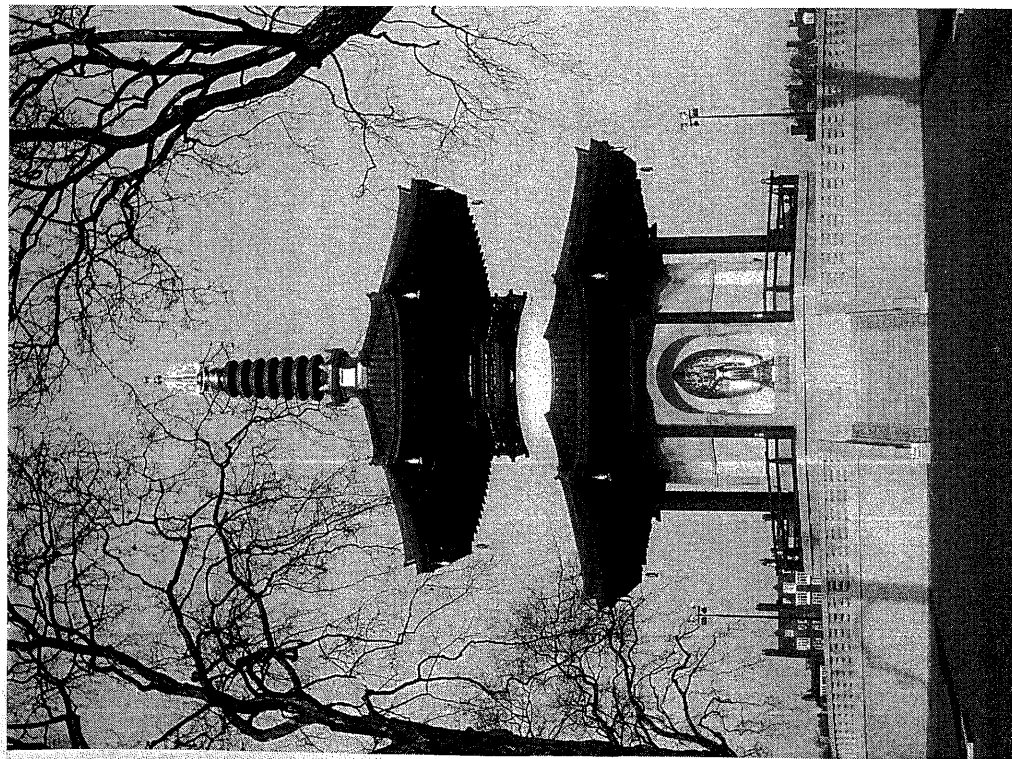




The 'Peace Pagoda' in Battersea Park, London.

AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

Teachings, history and practices

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One strand of Tantrism included taboo- and convention-breaking practices to overcome attachments and aid insight into seeing everything as the *Dharma*-body. The *Hevajra Tantra* asserts that the world is bound by lust, and may also be released by lust. This referred to the practice of sexual yoga, in which the power of lust is harnessed, and transmuted into a power for liberation, by means of visualizing the flow of various mystical energies within the body. At a time when Buddhist influence had led to widespread vegetarianism, such rites might be carried out after eating meat and drinking wine, in a cemetery at night, the sexual partner being a low-caste girl visualized as a deity. The importance of the body, which the *Tantras* stress, goes back to the Buddha saying that *Nirvāṇa* is in 'this fathom-long carcase' (see p. 59), while cemeteries were often seen as good places in which to meditate on the nature of the body and death. The bizarre-sounding tantric rites were certainly an innovation, though!

The *Mahā-siddha* Saraha (ninth century?) also developed an iconoclastic, intuitionist approach which dispensed with *mantras* and complex rites as side-tracks. In his *Dohā-kośa*, he says that perfect knowledge may be developed without being a monk, but while married and enjoying sense-pleasures. He rigorously emphasizes the importance of spiritual practice, under a *Guru*, rather than dying of thirst 'in the desert of multitudinous treatises' (v. 56). Such practice involved cultivating a state free from thought, a spontaneous, natural state akin to the innocence of a child. This '*Sahaja-yāna*' way would make manifest the 'Innate' (*Sahaja*), the profound, non-dual ultimate reality which could be seen in everything.

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THE LATER HISTORY AND SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

BUDDHISM IN INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

During the Hindu Gupta dynasty (320-540), which ruled much of north India, Hinduism grew stronger. Buddhism generally continued to flourish, though, with the rulers patronizing both religions. During the century from around AD 450, the White Huns, originally from Central Asia, devastated monasteries in Afghanistan, northern Pakistan and areas of western India. By the seventh century, a slow recovery was being made in the north-west, with the Buddhism of southern Pakistan remaining strong. In western and some southern regions of India, though, it was losing out to Hinduism and Jainism. From AD 750, the mostly Buddhist Pāla dynasty ruled in the north-east, patronizing Buddhism and supporting five monastic universities, the major one being the internationally renowned Nālandā. In the eleventh century, Pāla rule weakened, and it was followed in 1118 by the Hindu Sena dynasty. From AD 986, the Muslim Turks started raiding north-west India from Afghanistan, plundering western India early in the eleventh century. Forced conversions to Islam were made, and Buddhist images smashed, due to the Islamic dislike of 'idolatry'. By 1192, the Turks established rule over north India from Delhi. The north-eastern stronghold of Buddhism then fell, with the destruction of Nālandā university in 1198. In the north-east, east, and Kashmir, Buddhism lingered on for another two centuries or so, with some royal patronage in the latter two areas. In Kashmir it was forcibly stamped out by the Muslims in the fifteenth century. Buddhist refugees fled to south India (where Hindu kings resisted Muslim power), South-east Asia, Nepal and Tibet. The Theravāda school flourished in the south until at least the seventeenth century, before it withdrew from the war-torn region.

to Ceylon. From the sixteenth century, however, it had been re-introduced from Burma to the north-eastern fringes of the Indian sub-continent.

North of Tibet, in the area known as Central Asia, was an international trade-route called the Silk Road, as silk was exported along it from China to north-west India, and even to the Mediterranean world. Among Indian merchants were many Buddhists, who, often accompanied by wandering monks, helped spread the religion in Central Asia. Buddhism was present in the region from the second century BC, and in the first century AD both Sarvāstivāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism flourished in several of the city states of the area. Central Asia remained Buddhist until the tenth or eleventh centuries, when the Turks brought conversions to Islam.

What factors contributed to the decline and virtual demise of Buddhism within the Indian sub-continent (excluding the Himālayan region and Ceylon)? One was a dilution of the distinctiveness of Buddhism relative to the rising power of Hinduism. Mahāyāna writers were quite critical of Hinduism, but the surface similarities of Hindu and Mahāyāna devotional cults and Tantrism may have led the laity to perceive the two religions as quite similar. Hinduism also borrowed elements from Buddhism. The devotees of the god Viṣṇu came to frown on animal sacrifices and to practise vegetarianism, while some Śaivites (followers of the god Śiva) viewed caste-distinctions as being of little relevance to religious practice. The great theologian Śāṅkara (788-820) developed a monasticism paralleling the *Saṅgha*, and also used the Buddhist concept of 'two levels of truth', already borrowed by his predecessor Gauḍapāda (seventh century). Hinduism could not ignore the Buddha; so by around the sixth century, it recognized him as the ninth incarnation of Viṣṇu.

Hindu hostility also played a part. The Buddha incarnation was seen as a way to delude demons into denying the authority of the *Vedas*, so as to lead them to hell. Śāṅkara described the Buddha as an enemy of the people, and sporadic persecution was directed at Buddhists from the sixth century. There is also evidence for social ostracism of Buddhists, probably due to their lack of enthusiasm for the caste system, which became particularly influential on society from around AD 600. While Buddhism sought to influence society from its monastic centres, Hinduism wove itself into the fabric of society through the caste system,

with Brahmin priests having a certain authority over others within it. Unlike the more universal Buddhism, Hinduism came to be seen as the 'national' religion of India.

The Muslim invasions were the worst blow, however, for Buddhism had few royal defenders and, unlike Hinduism with its *Kṣatriya* warrior class, it lacked a soldierly spirit. The *Saṅgha*, whose survival is essential for the flourishing of Buddhism, was an easily identifiable and thus vulnerable institution. The devastation of agriculture due to the invasions also meant that the laity no longer had surpluses to support their monks. The *Saṅgha* thus died out in most areas, and could not be revived without existing monks to ordain new ones. Between the alien Muslims, with their doctrinal justification of a 'holy war' to spread the faith, and Hindus, closely identified with Indian culture and with a more entrenched social dimension, the Buddhists were squeezed out of existence. Lay Buddhists were left with a folk form of Buddhism, and gradually merged into Hinduism, or converted to Islam. Buddhism therefore died out in all but the fringes of its homeland, though it had long since spread beyond it.

