

Document 18

Source: Pak Cho, Anti-Buddhist Memorial, c. 1400, translated from Korean*

“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?...

*Pak Cho was a member of the Goryeo Dynasty's National Academy and a Confucian scholar.

Document 7

Source: Askia Muhammad Al-Turi, “The Seventh Question African Muslim theologian Muhammad al-Maghili,” late 15th century, translated from Arabic*

Among the people, there are some who claim knowledge of the super-natural through sand divining and the like, or through the disposition of the stars . . . [while] some assert that they can write (talismans) to bring good fortune. . . or to ward off bad fortune. . . . Some defraud in weights and measures.

One of their evil practices is the free mixing of men and women in the markets and streets and the failure of women to veil themselves... [while] among the people of Djenné [Jenne] it is an established custom for a girl not to cover any part of her body as long as she remains a virgin. . . and all the most beautiful girls walk about naked among people.

So give us legal ruling concerning these people and their ilk, and may God Most High reward you!

*Al-Turi. Was the first Muslim among the rulers of the Songhai.

Document 10

Source: Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 1405, translated from French

But just the sight of this book, even though it was of no authority, made me wonder how it happened that so many different men—and learned men among them—have been and are so inclined to express both in speaking and in their treatises and writings so many devilish and wicked thoughts about women and their behavior... They all concur in one conclusion: that the behavior of women is inclined to and full of every vice. Thinking deeply about these matters, I began to examine my character and my conduct as a natural woman, and, similarly, I discussed this with other women whose company I frequently kept, princesses, great ladies, women of the middle and lower classes in great numbers, who graciously told me of their private experiences and intimate thoughts, in order to know in fact—judging in good conscience and without favor—whether the testimony of so many famous men could be true. To the best of my knowledge, no matter how long I confronted or dissected the problem, I could not see or realize how their claims could be true when compared to the natural behavior and character of women.

Document 9

Source: A Persian Nobleman's Letter to His Father, "Baghdad-City of Wonders," c. 800, translated from Persian

I admired the arrival of buildings in Baghdad because of the over crowdedness of the people I had seen in its sections. Their billowing is like the sea in its expanses; their number is said to exceed 1,500,000, and no other city in the world has such a sum or even half its amount...

It is difficult for me, with this pen which is of limited substance, to describe the glorious qualities of the city which are but a small part of the honor it achieves, such that it prides itself in the splendor of power.... The people of wealth walk with slave boys and retinue whose number the listener will fancy to be far from the truth. I witnessed at Attabiyya station a prince who was riding with a hundred horsemen and was surrounded by slave boys, even filling the road and blocking the path of the people until they passed.... Nor was any Caliph ever known to be more generous than he (Haroun al-Rashid) in the handing out of wealth.

Document 10

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But just the sight of this book, even though it was of no authority, made me wonder how it happened that so many different men—and learned men among them—have been and are so inclined to express both in speaking and in their treatises and writings so many devilish and wicked thoughts about women and their behavior... They all concur in one conclusion: that the behavior of women is inclined to and full of every vice. Thinking deeply about these matters, I began to examine my character and my conduct as a natural woman, and, similarly, I discussed this with other women whose company I frequently kept, princesses, great ladies, women of the middle and lower classes in great numbers, who graciously told me of their private experiences and intimate thoughts, in order to know in fact—judging in good conscience and without favor—whether the testimony of so many famous men could be true. To the best of my knowledge, no matter how long I confronted or dissected the problem, I could not see or realize how their claims could be true when compared to the natural behavior and character of women.