • •

Traditional date for when Gautama attains enlightenment and, as Buddha, begins teaching the *Dharma*, the correct understanding of higher truths.

**400–200 BCE**

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Around 383 BCE, a major Buddhist council deals with splits among Buddhists. In 325 BCE, Alexander the Great conquers northern India and leaves lasting Greek cultural influences there. Buddhism begins to spread into Central Asia. Emperor Ashoka rules much of India from 272–231 BCE. He converts to Buddhism and sends missionaries to spread its message outside of India. Ashoka inscribes several edicts in support of Buddhism on pillars and other objects in various places around India. Around 220 BCE, Ashoka's son Mahinda introduces Theravada Buddhism to Sri Lanka.

**200 BCE–1 CE**

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An Indo-Greek kingdom extends Hellenic, or Greek, influence into India. It covers various parts of northern India from 180 BCE to around CE 10. Buddhism flourishes under some of its kings. Sometime in the first century BCE, the standard scriptures of Theravada Buddhism are completed and written down at a council in Sri Lanka. Inscriptions in Dunhuang along the Silk Road suggest that Chinese Emperor Han Wudi (156–87 BCE) had received some golden Buddhist statues.

**1–200 CE**

• • •

Liu Ying, as the Prince of Chu, sponsors Buddhism in CE 65, the first documented case of Buddhism being practiced in China. A Buddhist council is held in Kashmir in the first century CE. It is seen as the point at which the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism was systematized. Theravada, the other major Buddhist tradition, does not recognize the work of this council. In China in the second century, the Theravada and the Mahayana texts are translated into Chinese. In these centuries, Indian Buddhists settle in Southeast Asia.

**200–600 CE**

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From around CE 320 to 600, the Gupta Empire in northern India thrives. This is often called a golden age for India, a time when science, mathematics, Buddhist philosophy, and art flourish. As commerce and trade grow, Buddhism takes root in many parts of Southeast Asia and Indonesia. In 372, Chinese monks bring Buddhism to Korea. In 552, Buddhism is brought to Japan from Korea. Various forms of Buddhism develop in China, including Tiantai in the sixth century. Many historians see Tiantai as the first truly Chinese form of Buddhism. The Pure Land sects and Chan (Zen) Buddhism also emerge in these centuries. In the seventh century, Buddhism is established in Tibet. Meanwhile, Buddhism will begin to fade in India itself.

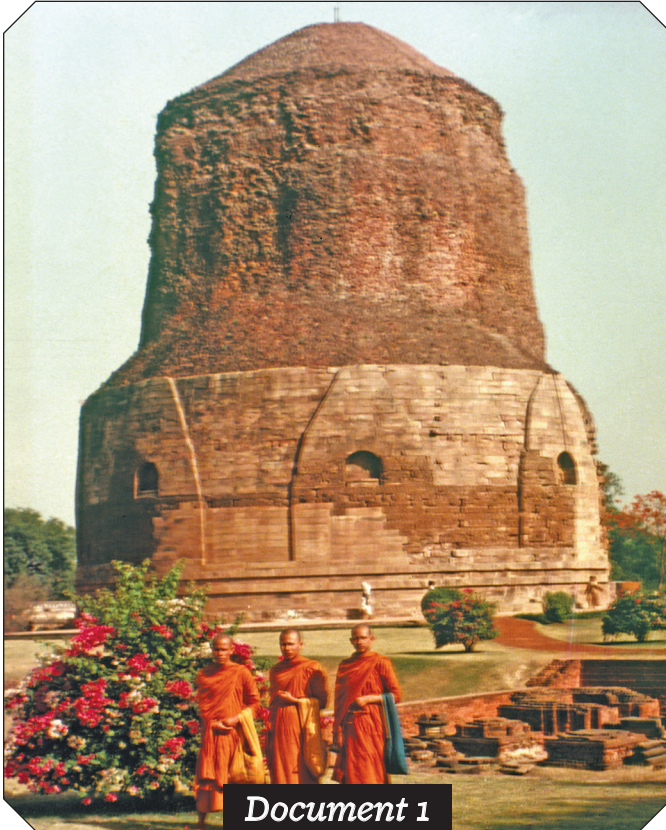
**600–900 CE**

• • •

China's Tang Dynasty (618–907) is considered a golden age of Buddhism in China. In the eighth century, Buddhism becomes Japan's state religion. In 845, the Chinese emperor attempts to suppress Buddhism. This is a setback. Nevertheless, Buddhism will continue to thrive in China and throughout Asia for many centuries to come.

## DOCUMENTS 1 &amp; 2

## Visual Primary Source Documents 1 &amp; 2

**Document 1**

The Granger Collection, New York

**Document 2**

The Granger Collection, New York

**Information on Documents 1 & 2**

**Document 1** shows a stupa built by Ashoka in 249 BCE in Benares, India. Ashoka ruled the Mauryan empire and ruthlessly expanded it to much of India. He later began to support Buddhism. He left stupas and pillars inscribed with edicts in many parts of India. These edicts are the first written evidence of Buddhism, though they stress moral and social issues more than religious matters. This stupa marks the spot where Buddha is said to have given his first sermon after attaining enlightenment.

**Document 2** is a statue of Buddha from the first or second century CE in Gandhara (now northwestern Pakistan). This is an early depiction of Buddha as a man or a man-god. Following Alexander the Great's conquests in India (327–325 BCE), several Hellenistic kingdoms ruled in Central Asia and northern India. Buddhism also flourished in these regions, given a boost by Ashoka's missionary efforts. Gandhara was a Buddhist state. Hellenistic Greek and Roman contacts seem to have influenced Buddhism in this region, as this statue's artistic style suggests.