SRI LANKA

The history of Ceylon and its Buddhism is chronicled in works such as the *Dīpavaṃsa*, *Mahāvāṃsa* and *Cūḷavaṃsa*. The monks of Mahinda's mission of around 250 BC brought the Pali Canon in their memories, along with the developing commentaries. These continued to be orally transmitted till around 80 BC, when invasion and famine meant that parts of the Canon could be lost as monks died. A council was therefore held to see to the writing down of the Canon, in Pali, and the commentaries in the local Sinhala dialect of Indo-Aryan. Mahinda established an indigenous *Saṅgha* in Sri Lanka, and his sister, the nun Saṅghamittā, brought a cutting from the original *Bodhi*-tree to plant in the capital Anurādhapura. She also brought relics of the Buddha, which were enshrined in the first of the many *Dagaba*'s (*Stūpas*) to be built on the island.

Since then, Buddhism has been the major religion. The *Saṅgha* taught and advised the kings, and at several times in the island's history it influenced the choice of ruler. The Sinhalese have long felt that civilized life is impossible without the presence of monks in society.

They required their kings to be Buddhist, and from the tenth century saw them as *Bodhisattvas*. In general, the most devout kings have been the most active in social welfare: building irrigation works, supporting medical and veterinary services, and providing homes for the incurable. Education was supported via support for the monks, who became the educators of the people.

In the fifth century, the monk Buddhaghosa came to Sri Lanka, as he had heard that extensive commentaries on the scriptures existed there. He was allowed to translate these into Pali, edit them, and add certain thoughts of his own. To prove his suitability for this task, he first composed the *Visuddhimagga*, or 'Path of Purification', a masterly survey of meditation and doctrine which became the classic expression of Theravāda Buddhism. Sri Lanka and other Theravāda lands produced a thriving Pali literature: chronicles, commentaries and sub-commentaries, and works of devotion, doctrine and *Abhidhamma*. Of particular note is Anuruddha's *Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha* (eleventh century), a systematic compendium of *Abhidhamma*.

Three monastic fraternities developed, though all used the Pali Canon as scripture. The oldest was centred on the Mahā-vihāra, the 'Great Monastery' established by Mahinda. Then, around 98 BC, king Vattagāmaṇi donated the Abhayagiri monastery to a favoured monk. As this was not given to the community as a whole, the monk was expelled from the Mahā-vihāra fraternity, leading to a schism. Later, the Jetavana fraternity formed, again due to donation of a monastery to an individual monk, by king Mahāsena (AD 274–301). The monks of the Abhayagiri fraternity were more receptive to Mahāyāna ideas than the more conservative Mahā-vihāra monks, while the Jetavana monks vacillated. Mahāsena supported the Mahāyāna and destroyed the Great Monastery, but his successor rebuilt it. The Mahā-vihāra fraternity was later strengthened by the work of Buddhaghosa, though in the eighth and ninth centuries, there was a period of considerable Mahāyāna and Mantrayāna influence. From late tenth century, there was a decline in Buddhism and monastic discipline due to Tamil invasions and civil wars. In the early eleventh century, the monks' ordination line had to be re-imported from Burma, where it had recently been taken, but the monks' Order died out. King Parakkama Bahu I (1133–86) halted the decline and purified the *Saṅgha*, also unifying it on the basis of the Mahā-vihāra fraternity. Around this period, Southern Buddhism entered

its golden age in both Sri Lanka and South-east Asia, incorporating selected Mahāyāna/Mantrayāna practices and aspirations into its existing framework of *Sutta* teachings, Theravādin *Vinaya* and Vibhajjavādin *Abhidhamma*.

In time, Sri Lanka became a prized goal for Western colonial powers. The Catholic Portuguese (1505–1658), then the Calvinist Dutch (1658–1796) controlled certain lowland coastal regions. In the late sixteenth century, persecution by a Śaivite king led to a decline in which the ordination line for monks (but not novices) was again lost. Only in 1753 was it successfully re-introduced, from Thailand. The British finally brought an end to the highland kingdom of Kandy in 1815, so as to rule the whole island. While only the Portuguese had persecuted Buddhism, each colonial power tried to transmit its own brand of Christianity to the islanders.

SOUTH-EAST ASIA EXCLUDING VIETNAM

A small Buddhist community may have existed among the Mons of southern Burma/central Thailand since the time of Asoka. In any case, the tradition of Sri Lanka was probably introduced to the Mons in the early centuries AD. In northern Burma, Sarvāstivāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism, along with Hinduism, were present from the third century AD, with Tantric Buddhism arriving by the ninth century. A change came about when a northern king, Anawratā (1040–77), unified the country and gave his allegiance to the Theravāda of the Mons; for he was impressed by the simplicity of its doctrines. Since that time, Theravāda Buddhism has been the main religion of the Burmese, though Tantric elements have lingered on, and the gods of the pre-Buddhist nature religion have a place in Buddhist cosmology. Anawratā established contact with Sri Lanka, and, by the fifteenth century, a Theravāda ordination line from there was finally established as the orthodox one.

Merchants brought Brahmanism to the Khmers of Cambodia in the first century AD, and north-Indian Sanskritizing forms of Buddhism in the second century. From the sixth century, a mix of Hindu Śaivism and Mahāyāna was the religion of urban areas, though there was some royal persecution of Buddhism in the seventh century. From 802 to 1432, there was a powerful Khmer empire, with the king being seen as an

incarnation of both Śiva and a great *Bodhisattva*. Tantrism also had an influence. From the twelfth century, Mon missions won over the lower classes and countryfolk, who preferred Theravāda to the complex religion of the court. In the fourteenth century, royalty turned to the Theravāda, and the tradition became well established in the country as a whole.

In the region of modern Thailand, a mix of Mahāyāna and Śaivism was present from the tenth century. In the thirteenth century, the Tai people, driven south from China by the Mongolians, entered the area and drove out its Khmer rulers. Theravāda missions, sent from Burma from the eleventh century, found a response from the ruler of the Tais, once followers of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism. Theravāda then became the dominant religious tradition. Like Burma, Thailand had links with the Buddhism of Sri Lanka over the centuries. The Tai people also settled in Laos. Early in the fourteenth century, the Cambodian wife of a ruler helped convert the royal court and people to Theravāda Buddhism, so that it became the official religion in around 1350. In the fifteenth century, Theravāda also spread to the Dai, another branch of the Tai people in what is now China.

Buddhism was present in the Malay peninsula from the fourth century, with a Buddhist state existing in the north in the fifth century. From this time, Śaivism and Mahāyāna Buddhism were influential in the peninsula and on the Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra. In the seventh century, the Sarvāstivādins also became well established on Sumatra, and Tantric Buddhism became popular in the region in the eighth century. In around 800, a huge *Stūpa*, still the largest monument in the southern hemisphere, was built at Borobudur, Java. From the eleventh century, the dominant religion of the region increasingly became a mix of the Tantric forms of Buddhism and Śaivism. In the fourteenth century, Islam was brought by merchants, and in the fifteenth century it rapidly spread to become the dominant religion. The Hindu-Buddhist syncretism still exists on the small island of Bali, however, and Buddhism is also found among the Chinese community in the region.

THE LANDS OF NORTHERN BUDDHISM

Nepal shared in the developments of north Indian Buddhism and Hinduism, and by the thirteenth century, Hinduism had become the

dominant religion, favoured by rulers. By the fifteenth century, monks were increasingly abandoning celibacy and forming an hereditary caste, and scholarship was declining. Buddhism has been found mainly among the Newars of the Kathmandu valley. Since 1786, when the Gurkhas conquered the country, they have held out against rulers' attempts to fully Hinduize this area.

Buddhism did not reach Tibet, the heartland of Northern Buddhism, till relatively late, the country being isolated and mountainous. Its indigenous religion, Bon, is centred on a cult of dead kings, spirit-possession, magic, and exorcism of demons and vampires, though it shares a belief in rebirth with Buddhism. The first real Buddhist influence in Tibet came under king Srong-bstan-sgam-po (pron. Songtsen Gampo; AD 616–50), who was converted by two wives, from Nepal and China. A minister visited India for texts, and then invented the first Tibetan script, for writing down translations. After the king's death, the impetus for Buddhism ran out, though many Tibetans studied it in Nepal. In the following century, Buddhist influences came from India, China and Central Asia, and king Khri-srong-lde-brstan (pron. Trhisong Detsen; 755–97?) tried to establish the first monastery in the country. Tradition says, however, that his efforts were frustrated by earthquakes and disease, seen as coming from the hostility of the Bon deities. The problems continued even after the Mahāyāna teacher Śāntarakṣita, of Nālandā university, was brought to bless the site. The latter advised the king that Tantric Buddhism would have most appeal for the Tibetans, with their love of magic, and suggested that Padmasambhava, one of the *Mahā-siddhas*, be invited to Tibet. When he came, he successfully exorcized the site in around 775, and converted many people. He is also said to have converted many of the native deities, so that they became protectors of Buddhism, which was recognized as the state religion in 779. The Buddhism which took root was a mixture of monastically-based Mahāyāna, represented by Śāntarakṣita, and tantric mysticism and ritual, represented by the revered Padmasambhava: a mix which became typical for Tibet. Translations were carried out in earnest, and in the period up to around AD 1000, many Tibetans studied in India and Indian teachers visited Tibet.

