

Catalyst of Enlightenment: The Strategic Roles of Ashoka and Gandhara in Shaping and Disseminating Mahayana Buddhism

ABSTRACT

This study examines the roles of King Ashoka and the Gandhara region in the dissemination and institutionalization of Buddhism, with a particular focus on their contributions to Mahayana Buddhism. The research aims to understand how Ashoka's promotion of Dhamma (moral teachings) and Gandhara's cultural synthesis facilitated the spread of Buddhist teachings across Asia. Using a qualitative methodology, the study draws upon historical and archaeological sources, including Ashoka's inscriptions at Shahbaz Garhi and Chanako Dheri, as well as secondary data from academic literature. Data were collected through documentation studies and field observations, followed by qualitative textual analysis to identify recurring themes such as non-violence, compassion, and cultural exchange. The findings reveal that Ashoka's transformation following the Kalinga War marked a shift towards governance rooted in compassion, as demonstrated through his Dharmayatra (moral teaching tours) and inscriptions promoting interfaith tolerance. Meanwhile, Gandhara's strategic location and cultural diversity positioned it as a hub for art, education, and the preservation of Buddhist texts, facilitating the spread of Mahayana teachings to Central and East Asia. This study highlights the depiction of Bodhisattvas (enlightened beings dedicated to helping others achieve liberation) in Gandharan art as a critical medium for conveying Mahayana values. This research offers new insights by integrating Ashoka's governance strategies with Gandhara's cultural dynamics, providing a holistic perspective on the mechanisms of Buddhist dissemination. The findings have broad implications for contemporary policies and education, offering lessons in ethical leadership and cross-cultural collaboration to address modern challenges such as religious intolerance and cultural conflict.

Keywords: *Dhamma* Ashoka, Gandhara Buddhism, Mahayana dissemination, ethical governance, cultural synthesis.

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INTRODUCTION

The dissemination of Buddhism in the Gandhara region during the 3rd century BCE to the Common Era is recognised as one of the most significant milestones in Buddhist history (Aslam & Bukhari, 2022; H. P. Ray, 2017). Located in present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan (Pyun, 2023), Gandhara's strategic geographical position made it a cultural crossroads for India, Greece, Persia, and Central Asia (K. Behrendt, 2017). This convergence of cultures created a fertile environment for the exchange of religious and philosophical ideas, establishing Gandhara as a crucial centre for the spread of Buddhism across Asia. Archaeological evidence indicates that Gandhara, at its zenith, hosted more than 1,000 *viharas* (Buddhist monasteries), further underscoring its central role in Buddhist history. However, there remains a gap in understanding the specific contributions of this region to the development and dissemination of Mahayana Buddhism (*Mahayana* translates as "the Great Vehicle," one of Buddhism's major schools emphasising universal salvation).

Buddhism, originating in India (Hirakawa, 1993), advanced significantly under rulers who adopted and promoted it. King Ashoka of the Maurya Empire, following the Kalinga War in the 3rd century BCE, embraced Buddhism as a state philosophy and implemented policies centred on peace and morality (Balkaran, Feldman, & Gucciardi, 2010). Ashoka's inscriptions, including those found at Shahbaz Garhi and Mardan, highlight his commitment to spreading Buddhist values throughout his empire, including Gandhara (Morgan & Oliveri, 2022). Under his rule, Gandhara became a vital centre for Buddhist growth, serving as a hub for teaching and dissemination. Beyond royal patronage, Gandhara's *viharas* gained renown as centres of learning, attracting scholars from various regions and contributing to intellectual exchanges that shaped Buddhist teachings (Barrech, Naz, Kakar, Naudhani, & Alam, 2023).

Literature on Gandhara's Buddhist heritage can be categorised into three main themes. First, studies on King Ashoka's role emphasise his significant influence in establishing Buddhism in the region (Deshwal, 2021; Khanna, 2020). These works detail how Ashoka's policies, including the construction of *stupas* (Buddhist shrines) and the dissemination of moral teachings, transformed Gandhara into a major Buddhist centre. Second, research on Gandharan art, such as Buddhist sculptures blending Greek and Indian styles, highlights its role in visualising and spreading Buddhist teachings (Soomro & Zulfiqar, 2020; Stewart, 2023). For instance, Greco-Buddhist art from Gandhara is believed to have shaped Buddhist iconography, influencing Buddhist art throughout Asia (Lam, 2013). Third, studies on Gandhara's intellectual contributions focus on its *viharas* as centres of philosophical discourse and script preservation (Sankrityayana, 2019).

