

UNIT 1: The Global Tapestry (c. 1200 – c. 1450)

Evaluate the extent to which religious responses to wealth accumulation in Eurasia in the period circa 600 B.C.E. to 1500 C.E. differed from state responses to wealth accumulation.

Document 1

Source: Chanakya, advisor to the first Mauryan emperor, Arthashastra, economic and political treatise, circa 250 B.C.E.

The Superintendent of Commerce shall monitor demand and the changing prices of various kinds of merchandise, both domestically produced and brought from other countries. He shall also determine the time suitable for the distribution, purchase, and sale of various kinds of merchandise. He shall avoid setting prices that allow for such large profits for merchants as to harm the people.

All those who sell merchandise shall submit to the Superintendent their sale reports, saying “this much has been sold and this much remains”; they shall also hand over their weights and measures for inspection.

The Superintendent of Commerce shall fix prices to allow a profit of five percent for local commodities and ten percent on foreign produce. Merchants who inflate the price even half a penny more than that shall be punished with a fine.

Document 2

Source: Gerontius, Christian monk, The Life of Melania the Younger, a saint’s biography composed circa 450 C.E.

The blessed Melania [383–438 C.E.] and her husband Pinian both came from foremost [Roman] families of senatorial rank. But they resolved to abandon their frivolous and worldly mode of life and experience an angelic, heavenly purpose. They left the great city of Rome and went to their suburban estate, where they devoted themselves to the practice of the virtues. They knew that it was impossible for them to offer pure worship to God unless they made themselves enemies to the confusions of a wealthy life...

[Melania described their estate in the following manner:] “It was an extraordinary piece of property and in it stood a bath that surpassed any other in worldly splendor. The estate had a total of sixty-two settlements within its borders, with four hundred slaves. But I knew that it was the Devil who set before me those multicolored marbles, the villa, and all that inestimable revenue.”

So the blessed ones fearlessly gave away all their possessions, which were enough for the entire world. They established monasteries of monks and nuns, furnishing each place with a sufficient amount of gold. They presented their numerous expensive silk clothes at the altars of churches and made many other offerings to God

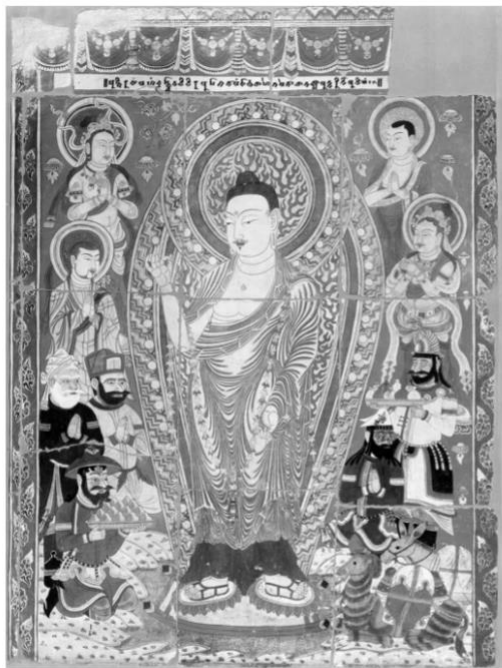
Document 3

Source: *The Qur'an, the holy book of Islam*

O you who believe! Spend on others out of the good things you may have acquired, and out of that which God brings forth for you from the earth; and choose not for your charity things that you yourselves would not want or accept without averting your eyes in disdain. Satan threatens you with the prospect of poverty and bids you to be stingy, but God is infinite, all-knowing, granting wisdom unto whom He wills. Whatever you may spend on others, or vow to spend, God knows it; and those who do wrong by withholding charity shall have no one to comfort them. If you do deeds of charity openly, it is well, but if you bestow it upon the needy in secret, it will be even better for you, and it will atone for some of your bad deeds.

Document 4

Source: *Painting from the Buddhist cave temples at Bezeklik, Central Asia, circa 800 C.E. The painting shows the Buddha and bodhisattvas* blessing Central Asian traders bearing gifts for the Bezeklik temples.*



China: Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves, Turfan, Xinjiang: Pratiidhi scene / Pictures from History / Bridgeman Images

* Buddhist holy figures

Document 5

Source: *Ganapatideva, ruler of the South Indian Kakatiya state, edict, circa 1245 C.E.*

By the glorious king Ganapatideva the following edict assuring safety has been granted to sea traders starting for and arriving from all continents, islands, foreign countries, and cities:

Formerly kings used to take away by force the whole cargo—elephants, horses, gems, etc.—carried by ships and vessels which, after they had started from one country to another, were attacked by storms and wrecked ashore.

But We, out of mercy, for the sake of glory and merit, hereby pledge to leave everything except the fixed duty to those who have incurred the great risk of a sea-voyage with the thought that wealth is more valuable than even life.

The rate of this duty is one thirtieth on all exports and imports.