The school which looks back to Padmasambhava as its founder is the Nying-ma (pron. Nyingma), the school (*pa*) of those who are

'Adherents of the Old (*Tantras*)'. It has a strong emphasis on Tantrism and magic, and has been influenced by Bon, which by the eleventh century itself became much influenced by Buddhism. Bon hostility led to king gLang-dar-ma (pron. Langdarma; 838-42) persecuting Buddhism. Though he was then assassinated by a Buddhist monk, the period of political turmoil following did not favour the spread of Buddhism. In this time, political power was held by regional kings and even some large monasteries.

In the eleventh century, a renaissance of Buddhism led to its firm establishment throughout Tibet. At the invitation of a regional king, the ageing monk-professor Atiśa came from India on a missionary tour in 1042. He helped purify the *Saṅgha*, emphasizing celibacy, and improved Tibet's understanding of Buddhist doctrine, as based on a mix of Madhyamaka and the *Tantras*. His reforms led his main disciple to establish the bKa'-gdams-pa (pron. Kadam-pa), or 'Bound by Command (of monastic discipline) School', and also influenced two other new schools of the period. The first was the bKa'brgyud-pa (pron. Kagyu-pa), the 'Whispered Transmission School'. Its founder was Mar-pa (1012-96), a married layman who had studied with tantric Gurus in India, and translated many texts. He emphasized a complex system of yoga and secret instructions whispered from master to disciple. His chief pupil was the great poet-hermit-saint Mi-la-ras-pa (pron. Milarepa; 1040-1123), whose own pupil sGam-po-pa (pron. Gampopa) first established bKa'brgyud-pa monasteries. The other new school was the Sa-skyapa (pron. Sakya-pa), founded in 1073 at the Sa-skya monastery. It is noted for its scholarship and is close to the bKa'brgyud-pa in most matters.

The powerful Mongols had designs on disunified Tibet and, in 1244, their ruler summoned the head Sa-skyapa *bLama* to his court. In return for the submission of Tibet, the *bLama* was made regent over it. He also spread (Sa-skyapa) Buddhism to Mongolia and regions of northern China within the Mongolian empire. His successor 'Phags-pa (pron. Phakpa; 1235-80) was the spiritual adviser to Khubilai Khan, who became Mongol emperor of China. Sa-skyapa power was resisted by the other schools and their soldiers, and came to an end in 1336. A line of kings followed from 1358 to 1635.

By the fourteenth century, the Tibetan Canon of scriptures, based on careful and often literal translations, was complete. Tibet's Buddhism is

the direct heir of late north Indian Buddhism, and as the Muslims had destroyed libraries in India, the Tibetan Canon is the best, if incomplete, indication of the nature of this.

The last major school of Tibetan Buddhism was founded by the reformer Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1410), on the basis of the bKa'-gdams school and Atiśa's arrangement of teachings in a series of levels, with a purified Tantrism at the top. He founded the dGe-lugs-pa (pron. Geluk-pa), or 'Virtuous School', whose monks are distinguished from others by the yellow colour of their ceremonial hats. Tsong-kha-pa emphasized the study of Madhyamaka, and the following of monastic discipline. He cut down on magical practices and eliminated sexual yoga for monks. The three main dGe-lugs monasteries, near the capital Lhasa, were modelled on the monastic universities of India, and became great centres of Buddhist scholarship, logic and debate. In the sixteenth century, the head of the dGe-lugs school reintroduced Buddhism to the Mongols, who had lapsed from it. One of the Mongol rulers, Altan Khan, therefore gave him the Mongolian title of *Dalai*, 'Ocean (of Wisdom)', *bLama* (pron. Lama). He was regarded as the second reincarnation of a former dGe-lugs leader, Tsong-kha-pa's nephew, so that the latter was seen, retrospectively, as the first Dalai Lama. Each Dalai Lama was also seen as a re-manifested Transformation-body ('Tib. *sprul-sku*, pron. *trulku*) of Avalokiteśvara, one among the 300 or so recognized *sprul-skus* in Tibet. *Sprul-skus* are recognized as children, based on predictions of their predecessors and the ability to pick out their possessions from similar looking ones. This practice became the basis for a system of succession to leadership of monasteries, and the political power that sometimes attended this.

In 1641, the Mongolians invaded Tibet and established the fifth Dalai Lama as ruler of the country. From then, the dGe-lugs school became the 'established church'. Some of the bKa'brgyud-pa monks and *bLamas* who were unhappy with this moved to Sikkim and Bhutan, thus spreading Buddhism there. In Mongolia, Buddhism became well established and popular, pacifying a once war-like people. In the eighteenth century, it spread northwards to the nomads of what are now the Buryat and Tuva Soviet republics. A branch of the Mongolian people also migrated westwards to the Kalmyk Soviet republic, by the Caspian sea. A community in the Baltic states of the USSR also claims a long Buddhist heritage, from Mongol roots.

CHINA

Early history

As the religion of foreign merchants arriving from Central Asia, Buddhism was present in China by around AD 50. By the middle of the next century, Chinese interest led to texts being translated: firstly Śrāvakayāna works on meditation and *Abhidharma*, then also Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtras* and works on the Pure Lands of Amitābha and Bhaiṣajya-guru, and the heaven of Maitreya.

Unlike most other lands where Buddhism spread, China already had an ancient literate civilization, yet Buddhism managed to bridge the wide cultural chasm between the Indian and Chinese worlds. The dominant ideology of society was Confucianism, a social philosophy going back to K'ung Fu-tzu (Confucius; 551-497 BC). K'ung stressed the importance of the family and correct, harmonious social relationships, particularly filial piety, or respect for parents. This extended to respectful worship of ancestors, in line with long-standing Chinese practice. Man was seen as part of a triangle of forces: Earth, Man and an impersonally conceived Heaven (*T'ien*). K'ung's ideal was the scholar-gentleman, who studied the ancient classics that he had edited, and cultivated a life of human-ness and proper, respectful social relationships. In the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), such scholar-gentlemen ran the bureaucracy of the huge Chinese empire on behalf of the emperor, who was seen as the mediator of the forces of Earth, Man and Heaven, and as worthy of worship.

The other strand of Chinese thought was Taoism, a religious-philosophical system founded by the semi-mythical Lao-tzu ('Old Sage'), said to have been born in 604 BC. To him is attributed the *Tao-Te-Ching*, 'The Standard Work on the Way (*Tao*) and its Power'. This sees the mysterious, indescribable *Tao* as a force flowing through and generating all things in nature. The Taoist sage is one who tries to be like the *Tao* in acting effortlessly, spontaneously and naturally. Thus Taoism dislikes the formality engendered by Confucianism, though it shares its love of harmony. The sage should be humble, compassionate, and seek to become one with the *Tao* by meditatively contemplating it. From the second century AD, a form of Taoism developed which was based on worship of many gods, and the quest for longevity, or physical 'immortality', using alchemy, diet and meditation.

In Buddhism's transmission to China, some of the problems it faced related to its monasticism. Celibacy was seen as undermining the Chinese stress on continuing the family line, so as not to deprive the ancestors of worship. The 'unfilial' monks also lived a life which was not based on home and family, the centre of Chinese life. Moreover, the Chinese expected all but the scholar-gentleman to be engaged in productive work, but the monks lived off alms. When monasteries in time became wealthy, through the donation of both land and precious metals for images, Buddhism was attacked as being an economic drain on the country. The *Sangha* was also regarded with some suspicion; for it was an autonomous group, which needed to be regulated before it could fit into the totalitarian structure of Chinese society. A symbol of this autonomy was the fact that, initially, monks would not bow in worship to the emperor; for monks should not bow to even the most senior layperson.