This study aims to address gaps by examining Gandhara's role in the development and dissemination of Mahayana Buddhism, a focus that is absent in some prior literature. Specifically, it explores how Gandharan art, educational systems, and Buddhist relics facilitated the transmission of Mahayana teachings to other parts of Asia. By focusing on these elements, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of Gandhara's contributions to Buddhist history and its cultural legacy.

The research argues that Gandhara, with its unique position as a cultural and religious hub, served as a catalyst for the dissemination of Mahayana Buddhism. The synergy of Greek, Persian, and Indian influences in Gandharan art and its intellectual traditions played a pivotal role in shaping and spreading Mahayana teachings. For example, the depiction of *Bodhisattvas* (enlightened beings dedicated to helping others achieve liberation) in Gandharan art served as a visual medium for communicating Mahayana values, facilitating the acceptance of these teachings in regions such as Central and East Asia (K. A. Behrendt, 2007). Furthermore, Gandharan *viharas* functioned as training centres for monks and repositories of Mahayana texts, underscoring the region's importance in Buddhist history.

This study analyses key variables, including the influence of Gandharan art on the reception of Mahayana teachings in China and Southeast Asia, the role of Gandharan *viharas* in scriptural development, and the significance of relics in enhancing Buddhist devotion. By addressing these aspects, the research offers fresh insights into Gandhara's integral role in the evolution of Mahayana Buddhism and its broad cultural impact across Asia.

METHOD

This study aims to explore the role of King Ashoka in the dissemination of Buddhism, particularly in the Gandhara region, which now comprises parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The research focuses on analysing the moral content and socio-cultural impact of his *edicts* (inscriptions issued by Ashoka containing moral teachings) on the people of Gandhara, establishing them as the primary unit of analysis. Specifically, the study uncovers the teachings embedded within these *edicts*, such as *ahimsa* (non-violence) and peace, as well as their influence on the cultural and religious transformation of the local community.

The research adopts a qualitative approach, which is well-suited for understanding the contextual and interpretative aspects of Ashoka's influence on the spread of Buddhism. Qualitative research enables in-depth exploration of cultural meanings and nuances. This design is particularly crucial when dealing with ancient texts and artefacts, as it prioritises comprehension over measurement (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020).

The data for this study comprises both primary and secondary sources. Primary data includes Ashoka's *edicts* found in Gandhara, particularly those located at Shahbaz Garhi and Chanako Dheri, as well as other relevant archaeological artefacts. These *edicts* were directly examined to ensure their accuracy and authenticity. Meanwhile, secondary data was gathered from reputable sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and prior studies focusing on King Ashoka, Gandhara, and the development of Buddhism during that era (Creswell, 2016). Secondary sources were selected based on their academic reputation and relevance to the topic, ensuring only high-quality, authoritative references were utilised.

Data collection techniques included document analysis and field observations. Document analysis involved gathering and examining Ashoka's *edicts* and consulting relevant literature to provide historical and cultural context. Field observations were conducted at archaeological sites in Gandhara, such as Shahbaz Garhi and Chanako Dheri. During these visits, a systematic observation checklist was

used to evaluate the condition, language, style, and content of the *edicts*. This checklist ensured consistency and rigour in data collection.

Following data collection, a rigorous qualitative text analysis was performed (Kuckartz, 2014). The *edicts*, written in *Prakrit* (an ancient Indo-Aryan language) and Greek, were analysed to identify moral themes and Buddhist teachings. The analysis involved several steps: (1) reading and re-reading the texts to comprehend their content, (2) coding recurring themes such as *ahimsa* (non-violence), compassion, and principles of governance, and (3) categorising these themes to understand their broader implications. Triangulation was employed to ensure the validity of the findings by comparing data from the *edicts*, literature reviews, and archaeological observations (Noble & Heale, 2019; Sciberras & Dingli, 2023). For instance, themes identified in the *edicts* were cross-referenced with secondary sources to confirm their historical accuracy and relevance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Ashoka's Transformation and the Role of Gandhara in the Spread of Buddhism

King Ashoka, recognised as one of the most influential rulers in Indian history, played a crucial role in the dissemination of Buddhism, particularly in the Gandhara region (Khanna, 2020; Olivelle, 2024). His reign marked the beginning of a new era founded on peace, *ahimsa* (non-violence), and interfaith tolerance—principles previously unprecedented in their large-scale application in the Indian subcontinent. Ashoka's life and spiritual transformation, from a ruthless conqueror to a compassionate leader, significantly shaped the course of history in India and beyond.

