

**EXCERPT FROM “SONG FOR THE PEACE OF THE PEOPLE” (ANMIN’GA)
By Ch’ungdam**

Introduction

Hyangga were oral Korean-language poems of Silla and early Koryŏ that were later written down using *hyangch’al*, a form in which Chinese characters were used for both their meaning and sound values in order to represent the very different structure of Korean. Only fourteen *hyangga* from the Silla era survive.

If Silla *hyangga* (songs) were sometimes private and intimate in feel, like Wŏlmyŏng’s song for his dead sister, they could also be public and more explicitly political. The “Song for the Peace of the People,” or *Anmin’ga*, also drawn from the *Samguk yusa*, was composed by the monk Ch’ungdam at the behest of Silla King Kyŏngdŏk in the mid-700s, shortly after the Silla Unification. It expresses a vision of what constitutes peaceful rule. By this point in Silla history, a National Academy to teach Confucian texts had been established, and many would argue that this *hyangga* expresses a worldview aligned with Confucian political thought.

Document Excerpt with Questions

From *The Book of Korean Poetry: Songs of Shilla and Koryŏ*, translated and edited by Kevin O’Rourke (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006) 17-18.

Excerpt from “Song for the Peace of the People” (Anmin’ga)

The king is father;
each minister is loving mother;
the people are foolish children —
thus the people come to know love.
The people live in grinding poverty;
feed them, guide them.
They won’t ever leave;
they will know the land is governed well.
When king, ministers, and people all do their part
the land knows a great peace.

Questions:

1. What does it mean to consider the people “foolish children,” and what sort of love do foolish children know?

Primary Source Document with Questions (DBQs) on

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2. What are some possible consequences of thinking of a political system as a family? Do you think about contemporary political systems this way? Why or why not?
3. What might it mean for "king, ministers, and people all [to] do their part"? Is this the same as saying that the will of the king ("the father") should hold sway?
4. If the *Anmin'ga* is, indeed, a Confucian-themed song being offered by a Buddhist monk, what does this say about the exclusivity or non-exclusivity of Buddhism and Confucianism during the Three Kingdoms and Unified Silla periods? Did people think of them as "religions" in the same way we think about "religions" today? Why or why not?