Though the Chinese loved foreign exotica, the nationalistic Confucian literati came to criticize the growing religion as suitable only for foreign barbarians. Buddhist thought tended to see class differences as unimportant, while social hierarchy was important in Confucianism. The metaphysical, other-worldly aspects of Buddhist thought were also in tension with Chinese pragmatism and focus on this world. To Confucian rationalists, there was no evidence for rebirth, there was nothing wrong with killing animals, and the fate of individuals and kingdoms depended on the will of Heaven, not individual karma.

How was it, then, that Buddhism came to be for a long time the major religion of all classes in China, with Taoism as the second religion, and Confucianism remaining as the main influence on social ethics? A key event was the decline and break-up of the Han dynasty, which led to a crisis of values due to the apparent failure of Confucianism. In this situation of uncertainty, Buddhism stepped in to fill a vacuum and put down its roots. In some ways, this has parallels with the origins of Buddhism in India, which was also at a time of social change, anxiety, and the seeking of new values.

Buddhism had *both* a developed ethic, as Confucianism had, *and* a developed philosophy, as Taoism had. It was more popularly orientated than Confucianism, and had a more systematic philosophy of man than Taoism. Particularly popular was the concept of all people having the Buddha-nature, an equal potential for enlightenment, which introduced to China the notion of the equal worth of all people. The compassionate

assistance of heavenly Buddhas and Great Beings brought hope and solace in sorrow; the karma-rebirth doctrines came to be seen as a good support for morality, and the 'alien' faith proved to be adaptable and tolerant. Adaptations were facilitated by the notion of skilful means. Ancestors could be cared for by transferring 'merit' to them, so that Buddhist monks came to be much called on for rites for the dead. Dead abbots were worshipped as the 'ancestors' of a monastery, and a novice monk was expected to behave in a respectful, filial way towards the monk assigned to watch over him. Moreover, schools of Buddhism developed which had a more this-worldly, pragmatic emphasis.

Following the Han dynasty, China was split into a northern part, controlled by non-Chinese 'barbarians' such as the Huns, and a southern part, governed by a series of weak Chinese dynasties. In the north, missionary monks had a reputation for meditation-based psychic powers, and so were sought out by the magic-loving people to teach meditation, seen as a means of protection in the war-torn period. The rulers sought out the 'psychic' monks as advisers on political and military matters, and the monks then gradually civilized them, tempered their excesses, and converted them into protectors of Buddhism: a good example of skilful means at work. As a non-Chinese religion, Buddhism found favour with the powerful rulers, and also became the religion of the people. The practical side of Buddhism was stressed, in the form of devotion, meditation and good works, with more than 30,000 temples being constructed in the north by the sixth century. Many translations were also made, especially by the large translation-bureau run by the Central Asian monk Kumārajīva from AD 402 to 413. Brief Taoist- and Confucian-inspired suppressions in 446-52 and 574-78 were ineffective in stemming the growth of Buddhism.

In the south, Buddhism at first allied itself with Taoism; for it was seen as a form of Taoism that Lao-tzu had taught to foreigners in the west. Taoists looked to Buddhism for solutions to certain problems in Taoist philosophy and, till the fourth century, Buddhist terms were frequently translated by Taoist ones. Emphasis in the south was not on religious practice but on intellectual discussion among the nobility and literati, particularly on the Perfection of Wisdom literature. Once Buddhism began to flourish in its own right, Taoism looked on it as a rival, while being influenced by some of its forms such as a Canon of scriptures and an ecclesiastical structure. When the Sui dynasty

(589-617) re-unified China, Buddhism was consolidated in Chinese culture, as it was seen as a unifying force that also encouraged peace.

The schools of Chinese Buddhism

From the fifth century, a number of different schools of Buddhism emerged, each being known as a *tsung*: a 'clan' which traced its lineage back to a certain founder or patriarch. Each school specialized in a particular aspect of Buddhist teaching or practice, and monks or nuns often studied or practised according to several of them.

Some of the schools were straight imports from India. The first was the San-lun, or 'Three Treatise' school, which was the Chinese form of the Madhyamaka. This was introduced by the translator Kumārajīva, and was based on three key texts. The second was the Fa-hsiang, or 'Characteristics of *Dharmas*' school, a form of the Yogācāra introduced by the pilgrim-translator Hsuan-tsang (596-664). An earlier form of the Yogācāra known as She-lun, introduced in the sixth century by the translator Paramārtha, died out. Paramārtha also introduced the Chushē, a form of the Sarvāstivāda based on the study of the *Abhidharma-kośa*. It was then organized by Hsuan-tsang. These schools lost their separate identity after a time, but as subjects of study they influenced others. A late import, arriving in the eighth century, was the Chen-yen, the '*Mantra*' or 'Efficacious Word' school. While it died out in China in a ninth-century persecution of Buddhism, this form of the Mantrayāna had considerable success in Korea and Japan.

Two important schools which originated in China were ones which, stimulated by the Chinese love of harmony, produced a philosophical synthesis of the teachings of different texts. They emphasized that the Buddha taught according to skilful means, and categorized the various Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna *Sūtras* as belonging to one or other of several levels of teaching, given at different periods in his life. At the highest level, the schools placed a chosen *Sūtra* as representing supreme truth. The T'ien-t'ai school was named after Mount 'Heavenly Terrace', where its headquarters was located. Founded by Chih-i (539-97), it placed the Lotus *Sūtra* and the Mahāyāna *Parinirvāṇa Sūtra* at the pinnacle of its teaching, and stressed both study and meditation. It emphasized the notion of the Buddha-nature as present in all things, and that the world is non-different from absolute Mind, thusness,

emptiness or *Nirvāṇa*. The Hua-yen school put the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in pride of place (see pp. 118ff.). Founded by the meditation-master T'u-shun (557–640), it was philosophically systematized by its third patriarch Fa-tsang (643–712), and came to be influential on the Ch'an school. Both the synthesizing schools flourished in the T'ang dynasty (618–907). Influenced by Chinese ways of thought, they emphasized ultimate reality as immanent in the world, like the *Tao*, and as fathomable by penetration into the thushness of any natural phenomenon.

In seeking to be all-inclusive, T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen diffused much energy on long hours of study and a range of practices. The remaining schools studied only a few selected texts, and focussed their energy on a limited number of practices. The smallest was the Lu, or 'Vinaya' school, introduced around AD 650. Based on the *Śrāvaka-yāna* Dharmaguptika school, it emphasized the study of monastic discipline, and had high standards for ordination and monastic life. In these respects it influenced the practice of other schools, especially Ch'an. The two other practice-orientated schools became the most successful: Ch'ing-t'u and Ch'an.

The Pure Land school

The Ch'ing-t'u, or 'Pure Land' school became the most popular form of Buddhism in China, particularly among the laity. It is based on the three main *Sūtras* related to Amitābha, and the *Sukhāvaiṭ-vyūhōpadēśa* ('Instruction on the Array of the Happy Land'), a work attributed to Vasubandhu which systematizes the ideas of the Larger *Sukhāvaiṭ-vyūha Sūtra*. At the start of the fifth century, Hui-yuan organized a society for meditation on Amitābha's Pure Land, but T'an-luan (476–542) was the first to properly organize the school, and is regarded as its first patriarch. He was a learned former Taoist, inspired by a missionary monk to see true immortality as gaining immeasurable life in Sukhāvaiṭ (the 'Happy Land'). While his writings drew on Madhyamaka and Yogācāra ideas, he stressed faith in the power of Amitābha's vows, which could save even an evil doer. His ideal was establishing a pure, firm and uninterrupted faith throughout life. This would ensure the ability, as death approached, to call on Amitābha for ten consecutive moments of genuine faith: the minimum requirement for rebirth in Sukhāvaiṭ. The main practice he advocated was one called *nien-fo* (Jap. *nembutsu*), a term which translated *Buddhānusmṛti*,

'recollection of the Buddha'. He explained it to mean both 'recollection' and 'calling on' Amitābha, this being done by repeatedly reciting the Chinese translation of the short formula of praise to Amitābha (see pp. 130 and 187).

The second patriarch, Tao-chi'o (562–645) emphasized the idea that, from AD 549, the world was in the degenerate age of the 'latter-day *Dharma*' (Ch. *ma-fa*, Jap. *mappō*). This was because the Chinese thought that 549 was 1,500 years after the Buddha's death, thus being the beginning of an age of decline in Buddhism and morality predicted by the Lotus *Sūtra*. In such a situation, most people could not follow the difficult 'path of the saints', based on their own virtue and meditation, but must rely on the 'easy path' of devotion to Amitābha. 'Self-power' must be replaced by 'other-power'. The third patriarch, Shan-tao (613–681) gave the school its classical form and did much to popularize it. From the ninth century, the school was so widely diffused that it no longer needed special patriarchs as leaders.

