

China and Buddhism

AP World History Notes

Chapter 9

China from 500 to 1300

Initial Rejection of Buddhism

- China did not take to Buddhism right away
 - Commitment to a secluded life for Buddhist monks and nuns contradicted Chinese belief in strong family values
 - Focus on individual salvation and enlightenment = selfish and against Confucianism
 - China was focused on “this world” with Confucianism and were wary of the concept of infinite time with Buddhism



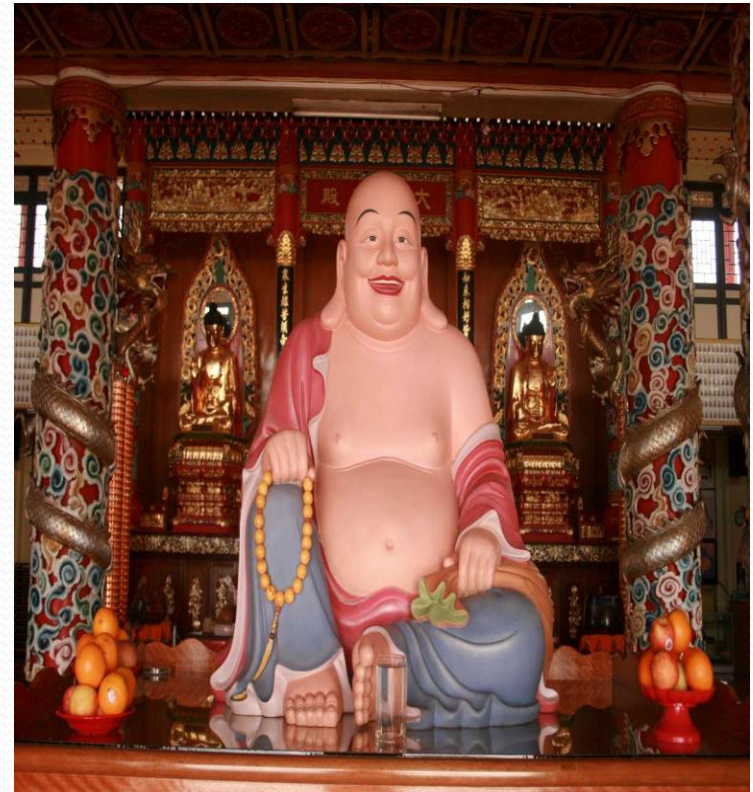
Buddhism Takes Hold in China



- When Han dynasty collapsed, people began to question Confucianism
- Many turned to Buddhism instead and liked its emphasis on compassion, morality, and meditation
- Rulers and elite families donated money to build Buddhist temples and monasteries

Buddhist Monasteries

- Provided:
 - Accommodation for travelers
 - Refuge for people fleeing from China's upheavals
 - Charity for the poor
 - Seeds for struggling farmers
 - Treatment and care for the sick
 - Education and books for children



Buddhist Backlash



- As Buddhism grew, some criticisms and resistance arose:
 - Resentment of its enormous wealth
 - Threat to imperial authority of China
 - Still seen as “foreign”
 - Withdrawal of monks from society = against family-based values of Confucianism

Chinese Imperial Decrees

- Ordered monks and nuns to pay taxes
- Thousands of Buddhist monasteries and temples were destroyed or turned to public use
- State confiscated Buddhist land and property
- Buddhists forbidden to use gold, silver, copper, iron, or gems to make their images