Ashoka was born around 304 BCE as the son of King Bindusara and the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, founder of the Maurya Empire (Seligman, 1941; Singh, 2015). Trained from a young age to become a strong leader, Ashoka was appointed as the viceroy of Avanti, with its capital at Ujjayini, at the age of 18 (Lahiri, 2015). His true test of leadership emerged during a violent succession war for the empire's throne. Upon ascending the throne, Ashoka inherited a vast and diverse empire, which required more than military strength to govern effectively. During this period, he began to display exceptional diplomatic and administrative skills.

Ashoka's life underwent a dramatic change following the Kalinga War in 261 BCE (Miążek, 2021). This war, aimed at conquering the Kalinga kingdom on India's eastern coast, resulted in immense suffering and destruction. Historical accounts estimate over 100,000 deaths, countless injuries, and large-scale displacement. Witnessing this devastation, Ashoka began questioning the purpose of power and warfare. The war profoundly impacted his conscience, leading him to abandon violent conquest and adopt a path of peace and compassion.



Figure 1: The First Sermon and the Turning of the Wheel of Law

The Kalinga War served as a turning point in Ashoka's life. Deeply moved by the suffering it caused, Ashoka embraced Buddhism and adopted principles such as *ahimsa* (non-violence), compassion, and spiritual growth. His conversion was not only a personal transformation but also a pivotal moment for his administration, as he shifted from expansionist policies to governance based on moral principles and social justice (see Figure 1).



Figure 2: Ashoka's Edict at Shahbaz Garhi, Mardan

Following his conversion, Ashoka actively promoted Buddhist values throughout his empire. The *Dhamma* (moral teachings) he advocated integrated Buddhist teachings with a vision of justice and harmony. To disseminate these ideals, Ashoka issued a series of *edicts*—commonly referred to as the *Charter*—inscribed on rocks and pillars. These *edicts* conveyed moral messages such as respect for all religions and compassionate leadership. For instance, the Shahbaz Garhi edict in Gandhara (see Figure 2) explicitly emphasises non-violence and tolerance. In these inscriptions, Ashoka often referred to his subjects as his "children," reflecting his deep sense of responsibility and compassion (Mirajkar, 2023).



Figure 3: Korean, Japanese, and Chinese Monks Worshipping at Chota Lahore

One of the regions most profoundly influenced by Ashoka's policies was Gandhara, now located in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Clough, 2024). Gandhara, a cultural crossroads of Greek, Persian, and Indian influences, had long been an intellectual and cultural hub. While Buddhism likely predated Ashoka in this region, his active involvement significantly strengthened its presence. During his *Dharmayatra* (journeys to promote moral teachings), Ashoka visited Gandhara, including the city of Salathura (now Chota Lahore). Historical records suggest that Ashoka engaged directly with local communities, converting many to Buddhism and fostering peaceful coexistence (Batool, 2022). This enduring spiritual significance is depicted in Figure 3, which shows monks from Korea, Japan, and China worshipping at Chota Lahore.

The *Charter Ashoka* established in Gandhara, particularly the Shahbaz Garhi inscriptions near Mardan, provides tangible evidence of his commitment to spreading Buddhism (see Figure 2). Written in *Prakrit* (an ancient Indo-Aryan language) and Greek, these *edicts* demonstrate Ashoka's openness to diverse cultures and languages. The Shahbaz Garhi inscriptions highlight core Buddhist principles, including respect for life, tolerance, and compassion, reflecting Ashoka's vision of moral governance. Beyond the *edicts*, archaeological sites such as Chanako Dheri illustrate Ashoka's dedication. At this site, Ashoka reportedly constructed a temple to honour children offered as alms, embodying Buddhist ideals of generosity and sincerity.