The Ch'an school

The name of the Ch'an, or 'Meditation' school (Jap. Zen) is an abbreviated transliteration of the Sanskrit *dhyāna*, referring to the state of deep meditation (Pali *jhāna*). In time, Ch'an became the most popular school among monks, artists and intellectuals. Like Tantric Buddhism in India, it developed powerful new methods of practice. In its terminology and spontaneous style, it was influenced by Taoism. Its expression of Buddhist ideas in direct, down-to-earth form was also in keeping with the Chinese temper. Meditation (*ch'an*) had existed in Chinese Buddhism from its earliest days, but Ch'an specialized in it. Its founding genius was seen as the semi-legendary Indian monk Bodhidharma, who may have been active in China in the period AD 470 to 520, and appears to have been a great meditation master and champion of the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*. One of the legends about him was that he spent nine years in meditation gazing at a wall, until his legs fell off! This illustrates the Ch'an single-minded emphasis on meditation as *the* method for attaining enlightenment. Another legend is that he told the pious emperor Wu that the latter had earned 'no merit at all' by his many good works. This shocking saying probably meant that 'merit', like everything else, is empty of inherent existence, and that more

important than good works is insight into reality. Though good works, devotion and study play their part in Ch'an, they should not become hindering focuses of attachment. Ch'an therefore has an iconoclastic streak, such that certain accomplished masters have burnt Buddha-images or torn up *Sūtras* as a means of undercutting someone's attachment. This has sometimes been misunderstood by Western students of Ch'an/Zen. When one such student, after a few days in a Japanese monastery, remarked that the old masters used to burn or spit on Buddha-images, not bow to them, the master simply replied 'you spits, I bow'.

A late saying attributed to Bodhidharma is:

A special transmission outside the scriptures;
Without depending on words and letters;
Pointing directly to the human mind;
Seeing the innate nature, one becomes a Buddha.

This expresses the secondary importance of study in Ch'an, and the idea that insight arises by direct mind-to-mind transmission from master to pupil. Indeed, Ch'an is said to have originated in a supposed incident in the Buddha's life, when he held up a flower. Mahākāśyapa smiled in understanding at this silent sermon, and so received the 'seal of *Dharma*' to pass on the teaching. The 'innate nature' within the mind is the Buddha-nature. Various levels of awakening (Ch. *wu*, Jap. *satori*) are attained by gaining direct insight into this. The highest realization is when this potentiality is fully actualized, and a person becomes a Buddha, one who truly knows that his mind had never been separate from Buddhahood. Other people and their teachings cannot really make a person see their Buddha-nature. This must come as a direct intuition, when he totally stops looking outside himself for the truth. The Ch'an master, then, can only try to stimulate the arising of this realization from *within* his pupil.

In the eighth century, there was controversy among some groups of Ch'an practitioners. A Southern school emphasized that, for the wise, enlightenment comes suddenly, and attributed to the flourishing Northern school the view that it is arrived at in stages, by a gradual process of purification. The Southern school took Hui-neng (638-713) as the 'sixth patriarch', while the Northern one took Shen-hsiu (600-706) as this. The bitter squabbles between the schools was due to

the earnestness with which their followers sought enlightenment, and the importance which had come to be attached to the genuine 'mind-to-mind' transmission of truth. The matter was settled at a council in 796, when an emperor chose in favour of the Southern school. Subsequently, the various groups of Ch'an practitioners were assembled under the umbrella of this school. Its ascendancy was due to the campaigning of Shen-hui (668-760), who championed its cause by building up Hui-neng into a legendary figure regarded as the second founder of Ch'an. The tradition came to accept an account of his life and teachings given in the *Liu-tzu T'an-ching*, 'The Platform *Sūtra* of the Sixth Patriarch', composed around AD 820. This relates that Hui-neng, as an illiterate boy, had an awakening when he heard a monk reciting from the Diamond-cutter Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtra*. As a young man, he went to join the monastic community of the 'fifth patriarch', Hung-jen (601-74), and was put to work in the kitchens, without being ordained. Eight months later, the patriarch was due to name his successor, whom everyone expected to be the community's chief monk, Shen-hsiu. Nevertheless, the patriarch decided to choose his successor on the basis of the insight expressed in a verse. Shen-hsiu wrote on the monastery wall:

The body is the Enlightenment (*Bodhi*) tree;
The mind is like a clear mirror.
At all times we must strive to polish it,
And must not let the dust collect.

(*Plat.* sec. 6)

This was judged to express only partial understanding and was surpassed by two verses which Hui-neng had a friend write on the wall. One was:

Enlightenment originally has no tree;
The mirror also has no stand
Buddha-nature is always clear and pure;
Where is there room for dust?

(*Plat.* sec. 8)

Here, the ultimate level of truth is expressed: all phenomena, however exalted, are empty. To be like a mirror clearly reflecting reality, the mind has no need of gradual purification – it is already the pristine Buddha-nature. One does not need to purify oneself to Buddhahood, but to realize one's innate purity, the *Dharma*-body or true thusness. Hung-jen then called Hui-neng to his room at midnight, deepened his wisdom by teaching the Diamond-cutter *Sūtra*, and made him the sixth

patriarch. Hui-neng secretly left the community, lest jealousy over a mere kitchen helper becoming patriarch should cause difficulties. For sixteen years he lived in the mountains as a layman, and then in 676 he ordained and came to gather many pupils.

The methods developed by Ch'an were aimed at enabling a person to directly intuit his true nature. To do this, the mind must be free of old habits, prejudices, restrictive thought-processes, and even ordinary conceptual thought. The basis for doing this, especially in the monasteries, was a disciplined life-style, which limited the expression of ego-desires so that a person could cultivate a naturalness and spontaneity which came from deep within: from the pure depths of the store-house consciousness. While a layperson could practise Ch'an, as it did not require long hours of study, monastic life was seen as providing a more conducive atmosphere for meditation, and gave closer access to the all-important meditation master. As he would have many pupils, private interviews with him were precious and long-awaited. In such an interview, the master would diagnose the specific spiritual problem that a pupil was currently subject to, and treat it accordingly. This might be by advice or explanation, or even by provocation, sudden actions, blows or shouts: whatever was appropriate to the pupil's state of mind, so as to help trigger an awakening. An awakening was said to depend on the right moment, the pupil's own Buddha-nature, and the master's direct pointing at this. The fierce methods used by some is reflected by this description of Ma-tsu (707-786): 'He strode along like a bull, and glared about him like a tiger.' The master would sometimes engage his pupil in a rapid dialogue which compressed different levels of understanding, and was intended to prod the pupil into himself finding and expressing the ultimate level of truth. In this, Ch'an was influenced by the Perfection of Wisdom paradoxical style of dialogue, Madhyamaka dialectic, and a probing style of questioning found in the *Sūrangama Sūtra*. A simple example is:

Monk: How can silence be expressed?

Master: I will not express it here.

Monk: Where will you express it?

Master: Last night at midnight, I lost three pennies by my bed.²

Here, the 'thusness' of silence is conveyed, not by describing it, but by conjuring up the picture of groping in the darkness and silence of night for some coins.

Records of some of these question-and-answer sessions, and of the spontaneous acts of masters, provided important paradigms for Ch'an practice. Such a record was known as a *kung-an* (Jap. *kōan*), or 'public record'. These were used as themes for one type of meditation, and as discussion points in private interviews. They were used increasingly from the eighth century, and by the twelfth century there were large anthologies of them. These were used as the basis of a system in which practitioners would have to wrestle with a series of enigmatic questions, such as 'what was my original face before my mother and father were born?', that is: what is my true nature, beyond existence in time and space? This was a way to educate people the 'hard way'.

Of the different Ch'an lineages, two survived the vicissitudes of history, and came to dominate after the eleventh century. The first is the Lin-chi (Jap. Rinzai) school, founded by Lin-chi (died 867). It emphasizes the use of *kung-ans*, harsh methods in interviews, and that awakenings come suddenly. The second is the Ts'ao-tung (Jap. Sōtō) school, founded by Ts'ao-shan (840-901) and Tung-shan (807-869). This emphasizes a form of sitting meditation, and came to see awakenings as gradually unfolding. While the Japanese forms of these two schools have remained separate, they merged in China during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

By the sixteenth century, the pervasive Pure Land practice of *nien-fō* came to be part of the daily liturgy of Ch'an monasteries. In this context, however, it became more of a Ch'an 'self-power' exercise than a Pure Land 'other-power' one. This was because, in addition to the recitation, a common topic of meditation was 'who recites the name of the Buddha?', that is, what is one's true nature? A syncretism between Pure Land and Ch'an also developed, in which the Buddha-nature 'within' and Amitābha Buddha 'without' were seen as different ways of looking at the same reality.

