

## TEACHER KEY 6.6: Faxian's *Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms* (Source 8)

**Faxian's Journey:** This text below, from around the year 400, documents one Chinese Buddhist monk's journey to learn more about Buddhism by traveling across the overland Silk Road from the Chinese city of Chang'an (modern day Xi'an) to India. It was written during the journey back by sea, either by the monk Faxian himself or by a scribe. Follow the directions in each of the sections below to help you examine Faxian's route, preview important words/concepts, work through the meaning of each piece in the text, and analyze and reflect on what the text suggests about Buddhism's spread along the overland Silk Road.

- I. **Examining context.** Look at the map below to understand Faxian's route and the locations discussed in his passage.
- II. **Previewing Vocabulary.** Preview the following list of terms and concepts/references related to Buddhism that you will see in the text. (Refer to this list as needed as you read material in the next section.)

### General vocabulary:

oasis: a spot in a desert with water and plants

deplore: to feel sadness or regret about something

mutilated: cut up or destroyed

earnestly: seriously

prosperous: fairly rich, doing good business

### Buddhist concepts or references:

Books of Discipline: Buddhist texts about how the *sangha* (the monasteries) should be run

disciplinary rules: Buddhist rules for monks

profess our law: believers in Mahayana Buddhism

Maitreya Bodhisattva: this is the figure seen in Source 7

sramans: monks, in this case, they were also missionaries

sutras: Buddhist scriptures, or sacred texts

- III. **Clarifying the pieces.** Now you're ready to tackle the text itself on the following chart. To help with your understanding, Faxian's account has been broken up into sections that correspond with different locations he visited. (Refer to your map as needed.)
  - a. In the third column, paraphrase, or rewrite in your own words, any excerpt that is bold. (Refer to your vocabulary list as needed.)
  - b. In the last column, write a one-sentence summary of the main idea of each section. (Again, refer to your map or vocabulary list for context as needed.)

	TEXT	Paraphrase each of the bolded phrases.	Summarize the main idea of each section.
Section I: Chang'an (Xi'an)	Faxian had been living in Ch'ang-gan. <sup>1</sup> <b>Deploring the mutilated and imperfect state of the collection of the Books of Discipline . . .</b> he [decided to] go to India and <sup>2</sup> <b>seek for the disciplinary Rules. . . .</b>	<i><sup>1</sup> Feeling sad that the Buddhist texts in his part of China were damaged or incomplete . . . <sup>2</sup> look for the rules of the Buddhist monks where they were originally created . . .</i>	<i>A Buddhist monk from the capital city in China wanted to go to India to find out more about his religion.</i>
Section II: Crossing the Taklamakan Desert	[Faxian and his companions began to cross the] desert [before them], in which there are many evil demons and hot winds. [Travellers] who encounter them perish all to a man. There is not a bird to be seen in the air above, nor an animal on the ground below. Though you look all round most earnestly to find where you can cross, you know not where to make your choice, the only mark and indication being the dry bones of the dead [left upon the sand]. . . .	<i>No paraphrase is necessary.</i>	<i>The crossing of the Taklamakan Desert was very challenging and dangerous.</i>

<p>Section III: Yu-teen (Khotan)</p>	<p>Yu-teen [Khotan] is <sup>3</sup>a <b>pleasant and prosperous kingdom, with a numerous and flourishing population.</b></p> <p><sup>4</sup><b>The inhabitants all profess our Law</b>, and join together in its religious music for their enjoyment. . . .</p> <p>The lord of the country <sup>5</sup><b>lodged Faxian and the others comfortably, and supplied their wants, in</b> a monastery called Gomati, of the Mahayana school. Attached to it there are three thousand monks, who are called to their meals by the sound of a bell...</p>	<p><sup>3</sup><i>Yu-teen was a nice and wealthy place with lots of people.</i></p> <p><sup>4</sup><i>The people who live there follow Mahayana Buddhism.</i></p> <p><sup>5</sup><i>took care of the travellers and gave them a place to stay</i></p>	<p><i>Faxian and his party stayed at Yu-Teen, a bustling desert oasis kingdom full of Buddhists.</i></p>
<p>Section IV: northern India</p>	<p>The monks [in northern India] asked Faxian <sup>6</sup>if it could be known when the Law of Buddha first went to the east. He replied, 'When I asked the people of those countries about it, they all said that it had been handed down by their fathers from of old that, after the setting up of the image of Maitreya Bodhisattva, there were sramans of India who crossed this river, carrying with them sutras and Books of Discipline.'</p>	<p><i><sup>6</sup>if he found information about when Buddhism spread from India to China</i></p>	<p><i>Buddhist missionaries from India reached China generations ago.</i></p>

**VIII. Analyzing and reflecting on the whole text.**

- a. Throughout the text (in the second column of the chart above) highlight or underline any references to Buddhism, or Buddhist practices.
- b. Use the evidence you highlighted to help you answer the following question: **How widespread was Buddhism along the overland Silk Road at the time of Faxian's journey?**

*Buddhism seemed to be fairly widespread along the overland Silk Road at the time of Faxian's journey. The author notes that one of the towns in the middle, Yu-Teen, has a monastery that houses many Buddhist monks. He also talks about people who told him about earlier Buddhist missionaries from India who made their way to China much earlier.*