Ashoka's efforts transformed Gandhara into a key centre for Buddhist learning. Monasteries, *stupas* (Buddhist commemorative monuments), and Buddha statues flourished, symbolising spiritual and artistic growth in the region. Gandhara art, blending Greek, Persian, and Indian styles, introduced a humanised representation of Buddha that became a hallmark of Buddhist iconography across Asia. Through its integration of artistic innovation, philosophical development, and intercultural harmony, Gandhara laid the groundwork for Buddhism's dissemination to Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and China.

Ashoka's legacy extends far beyond Gandhara. His policies and missionary efforts established the foundation for Buddhism's expansion throughout Asia, while the integration of local cultures with Buddhist teachings in Gandhara reflects his vision of intercultural harmony. Ashoka's transformation from a ruthless conqueror to a compassionate leader underscores the transformative power of moral governance. This research enriches our understanding of Ashoka's role in promoting not only Buddhism but also tolerance and interfaith dialogue. By

examining his *edicts* and messages, we gain insight into how Ashoka's principles continue to inspire ideals of peace and coexistence today.

2. The Strategic Role of Gandhara in the Development and Dissemination of Mahayana Buddhism

Mahayana Buddhism, one of the main branches of the Buddhist tradition (Jayadi, 2018), emerged as a dominant force in the Indian subcontinent during the first century CE, marking a significant shift in Buddhist history. Unlike the conservative Theravada tradition, Mahayana emphasised the ideal of the *Bodhisattva* (an enlightened being who, out of compassion, delays attaining *Nirvana*—ultimate liberation—to help others achieve salvation). This transformation was not only theological but also cultural and social, spreading across South and Central Asia.

Gandhara, a historic region now part of Pakistan and Afghanistan, played a crucial role in the development and dissemination of Mahayana Buddhism. Strategically located along ancient trade routes connecting East and West, Gandhara became a centre of intellect, art, and religion. Its unique location fostered cultural exchanges among Indian, Greek, Persian, and Central Asian influences, creating a synthesis that enriched Buddhist philosophy and practice. Gandhara's cultural diversity allowed Buddhism to adapt in ways that resonated with various populations.

During the first or second century CE, King Kanishka of the Kushan Empire convened the Fourth Buddhist Council (Ball, Bordeaux, Mac Dowall, Sims-Williams, & Taddei, 2019), Kanishka's support was instrumental in legitimising Mahayana Buddhism. The council, attended by around 500 eminent monks, including Vasumitra, Asvaghosa, Nagarjuna, and Parsva (renowned Buddhist scholars), sought to reconcile differences among the 18 recognised Buddhist sects (R. A. Ray, 1994). Under the leadership of Vasumitra and Asvaghosa, the council formalised Mahayana principles and institutionalised its teachings, laying the foundation for its dissemination.



Figure 4: The Kanishka-Inscribed Casket Containing Buddha Relics

The council also prioritised the preservation of Buddhist manuscripts, systematically compiling texts believed to be stored in stone caskets within *stupas* (Buddhist relic mounds). This meticulous preservation ensured the continuity of Buddhist teachings for future generations.



Figure 5: Relief at the Peshawar Museum

Gandhara's contributions to Buddhism extended to art and education. The region is renowned for its Buddhist sculptures, inspired by Greek artistic traditions but adapted to convey Buddhist philosophy (Aslam & Bukhari, 2022). Realistic depictions of Buddha, symbolising compassion and enlightenment, spread across Asia, serving as vital tools for disseminating Mahayana ideas. Simultaneously, Gandhara's monasteries attracted monks and scholars from around the world, fostering intellectual exchanges that shaped Mahayana thought and facilitated the compilation of essential texts.



Figure 6: Queen Maya's Dream

Gandhara's significance also lies in its association with Buddha relics. Artefacts such as the Kanishka-inscribed casket, relics discovered at Shahji Dheri (see Figure 4), and depictions like Queen Maya's dream underscore the region's role in preserving and venerating sacred relics (see Figure 6). These artefacts, housed in institutions like the Peshawar Museum, continue to inspire devotion and scholarly interest (see Figure 5).