Later history

Buddhism flourished in the T'ang dynasty (618-907), when monasteries were large, well-endowed institutions which fostered artistic creativity, cared for the sick, old and orphans, and ran community development projects. Buddhism's influence and the wealth accumulated by its monasteries, however, led to machinations by rival Taoists. The government was in need of money after a civil war, and looked to the precious metals used in Buddhist images, temple lands, and the tax-

exemption enjoyed by monks and the laity working in the monasteries. In 842, the emperor confiscated land belonging to lax monks and nuns, and in 845 he had all but a few temple-monasteries destroyed, laicized many monks and nuns, and took much of the *Sangha's* land. The persecution was short, but it devastated Buddhist institutions throughout China. The emperor died in 846, and his policy was reversed, but most schools did not recover and went into decline. T'ien-t'ai retained some of its power, but the main surviving schools were Ch'an and Pure Land. Ch'an survived because it was less dependent on libraries and images, etc., its monks had come to grow their own food, and many of its centres were geographically isolated. Pure Land survived because it was mainly a lay movement. Buddhism in China was now past its peak.

During the Sung dynasty (960-1279), though, the entire Canon of Buddhist scriptures was printed, using over 130,000 wooden printing blocks (972-83). In time, however, Buddhism came to lose out to the rising power of Neo-Confucianism, which reached its classic form in the twelfth century. Drawing elements from Buddhist philosophy, this was an all-embracing ideology and metaphysic which became the basis of competitive civil-service exams. Under its influence, Buddhism was increasingly seen as fit only for the masses. The decline of Buddhism under this reformulated expression of indigenous Chinese beliefs is in some way akin to its decline in India under Hinduism, a reformulated Brahmanism. In both cases, a religion or philosophy closely tied to a national culture came to overshadow a universal religion from which it borrowed. In time, however, it became quite common for people's practice to draw on Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.

In the Mongolian Yuan dynasty (1280-1368), state patronage increased again, though it was mainly for Northern Buddhism. Early in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Buddhism had a small revival due to initial state encouragement, but then the control of education by Confucian scholars, and the prevention of Buddhists being state officials, led to a decline in Buddhist scholarship. Popular Buddhism still thrived, however, though it became increasingly mingled with Taoism and folk religion. In the Ch'ing, or Manchu dynasty (1644-1911), Buddhism continued to be criticized by Neo-Confucian propaganda, but in the seventeenth century it was spread to the island of Taiwan by Chinese immigrants.

VIETNAM AND KOREA

Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism had reached north Vietnam, from both China and India, by the third century AD. The Pure Land school was influential at the popular level from the ninth century, and Thien (Ch. Ch'an) became the most influential school in the monasteries. From the tenth century, Buddhism flourished among all classes of people, and state patronage began, with Thien monks being the learned cultural elite.

In the south, Hinduism and Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism reached the kingdom of Champā by the third century AD. By around 900 AD, a mix of the Mahāyāna and Śaivism was patronized by the rulers. In the fifteenth century, an invasion from the north led to the subsequent dominance of the Chinese-based form of the Mahāyāna over all of Vietnam, though Theravāda continued to exist in the south near to Cambodia. A revival of Confucianism as the state ideology led to a gradual decline in Buddhism, however, and from the late sixteenth century, Catholic Christianity, spread by Spanish then French missionaries, had some success in the south. In the eighteenth century, Buddhism had something of a revival.

The indigenous religion of Korea is a form of shamanism, as in many cultures, and this continues to this day. By the late fourth century, Buddhism had reached the north and south-east, and by the sixth century it had penetrated the whole of the Korean peninsula, bringing much of Chinese culture with it. In the sixth and seventh centuries, Korean monks studying in China brought back most of the schools of Chinese Buddhism. Buddhism became the religion of the elite, with its Pure Land form having some success among the common people. Confucianism was the philosophy of the lower aristocracy, however. During the Silla period (688-935), Buddhism became a dominant force in society, with Son (Ch. Ch'an) becoming a major school from the ninth century. In the Koryo period (935-1392), Buddhism was very influential, being a popular as well as aristocratic religion from the twelfth century. There was considerable state patronage, and Buddhist monks succeeded, in 1036, in getting the death penalty abolished. The entire Chinese Canon was printed in the twelfth century and a new edition was printed in the thirteenth century, using 81,258 wooden printing blocks (which are still in existence). In the fourteenth century, Buddhism dominated cultural life.

The unconventional monk-cum-layman Won Hyo (617–86) wrote extensive commentaries on the doctrines and *Sūtras* emphasized by all the competing schools, seeking to harmonize them around the idea of the 'One Mind'. His writings were influential in China, and in Korea he was the first to develop the syncretistic trend which was to become common. After the introduction of Son in the ninth century, however, there was considerable rivalry between it, emphasizing mind-to-mind oral teaching, and the other, *Sūtra*-based schools, particularly Hwaom (Ch. Hua-yen). Son also argued for a 'sudden' approach to realization, rather than a gradualist one. Uich'on (1055–1101) was the first to attempt a reconciliation between what he saw as one-sided approaches emphasizing study or meditation, instead of a balance of the two. His *rapprochement* was based on a revival of the Ch'ont'a'e (Ch. T'ien-t'ai) school, but after his death this just became another contending school. The person most responsible for the harmonizing trend of Korean Buddhism was the Son monk Chinul (1158–1210), who also established a truly Korean form of Son. Unusually, he used the *Sūtras* to guide his Son practice, and so came to teach the usefulness of scriptural study. As in traditional Son, he accepted the central importance of sudden insights into one's Buddha-nature. He also accepted, however, that many people needed to mature such insights by gradual cultivation of wholesome states, while seeing that these and defilements were 'empty'. He drew on the practices of several schools in a pragmatic way, according to the needs of people of different capacities. Essentially, however, he developed a synthesis of Son with the philosophy and practices of Hwaom. In the fourteenth century, the Lin-chi *kung-an* method, which he had begun to experiment with, became the normative Son method.

Buddhism suffered a reversal in the Yi dynasty (1392–1910), when Neo-Confucianism from China came to be adopted as the state ideology. In the early fifteenth century, monastery lands were confiscated, monasteries were reduced to 242, then 88, and schools were reduced to seven, then to two umbrella organizations. These were the Son, or Meditation school, dominated by Son, but including Kyeyul (Ch. Lu), Ch'ont'a'e and Milgyo (Ch. Chen-yen), and the Kyo, or Textual school, which included the remaining schools. Government anti-Buddhist measures were at their height in the early sixteenth century; monks were banned from entering the capital (1623), and

aristocrats' children forbidden from ordaining. Buddhism therefore retreated to mountain monasteries, and ticked over as a religion of the masses, as in China, with a revival developing in the 1890s.

JAPAN

Early history

The indigenous religious tradition of Japan is Shintō, the 'Way of the Gods', which is based on worship of a range of divine beings, each known as a *kami*. Some are seen as personalized creative forces, many as impersonal forces present in notable natural objects and animals, and some as extraordinary humans: anything awe-inspiring or mysterious can be seen as a *kami*. The tradition did not have a strong ethical dimension, but it had a developed appreciation of natural beauty, and a concern for ritual purity.

Buddhism first officially reached Japan in AD 538, when a Korean king sent ambassadors with a Buddha-image, scriptures, and a group of monks. Subsequently, it brought much of Chinese civilization, including Confucianism and Taoism, to a country in the process of developing a centralized monarchy. Buddhism was at first adopted through the appeal of its art and ritual, the protective power offered by 'merit' making and magical rites, and the power of its ethic to encourage unity among rival clans. The pious and learned Regent, prince Shōtoku (573–622), firmly implanted Buddhism by making it the state religion, with responsibility for the welfare of Japan, and made Confucianism the state philosophy. From this early period onwards, Buddhism had links with the power of the state.

In the Nara period (710–84), the devout emperor Shōmu ordered the building of temples throughout the land. Monks acted as scribes, thus introducing writing, and helped open up a country-wide road system. Six schools of Chinese Buddhism were introduced, the most influential being the Keron (Ch. Hua-yen). In Nara, the capital, Shōmu built a temple enshrining a 16-metre tall image of Vairocana: the central, *Dharma*-body Buddha according to the Keron school. This image represented the centre of both spiritual and temporal power in the realm. Just as Keron saw ultimate reality as interpenetrating phenomenal reality without these impeding each other, so the power of the emperor

was seen as interpenetrating Japanese society. This notion fitted well with the blend of collectivism and individualism found in Japanese culture. A Nara *kami* was also recognized as a *Bodhisattva* and made the protector of the main temple.

