

Primary Source Analysis

Name _____

Date _____

The Journey of Faxian to India

Source Information

The Journey of Faxian to India, University of Washington, selected 1999 Daniel C. Waugh (<https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/faxian.html> : accessed 16 January 2018); citing A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-Hien of His Travels in India and Ceylon (A.D. 399-414) in Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline (Oxford, 1886), pp. 9-36; edited for length by David Jones, 2018

Historical Context

Consider for your historical context the spread of Buddhism to China and the perspective of a Buddhist monk visiting India. You could also consider the history of the Silk Roads or the problems religions have with translations of texts and preserving writings before the invention of the printing press.

Editor's notes:

- The text references “The Jātaka tales”, which are stories native to India concerning the previous births of Gautama Buddha in both human and animal form.
 - This text spells Faxian as “Fa-hien”.
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Task

Mark up the text as you read and analyze.

Paragraph 1: State the type of source and its purpose. State who the audience was and reflect on how they were expected to react.

Paragraph 2: Historical context: describe the historical events and related information associated with this source. (Usually 60-70 words)

Paragraph 3: Compose a summary of the source's content.

Paragraph 4: State one purpose that this source could serve for historians. Discuss 3-4 factors affecting the reliability of this source **for that purpose**. (audience, purpose, point of view (bias?), time and place, format, authorship). Identify the biases you personally bring to the examination of a source.

NYS Social Studies Frameworks Reference

9.3c A period of peace, prosperity, and cultural achievements can be designated as a Golden Age.

- Students will examine the achievements of Greece, Gupta, Han Dynasty, Maya, and Rome to determine if the civilizations experienced a Golden Age.

9.4c Interregional travelers, traders, missionaries, and nomads carried products and natural resources and brought with them enslaved people and ideas that led to cultural diffusion.

- Students will examine the diffusion of religious ideas along the Indian Ocean complex, Silk Roads, and Trans-Saharan routes.

Level 4 NYS Performance Level Descriptor, Evidence-Centered Design

CLAIM 1: Students can analyze sources and use evidence to create and analyze disciplinary-based (e.g., geographic, economic, political and/or historical) claims.

1.1 Student identifies authorship, purpose, content, bias/point of view, format of source, location of source in time and/or place, and/or intended audience of sources, and describes how some of these factors influence the reliability (strengths/weaknesses/ uses) of sources.

1.2 Student identifies the biases she/he brings to the examination of a source (e.g., analyzing a source using current perspectives vs. interpreting a source using the historical context of the time in which it was created).

CLAIM 2 Students can analyze how events are related chronologically and the geographic, economic, political, and/or historical causes and effects of those events.

2.1 Student identifies a time period or periods and categorizes events that are associated with that period or periods, including historical, geographic, economic, or political characteristics associated with the period(s).

2.2 Student identifies and describes related events in chronological sequence.

2.3 Student describes and explains the historical, geographic, economic, or political factors (e.g., ideas, individuals, groups, technical developments, physical settings) that influence change and/or continuity within a time period.

CLAIM 3 Students can analyze how the context of time and place affect disciplinary- based issues and historical events, and also compare issues and events across time and place.

3.1 Student places issues and events in the appropriate context of time and place (including the spatial organization of people, places, and environment) with minor inaccuracies.

3.3 Student compares and/or analyzes issues or events with some depth.

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Fa-hien had been living in Ch'ang-gan. Deploring the mutilated and imperfect state of the collection of the Books of Discipline....he entered into an engagement with Hwuy-king, Tao-ching, Hwuy-ying and Hwuy-wei that they should go to India and seek for the disciplinary Rules.

After starting from Ch'ang-gan, they passed through Lung [in eastern Gansu]...and reached the emporium of Chang-yih [north and west of Lanzhou, near the Great Wall]. There they found the country so much disturbed that travelling on the roads was impossible for them. Its king, however,

was very attentive to them [and] kept them (in his capital)...

15 [...]

As you go forward from these mountains, the plants, trees, and fruits are all different from those of the land of Han, excepting only the bamboo, pomegranate, and sugar-cane.

20

From this (the travellers) went westwards towards North India, and after being on the way for a month, they succeeded in getting across and through the range of the Onion mountains. The

snow rests on them both winter and summer. There are also among them venomous dragons, which, when provoked, spit forth poisonous winds, and
25 cause showers of snow and storms of sand and gravel. Not one in ten thousand of those who encounter these dangers escapes with his life. The people of the country call the range by the name of 'The Snow mountains.' When (the travellers) had
30 got through them, they were in North India, and immediately on entering its borders, found themselves in a small kingdom called T'o-leih, where also there were many monks, all students of the Hinayana.

