

Document Set: China's Influence

Document 1:

As Đại Việt (a kingdom in Vietnam) grew in the central delta, its population and prosperity increased greatly. This drew maritime trade, particularly from Song China, up from the lower delta and the coast. Through the twelfth century and into the thirteenth, this coastal region gained greatly in wealth and power. From it, there arose a new power, the Trần (of Chinese descent), which was able to overpower the Lý, seize the capital and integrate the upper and lower delta regions politically. This new royal family brought into the capital both scholars of classical Chinese learning (Confucianism) and Buddhism of a more Chinese style.

Source : Introduction for the poem “A CHANT ON THE MUSTARD HUT” By Trần Minh Tông, from Asia for Educators by Columbia University

Document 2:

Local society during the later Han Dynasty of China (1st to 3rd centuries CE), especially in Vietnam, became a merger of indigenous peoples and families of Chinese descent. Many elements of the northern Chinese civilization entered the local culture (for example, writing with Chinese characters, eating with chopsticks, aspects of Chinese thought and religion). Power remained in Chinese hands, sometimes with officials from the north and sometimes with local clans. In addition, this was a period of increasing international contact and trade. Buddhism was the ideology of this international circuit that linked India and Central Asia, as well as Southeast Asia and China. Buddhist monks and traders brought their religion as well as foreign material goods to the Vietnamese.

Source : Introduction for an excerpt of Si Vuong (Shi Xie) , from Asia for Educators by Columbia University

Document 3:

What Heaven imparts to man is called human nature,
To follow our nature is called the Way.
It is rooted in the Mind and lodged in the Teachings
The forms through which it has been bequeathed to us are full of dignity
Eternal and ageless as Heaven

Excerpts from Nguyễn Bình Khiêm's Inscription for “Three Belief” Temple from Asia for Educators by Columbia University

Document Set: China's Influence

Document 4:

1. Ever since the founding of the dynasty, our court has pursued the policy of respecting the senior state with utmost sincerity and has consistently tried to follow the Chinese system of government. As we share with China at present the same writing and the same institutions, we are startled to learn of the invention of the Korean script. Some claim that the Korean script is based on old writings and is not a new alphabet at all. Although the letter shapes are similar to the old seal letters, the use of letters for phonetic value violates ancient practice and has no valid ground. If this becomes known to China and anyone argues against it, it would disgrace our policy of respecting China.

2. Although winds and soils vary from region to region, there has been no separate writing system for local dialects. Only such peoples as the Mongolians, Tanguts, Jürchens, Japanese, and Tibetans have their own writings. But this is a matter that involves the barbarians and is unworthy of our concern. It has been said that the barbarians are transformed only by means of adopting Chinese ways; we have never heard of Chinese ways being transformed by the barbarians. Historically, China has always regarded our country as the state that has maintained the virtuous customs and has viewed our literature, rituals, and music as similar to its own. Now, however, our country is devising a Korean script separately in order to discard the Chinese, and thus we are willingly being reduced to the status of barbarians. This is like abandoning the fragrance of storax in favor of the obnoxious odor of mantis. Is this not a great embarrassment to the enlightened civilization?

Excerpts from the Sejong sillok : Ch'oe Malli's Opposition to the Korean Alphabet from Asia for Educators by Columbia University

Document 5:

[Minh-mạng's comments after hearing the examination essays read to him in the 1830s]

In their examination themes, why must they demand such strangely obscure things? I regard the issuing of policy questions as being like asking questions about the Territorial Leader of the West conquering Li [an ancient state, situated in modern Shansi in China] . Sometimes we ask about such matters as King Wen serving the Yin dynasty and King Wu attacking the Yin dynasty. Questions like these have some bearing on the meanings of names and terms. Only then can one examine the scholars' mental and moral idiosyncrasies. If one emptily asks questions which use strange, eccentric phraseology, then those most prolific at repeating things from memory are able to answer them on their own. Truly, what is the advantage of choosing men by means like these?

Selections from the Nguyen court's comments on Scholarship and the Examinations from Asia for Educators by Columbia University

Document Set: China's Influence

Document 6:

What kind of man is this Buddha who makes a son that should carry on the family line betray his father and sever the affection between father and son; who makes men resist the Son of Heaven and destroy the righteousness between lord and minister; who says that for men and women to live together is not the Way; who says that for men to plow and women to weave is not righteous, thus severing the way of generating life and blocking off the source of food and clothing; and who thinks that through his way he can transform all under heaven? ...

Excerpt from the Koryŏ sa: Pak Ch'o, Anti-Buddhist Memorial from Asia for Educators by Columbia University