Situated strategically with a rich cultural diversity, Gandhara became a convergence point for Buddhist thought and practice. Through royal patronage, artistic innovation, and educational exchange, Mahayana Buddhism gained recognition and spread globally. Gandhara's art and manuscripts provided visual and intellectual frameworks that facilitated Buddhism's adaptation in contexts such as China and Southeast Asia. Gandhara's legacy exemplifies how strategic geographical and cultural positioning can amplify the reach and influence of a religious movement.

3. Harmonising Governance and Culture: Ashoka and Gandhara's Role in Advancing Mahayana Buddhism

This research highlights the strategic roles of King Ashoka and the Gandhara region in shaping and disseminating Mahayana Buddhism. King Ashoka's spiritual transformation is particularly relevant in this context as it shifted his governance approach from military expansionism to the promotion of universal moral values such as *ahimsa* (non-violence), tolerance, and societal welfare. This transformation laid a strong foundation for the spread of Buddhist teachings, including Mahayana Buddhism, which emphasises compassion and universal salvation. Ashoka's transformation following the Kalinga War significantly influenced his policies, which prioritised moral principles like non-violence and interfaith tolerance. Ashoka's inscriptions in Gandhara, such as those in Shahbaz Garhi, demonstrate his efforts to propagate the *Dhamma* (moral teachings) in this intellectual and cultural hub. Meanwhile, Gandhara's strategic geographical location and the influence of Greco-Indian culture played a pivotal role in the development of art and the preservation of Mahayana Buddhist texts. This study also underscores the importance of Greco-Buddhist art in Gandhara, particularly its depictions of *Bodhisattvas* (enlightened beings dedicated to helping others attain liberation), which served as a visual medium for conveying Mahayana values.

The findings reveal that King Ashoka's transformation was driven by the psychological impact of witnessing the devastation caused by the Kalinga War. The massive loss of life led Ashoka to abandon expansionist policies and adopt Buddhist principles. His influence in Gandhara stemmed from his position as a ruler advocating universal moral values, which resonated with the culturally diverse population of Gandhara. On the other hand, Gandhara's contributions to the dissemination of Mahayana Buddhism can be explained by its unique blend of cultural and intellectual traditions. The adaptation of Greek artistic styles into Buddhist art reflects efforts to make Buddhist teachings more accessible to multicultural societies, while the preservation of Mahayana texts ensured the continuity of its philosophy.

This research reinforces the findings of Deshwal (2021), who emphasised King Ashoka's policies in establishing Buddhist learning centres in strategic regions such as Gandhara. Deshwal highlighted how Ashoka not only constructed physical infrastructures such as *viharas* (monasteries) and *stupas* (Buddhist shrines) but also implemented policies facilitating intellectual exchanges and the dissemination of Buddhist values across his empire. This aligns with Stewart (2023), who explored Greco-Buddhist art as an essential medium for spreading Buddhist iconography. Additionally, the study builds on Ray (2017), who described Gandhara as a significant cultural crossroads for Buddhism, and Rienjang and Stewart (2023), who highlighted the global connections of Gandharan art in communicating Buddhist teachings.

Moreover, this research confirms the contributions of Gandharan technology and art as documented by Pollard and Liu (2022), where the introduction of brassmaking facilitated the spread of Buddhist iconography to regions such as China. This study offers novelty by integrating King Ashoka's moral policies with Gandharan cultural dynamics, providing a holistic perspective on Mahayana's

dissemination. It further adds empirical evidence from field observations at sites such as Chanako Dheri, enriching the literature on Gandhara's contributions.

The findings reveal that the dissemination of Mahayana Buddhism was influenced not only by religious values but also by governmental policies and local cultural dynamics. For instance, China's adoption of Mahayana Buddhism involved a different approach, where the teachings were adapted through the intellectual influence of local communities and Confucian traditions that emphasised social harmony. In contrast, Gandhara's cultural interactions between Greek, Persian, and Indian influences created a unique environment for integrating Mahayana teachings into local art and culture. These differences highlight the significant role of local cultural contexts in shaping how Mahayana Buddhism was received and disseminated across regions. Ashoka's transformation into a morally driven leader underscores the importance of ethical governance. Meanwhile, Gandhara demonstrates how cultural integration can enhance the spread of teachings to wider areas. The representation of *Bodhisattvas* in Gandharan art, for example, provided a visual gateway for communities less exposed to Buddhist texts, accelerating Mahayana's acceptance in Central and East Asia.