35 In this kingdom there was formerly an Arhat [a disciple of the Buddha who has attained nirvana], who by his supernatural power took a clever artificer up to the Tushita heaven [where bodhisattvas are reborn before appearing on earth
40 as buddhas], to see the height, complexion, and appearance of Maitreya Bodhisattva [the "Buddha of the Future"], and then return and make an image

of him in wood. First and last, this was done three times, and then the image was completed, eighty
45 cubits in height, and eight cubits at the base from knee to knee of the crossed legs. On fast-days it emits an effulgent light. The kings of the (surrounding) countries vie with one another in presenting offerings to it. Here it is--to be seen now
50 as of old.

[...]

After crossing the river, (the travellers) immediately came to the kingdom of Woo-chang [Udyana, north of the Punjab--i.e., Swat in northern
55 Pakistan], which is indeed (a part) of North India. The people all use the language of Central India, 'Central India' being what we should call the 'Middle Kingdom.' The food and clothes of the common people are the same as in that Central
60 Kingdom. The Law of Buddha is very (flourishing in Woo-chang). They call the places where the monks stay (for a time) or reside permanently

sangharamas; and of these there are in all 500, the monks being all students of the Hinayana. When stranger bhikshus [i.e., mendicant monks] arrive at
65 one of them, their wants are supplied for three days, after which they are told to find a resting-place for themselves.

There is a tradition that when Buddha came to North India, he came at once to this country, and
70 that here he left a print of his foot, which is long or short according to the ideas of the beholder (on the subject). It exists, and the same thing is true about it, at the present day. Here also are still to be seen the rock on which he dried his clothes, and the
75 place where he converted the wicked dragon. The rock is fourteen cubits high, and more than twenty broad, with one side of it smooth.

[...]

The travellers, going downwards from this
80 towards the east, in five days came to the country of Gandhara, the place where Dharma-vivardhana,

the son of Asoka [the Mauryan emperor known as a great patron of Buddhism in the third century BCE], ruled. When Buddha was a Bodhisattva, he
85 gave his eyes also for another man here [another jataka tale]; and at the spot they have also reared a large stupa, adorned with, layers of gold and silver plate The people of the country were mostly students of the Hinayana.

70 Seven days journey from this to the east brought the travellers to the kingdom of Taxila, which means 'the severed head ' in the language of China. Here, when Buddha was a Bodhisattva, he gave away his head to a man [another jataka tale],
95 and from this circumstance the kingdom got its name.

Going on further for two days to the east, they came to the place where the Bodhisattva threw down his body to feed a starving tigress [the
100 Mahasattva Jataka]. In these two places also large stupas have been built, both adorned with layers of

all the precious substances. The kings, ministers,
and people. of the kingdoms around vie with one
another in making offerings a them. The trains of
those who come to scatter flowers and light lamps
105 at them never cease. The nations of those quarters
call those (and the other two mentioned before) 'the
four great stupas.'

Going southwards from Gandhara, (the
travellers) in four days arrived at the kingdom of
110 Purushapura [Peshawar]. Formerly, when Buddha
was travelling in this country with his disciples, he
said to Ananda, 'After my pari-nirvana, there will
be a king named Kanishka [the famous Kushan
emperor], who shall on this spot build a stupa. This
115 Kanishka was afterwards born into the world; and
(once), when he had gone forth to look about him,
Sakra, Ruler of Devas, wishing to excite the idea
in his mind, assumed the appearance of a little
herd-boy, and was making a stupa right in the way
120 (of the king), who asked what sort of a thing he

was making. The boy said, 'I am making a stupa for
Buddha. The king said, 'Very good;' and
immediately, right over the boy's stupa, he
(proceeded to) rear another, which was more than
125 four hundred cubits high, and adorned with layers
of all the precious substances. Of all the stupas and
temples which (the travellers) saw in their
journeyings, there was not one comparable to this
in solemn beauty and majestic grandeur. There is a
current saying, that this 'is the finest stupa in
130 Jambudvipa'. When the king's stupa was
completed, the little stupa (of the boy) came out
from its side on the south, rather more than three
cubits in height.

135 [...]

Hwuy-king came to his end in the monastery of
Buddha's alms-bowl, and on this Fa-hien went
forward alone toward the place of the flat-bone of
Buddha's skull.