Nara Buddhism was primarily for the elite. It attracted wealth and also politically ambitious monks, who had been ordered to ordain for the 'merit' of the ruler. Consequently it became corrupt and politically meddlesome. The capital was therefore moved to Kyoto at the start of the Heian period (794-1185). Japanese Buddhism now came of age.

The Japanese monk Saichō (767-822) introduced the Tendai (Ch. T'ien-t'ai) school from China in 805. Its head temple-monastery was set up on Mount Hiei, near Kyoto, where Saichō established a twelve-year training regime of study, meditation and monastic discipline. This became the most important temple in the land, and housed 30,000 monks in its heyday. The Japanese monk Kūkai (774-835) brought the Mantrayāna Shingon school from China in 816, establishing its central temple on Mount Kōya, fifty miles from the capital. He helped develop the present written form of Japanese, had a notable impact on the arts, and popularized many protective rites and liturgies. Shingon's colourful and complex rites came to supplant Tendai influence at the royal court, and the school also had some influence on Tendai itself. Shingon practitioners aimed to establish contact with various holy powers, and realize their identity with Vairocana Buddha.

While the Tendai and Shingon schools flourished at the court, devotion to Amida and Avalokiteśvara was being spread among the people. Shintō remained strong in the countryside, though it came to be synthesized with Buddhism in a form known as Ryōbu, or 'Dual aspect', Shintō. In this, the Shingon and Tendai schools taught that major *kamis* were manifestations of heavenly Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas*, the sun-goddess Amaterasu being a form of Vairocana. In Shintō shrines, images of the corresponding Buddhist holy beings were set up, and Shintō borrowed heavily from Buddhism, as well as Confucianism and Taoism, to systematize and strengthen itself.

In late Heian times, the Tendai and Shingon schools became decadent and a period of social, political and religious chaos occurred, such that the 'period of the latter-day *Dharma*' (*nappō*) was seen to have started in 1052. During the troubled Kamakura period (1192-1333), rule was by military Shōguns and the samurai, or warrior-knight, class. The

latter helped Buddhism spread to the people, however, and thus put down deep roots. Five new schools began, as there was a move towards simpler forms of Buddhism which saw themselves as more practical than the long, complex Tendai path, and more open than esoteric Shingon ritual. All were founded by monks who had gone through the Tendai training on Mount Hiei, but felt it to have become corrupt. In their different ways, all attached importance to the quality of faith. Japanese Buddhist schools had harder edges than in other Buddhist lands, and became more like separate sects, with their own specific lay followers. They also tended to split into many sub-sects over time.

The Pure Land schools

Aspects of Pure Land practice existed in the Tendai synthesis, and during the tenth century various unorthodox Tendai monks had begun to spread devotion to Amida (Skt Amitābha) among the people. The school did not take off until the Kamakura era, though, under the leadership of Hōnen (1133-1212) and Shinran (1173-1263). Hōnen was a scholar-monk who, at forty-three, came to view the Tendai path as too difficult a means to enlightenment in the degenerate *nappō* age. He therefore humbly turned to the 'easy path' of reliance on Amida and his 'original vow' to save all. Leaving Mount Hiei, he popularized the practice of *nembutsu* in Kyoto for many years, and wrote a work emphasizing a sincere and simple faith in Amida. He was disrobed and banished from Kyoto, however, as the Tendai authorities did not like him going against orthodoxy. The aged Hōnen, however, just took this as an opportunity to preach in the countryside, feeling concern lest the divine powers which he saw as protecting him would punish those opposing his message. He did not himself found a new school (*shū*), but one developed from his followers. These comprised the first Japanese Buddhist group independent of state power, uniting people of different classes. Harassment strengthened their unity, so that they eventually split off from Tendai to become the Jōdo-shū, or 'Pure Land School'. Shinran left Mount Hiei to follow Hōnen, going into exile with him and then travelling widely to popularize Amida-devotion among the poor and the samurai. He felt incapable of attaining enlightenment by his own efforts, so his last resort was faith in Amida – though he did not know whether the *nembutsu* would lead to the Pure Land or hell.

He felt that humans were helpless sinners, full of passion and depravity, ignorant of what is truly good or evil. His interpretation of Hōnen's message made it simpler and more extreme. People must give up any hopeless attempt at 'self-power' and should beware lest the deliberate cultivation of virtue or wisdom leads to pride and lack of faith in Amida. Hōnen taught that, as even wicked people could be reborn in Sukhāvatī, then good ones certainly could be; Shinran taught that, as even good people could be reborn there, 'wicked' ones stood an even better chance: an idea paralleling the Christian concept of the 'salvation of sinners'. Salvation comes from gratefully accepting Amida's saving grace, not by any good works. Even a person's faith comes from grace, for the all-pervading power of Amida can be found within one, prompting the Buddha-nature to overcome arrogance and sin.

For Hōnen, *nembutsu* recitation was the central religious act, but worship of other Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* was still accepted. One should seek to improve oneself and practise frequent repetitions of the *nembutsu* to make salvation more certain. Only one's attitude could make this a form of 'self-power', not the number of recitations. Shinran taught, however, that one sincere recitation was sufficient; after this, recitations should be done simply to thank Amida for already having saved one. Repetition to aid salvation was a form of 'self-power'. As it is so easy to slip into the way of 'self-power', Shinran taught that 'other-power' was the difficult path, not the 'easy path' (see p. 153). While salvation by pure grace is very unlike the early Buddhist emphasis on self-reliance, it does share with it the ideal of 'letting go'. Early Buddhism advocated letting go of all conditioned phenomena so as to undermine the 'I am' conceit, while Shinran advocated letting go of 'self-power' into the saving power of Amida. Both aim to overcome egoism, but the early Buddhists saw this as possible by using and developing inner resources through practising the *Dharmma* made available by Gotama, while Shinran saw the resources as coming from Amida.

While most of Hōnen's monastic followers retained celibacy, Shinran abandoned it when he dreamt that Avalokiteśvara told him to marry. He regarded monasticism as unnecessary for salvation, and marriage as a realistic admission of human weakness. He thus initiated a kind of married hereditary clergy, and advocated the family as the centre of religious life. Though an aristocrat by birth, he humbly described himself as an 'ignorant baldhead', addressing his followers as 'fellow

believers'. In time, these formed the Jōdo-shin-shū, or 'True Pure Land School', also known as the Shin-shū.

The Zen schools

Zen meditation had been included in Tendai, and Ch'an masters had visited from China, but Zen never caught on as a separate school until the Kamakura period. The monk Eisai (1141–1215) first introduced it from China, in its Rinzaï (Ch. Lin-chi) form. He experienced opposition from Tendai monks when he said that Zen was the best form of practice, but his adaptability ensured that Zen took root, for he also gave Tendai, Shingon and Ritsu (Ch. Lu) teachings. When it was said that Zen would have a debilitating effect on people, he argued that it would strengthen them and protect the land. Indeed, Zen's meditational and ethical discipline, and indifference to death, appealed to the samurai, who were thereby better able to resist two attempted Mongolian invasions in 1274 and 1281. Eisai gained the protection of a Shōgun at the capital Kamakura, and established the long-lasting alliance between Rinzaï and the samurai. This can be seen as an example of 'skilful means', in the form of an adaptation of Buddhism to the way of life of a particular group of people.

While Rinzaï Zen was mainly successful among the samurai, Sōtō (Ch. T'sao-tung) Zen had a more popular appeal, becoming known as 'farmers' Zen'. It was introduced by Dōgen (1200–1253), perhaps the greatest figure in Japanese Buddhism. This religious genius, admired by all Japanese, gave Zen both an identity fully separate from Tendai, and a more Japanese form. As a Tendai monk, a problem which plagued him was: if people already have the Buddha-nature, why do they need to exert themselves in religious practice to attain Buddhahood? His quest for an answer took him to a Rinzaï temple, and then to China. There he met a master who sparked off an awakening in him. In 1227, he returned to Japan, and though he did not want to found a new school, his single-minded advocacy of Zen meant that one formed around him. He attracted many pupils, monastic and lay, male and female, and several times had to move to a bigger temple to accommodate his community. He emphasized a strict and simple life of monastic discipline and *zazen*, or 'sitting meditation', and preferred to have a few good pupils than a richly patronized monastery with many sham ones.

Dōgen left many writings and, like Eisai and Chinul, was critical of

the late Ch'an neglect of the *Sūtras*, seeing these as in accord with the direct mind-to-mind transmission of truth. He was himself widely read in Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna *Sūtras*, and felt that study was acceptable provided it was done to support practice, and not for its own sake: 'It is you who gets lost in the *Sūtras*, not the *Sūtras* that lead you astray.'