This research illustrates that collaboration between visionary rulers and dynamic cultural communities can result in the wide dissemination of impactful ideas. For example, the collaboration between King Ashoka and Buddhist monks led to peace missions propagating *Dhamma* in distant regions such as Sri Lanka and Central Asia. Furthermore, in Gandhara, the synergy between local rulers and artists from various cultures created Greco-Buddhist art that not only visualised Buddhist values but also attracted multicultural audiences along the Silk Road. However, there is a risk that cultural adaptations may dilute the core values of teachings into overly localised forms. Thus, contemporary leaders inspired by Ashoka's model must ensure that moral values remain preserved in their adaptations.

The research findings provide several policy recommendations directly rooted in the study's key discoveries. King Ashoka's transformation and policies underscore the importance of value-based leadership for fostering social harmony, serving as an inspiration for policies promoting tolerance and non-violence. Additionally, the preservation of Gandhara's artistic and cultural heritage highlights the need to prioritise cultural sites as tools for intercultural dialogue. Gandhara's cross-cultural dynamics recommend incorporating cross-cultural approaches into educational curricula to address the challenges of global intolerance.

Firstly, governments today can draw inspiration from Ashoka's model of leadership, which was based on universal moral and ethical values such as tolerance, non-violence, and respect for diversity. This approach is relevant for creating inclusive policies that foster social harmony. Secondly, the preservation of cultural sites like Gandhara, including inscriptions and artistic artefacts, must be prioritised to ensure these cultural legacies remain sources of education and intercultural dialogue. This step is crucial for promoting historical values and cultural diversity.

Thirdly, educational institutions need to integrate cross-cultural approaches similar to those practised in Gandhara into their curricula to promote social harmony and respect for diversity. Such value-based education can address the growing challenges of intolerance in the era of globalisation. Finally, international collaboration is essential for preserving intellectual and cultural heritage. As

exemplified by Mahayana's dissemination, cross-border cooperation can be utilised to tackle global challenges such as intercultural conflicts and intolerance. This research reaffirms that the legacies of Ashoka and Gandhara remain relevant as models for spreading universal moral values and strengthening cross-cultural collaboration in the modern era.

CONCLUSION

This research has highlighted the strategic roles of King Ashoka and the Gandhara region in shaping and disseminating Mahayana Buddhism. The study's primary findings demonstrate that Ashoka's spiritual transformation following the Kalinga War was a pivotal moment that redirected his governance approach towards universal moral values, including non-violence, tolerance, and compassion. This transformation laid the groundwork for the spread of Buddhist teachings, particularly Mahayana Buddhism, emphasising compassion and universal salvation. Similarly, Gandhara's strategic geographical position and its cultural synthesis of Greek, Persian, and Indian influences provided a unique context for the development of Greco-Buddhist art and the preservation of Mahayana texts, which significantly facilitated the dissemination of Mahayana ideas across Central and East Asia.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in its integration of Ashoka's moral governance policies with Gandhara's cultural dynamics to provide a holistic understanding of the mechanisms underlying the spread of Mahayana Buddhism. By connecting historical evidence, such as inscriptions and artistic contributions, with cross-cultural and governmental influences, the study offers a nuanced perspective that enriches the existing literature. Furthermore, it introduces field-based observations, particularly from sites such as Chanako Dheri, as new empirical data to deepen understanding of Gandhara's contributions.

However, this research also acknowledges its limitations. While it extensively analyses the cultural and governmental roles of Ashoka and Gandhara, the scope of the study is limited to the historical and archaeological dimensions. It does not fully explore the social and economic impacts of Mahayana dissemination on local communities. Additionally, reliance on secondary data for certain aspects may limit the depth of contextual interpretation. Future research could address these gaps by examining the lived experiences of Buddhist communities in Gandhara and exploring comparative studies of similar cultural hubs in Asia.

This study underscores the enduring relevance of Ashoka's value-based leadership and Gandhara's cultural integration in promoting universal moral values and fostering cross-cultural collaboration. These historical lessons offer valuable insights for addressing contemporary challenges such as religious intolerance and intercultural conflict, demonstrating the transformative potential of ethical governance and cultural synthesis.

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