In his reading, Dōgen was deeply impressed by the personal example of the historical Buddha, whom he saw as having lived a simple ascetic life of constant exertion for the benefit of others. For Zen, Śākyamuni became less of a glorious heavenly being, and returned to being more of a human-like teacher and example. In line with this, both Ch'an and Zen have had a liking for the early *Aṅguttara* followers of the Buddha. For Dōgen, reading the *Sūtras* was seen as leading to faith in the Buddha and ultimate reality. Such faith was also roused by experience of impermanence and suffering – Dōgen's parents died when he was young – so that the *Dharma* was looked to as a way beyond these. Faith should lead to respect for any Buddhist object or practice, and should lead to trust in one's Zen teacher.

Dōgen advocated *zazen*, or 'sitting meditation', as a return to the true Buddhism of the Buddha, a natural and easy method open to all and encompassing all other practices. He criticized the Rinzai reliance on the *kōan* as one-sidedly mental, and stressed the importance of also training the body by correctly using the 'lotus' meditation posture of the Buddhas. *Zazen* is not seen as a 'method' to 'attain' enlightenment, but is itself enlightenment, a way of simply exhibiting one's innate Buddha-nature. Thus did Dōgen resolve the problem which set him on his spiritual quest. A person must sit in *zazen* with constant awareness, and with faith that he is already a Buddha. The process is one of self-forgetting in which the Buddha-nature gradually unfolds its infinite potential throughout one's life. As an aid to this, physical, mental, moral and intellectual discipline provides a fitting framework for a life of selfless action.

The Nichiren school

The Nichiren school is named after the monk Nichiren (1222–82). This fisherman's son aimed to reform Tendai by a single-minded advocacy of its chief scripture, the Lotus *Sūtra*, which he regarded as expressing the essence of Buddhism. He saw himself both as the successor to the founder of T'ien-t'ai, and as the incarnation of a *Bodhisattva* which the Lotus *Sūtra* said would protect its teachings in the *mappō* age. He was

probably influenced by a kind of Tendai meditation which involved worship and recitation of the Lotus *Sūtra*, and circumambulation of a copy of it.

In 1253, he started a campaign to convert Japan to faith in the Lotus *Sūtra*. He saw a number of natural calamities as a product of national degeneracy, and predicted the attempted Mongol invasion of 1274. He was a patriot who had a mission to save Japan, saying that it would prosper when it revered true Buddhism, and would be the source from which this spread to the whole world, bringing about a golden age. He advocated a 'self-power' method that was easy for all to practise. This was to chant the formula *Na-mu myō-hō ren-ge-kō*, 'Honour to the Lotus *Sūtra* of the True *Dharma*', and to contemplate a wooden plaque or scroll on which this invocation was written. This would activate the Buddha-nature, lead to the moral uplift of the individual and society, and to the attainment of Buddhahood. Nichiren castigated all other schools as wicked ruiners of the country, and said that the state should wipe them out. This was because they all neglected the Śākyamuni of the Lotus *Sūtra* in some way. The Pure Land schools worshipped the imaginary Amida, the Zen schools revered the earthly Śākyamuni, but not the heavenly one, and the Shingon worshipped Vairocana. If Shinran wondered if the *nembutsu* recitation would lead to hell, Nichiren was sure that it would! Such virulent denunciation is most uncharacteristic of Buddhism, and Nichiren cuts a figure more like an Old Testament prophet than a traditional Buddhist sage. His pronouncements meant that he was nearly executed, and was twice banished. He took all such sufferings in the spirit of a martyr, seeing them as the results of his karma and as helping to purify him. Moreover, his charismatic style of fierce evangelism and personal courage attracted many, who came to form the Nichiren school.

Later history

The Ashikaga period (1333–1573) was one of almost constant turmoil, with simultaneous rule by two emperors followed by rule by rival warring Shōguns. During this time, Rinzai Zen had great influence. Zen temples were havens of peace, culture, education and art, with Rinzai fostering developments in painting, calligraphy, sculpture, printing, gardening, architecture, literature, theatre and medicine.

In the Jōdo-shū, Ryōyō (1341–1420) developed the idea that the Pure

Land is in fact everywhere, and is to be entered by a changed attitude of mind during life, rather than at death. In the Jōdo-shin-shū, the 'second founder', Rennyo (1415-99), opposed a strand of thought which said that moral conduct was irrelevant to those with faith in Amida. He stressed that sincere faith implied a pure heart, and that a moral life expressed gratitude to Amida. He taught that other schools should not be criticized, but that Amida alone should be worshipped as the 'original Buddha' who includes all others. That is, Amida was the embodiment of the *Dharma*-body.

Jōdo-shin-shū became centred on fortified temples, with its armed followers acting to defend the faith. In the last century of the Ashikaga period, the sect organized and led peasant uprisings and became the ruling power in one region of Japan. Tendai and Shingon also maintained troops, some of them monks, and in the sixteenth century Nichiren Buddhists attacked the Shin- and Tendai headquarters. Such un-Buddhist behaviour can perhaps be seen as the product of violent times, where political power was up for grabs and ambition rose to the surface.

Two powerful Shōguns then put an end to military monasteries, leading up to the Tokugawa era (1603-1867), when the country was unified under a military dictatorship. During this time, Japan closed its doors to all but a few traders from the outside world. In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese had brought Christianity to Japan. Some rulers had favoured it as a foil to the power of Buddhist monasteries, and had propagated it with violence. Now, it was ruthlessly persecuted as being a possible conduit of foreign influence, and struggled on as the secret religion of a few.

In 1614, Buddhism was made the established Church and arm of the state, with all people having to register and periodically attend at their nearest temple. Buddhism was not short of financial support, but became too comfortable and moribund. The code of the influential samurai contained several un-Buddhist elements, such as the obligation to revenge and a disregard for life. An increasing secularism also developed as people moved to growing cities. Nevertheless, Buddhist scholarship continued, primary schools were run, and the Rinzai master Hakuin (1685-1768) revitalized the use of the *kōan* and gave many popular sermons. The Zen layman Bashō (1644-94) also popularized the seventeen-syllable *Haiku* poem as a religious art-form.

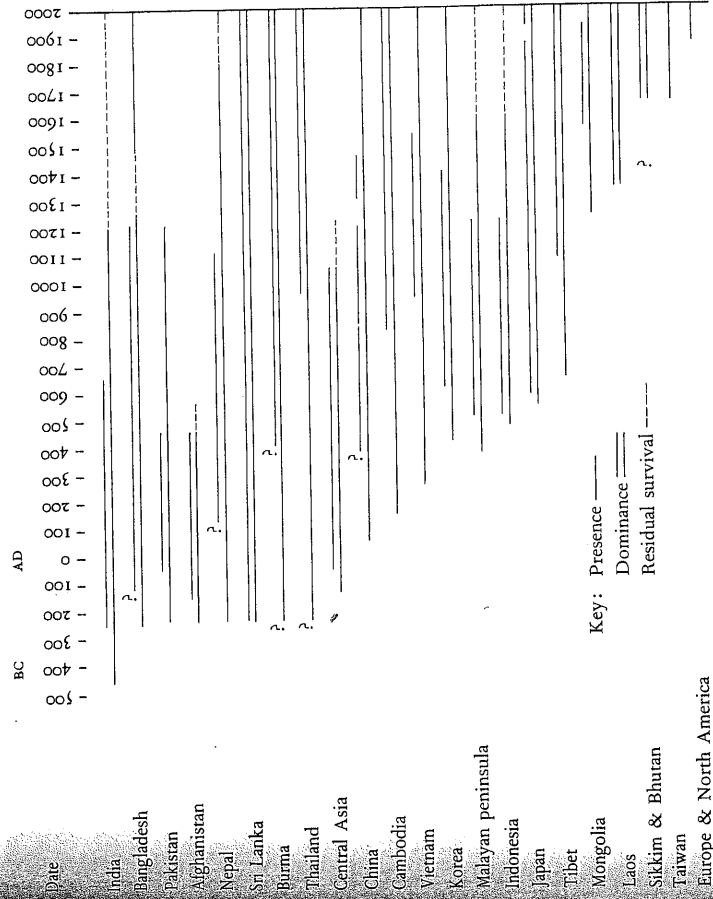


Figure 3 Chart showing the presence, dominance and residual survival of Buddhism in different lands.

Neo-Confucianism became increasingly influential as the state ideology, however, and from the eighteenth century a new form of Shintō began to be developed as the 'true religion' of the Japanese, a pure and spontaneous expression of religiosity unlike the 'artificialities' of foreign Buddhism and Confucianism. In 1868, this culminated in a *coup d'état* which ended the Tokugawa Shōgunate, who supported these foreign traditions. Power was restored to the emperor, seen as a *kami* who had descended from the sun goddess. Soon after, Japan opened its doors to Western influence.