

Brief history of Buddhism in Asia

From the insight enlightened wisdom, Buddha continuously passed his enlightened knowledge to others for 45 years according to Theravada legends, and 49 years with regards of Mahayana perspectives, the teachings of Buddha have been recorded and achieved in a variety of procedures, and these are precious guidance on training the body, speech and minds in harmony and compassionate ways. Bringing the peaceful contribution to society, Buddhism had spread around Asia before it gradually declined by a number of causes.

1. The biography of Siddhartha & the Emergence of Buddhism

Around 500 BC, Saddhartha left the royal life to seek for enlightenment, and, later on, he, somehow, has been considered as the founder of Buddhism.

The story about Buddha's birth is also very interesting and mysterious. It is similar to the story about Jesus of Christianity.. However, it is highly proven that he was born in a royal family, and the queen of Kathilavathu, namely Maya was his mother. Historically, Sudhodana was his father, the king of Kathilavathu which was the strongest country in the Middle of India at that time. Legend tells that his mother had a dream about a snow- color white elephant with six long tusks entering her right side. When she woke up, she was diagnosed with getting pregnant. This story seemingly has been acceptable by all surviving Buddhist schools for thousands of years without doubt. And then, nine months later, the queen Maya gave birth to a son, named Siddhartha. Siddhartha's mother is said to have passed away seven days after the birth and to have been reborn in heaven. Siddhartha was cared for by Mahapajapati Gotami, his mother's sister who also married his father.

Much evidence proved that the full-length biography of the life of Buddha was not written down until the first century BC by Ashvagosa, and it is not surprising that after 500 years legendary and mythological details find their way into the original story. Almost all stories about Buddha have been exaggerated by surviving Buddhist schools, but, in some Sutras in Aguttara, we still can see a Siddhartha as an ordinary person, but he had a strong will of living an unremarkable life.

Siddhartha was very special and unlike other children. He was very intelligent. He could remember all that he just read for only one time. But he was taking good care since when he was just born, a prophet asked his parents whether he might become a great monk or a great king. Of course, his father, Sudhodana did not want to let him become a monk; his father wished that he could become a great king. Therefore, Sudhodana ordered servants to oversee Siddhartha all the time. Besides, he was trying to keep Siddhartha living in the most comfortable condition.

Years after years, when Siddhartha was in the age of sixteen, he got married with Yasodhara who was the princess of his neighbor country, and who was the reward that he won in a competition. And then, Siddhartha lived a normal life as other mundane people. However, when his wife just gave birth to a son, named Rahula, Siddhartha had strong determination to leave his palace, and to become a monk after he saw four sights that changed his life: a tired, wrinkled old man; a man in terrible pain of illness; a corpse in funeral procession; and a religious man. Those sights made Siddhartha realize that the world is filled with suffering, and that all things, including himself, are subject to aging, disease and death.

From that initial enlightened thoughts, Siddhartha had build up unchangeable determination to get rid of those causes of suffering, and Siddhartha held a thought of becoming an ascetic monk. However, he had to postpone this plan, as his son had just was born and his wife was very weak; they all needed the concern of Siddhartha. After several months of mind- conflicted decision, he finally decided to leave the palace, and he made a plan for his decision.

One day, at the midnight, when everybody was falling in deep sleep, he stepped lightly into his room, glimpsing his beautiful wife and his new born son, and then he rode the horse to cross the river, Anoma, to leave the palace. He avoided waking his wife and looking at his son's face since it might weaken his resolve. Legend tells that the river was very large, but the horse, Kanthaka was very powerful at that night, with only a jump, crossing the river with Siddhartha on its back and Channa was holding its tail.

After crossing the river, Siddhartha was not alone in his quest. India society, during this period of its history, was deeply interested in the fundamental questions of existence. Therefore it was easy for Siddhartha to find some people who could guide him on his practice. According to the Mahayana system, at first Siddhartha spent five years wandering and learning with famous teachers, but before long, he overcame all of them. And he left them for six years of practice as an ascetic monk because he was not satisfied with his knowledge at that time. During six

years of practicing as an ascetic monk, he made friends with five other monks. They all were very diligent to practice; nevertheless, they could not achieve ultimate enlightenment. At last, Siddhartha decided that he was on the false path. He had to find out the middle way between extremes that he had known in life. He quitted the ascetic ordeals, and after washing himself under Nairanjana river, he put on new clothes and drank milk which two maidens gave him. The story continues to say that on drinking the milk, Siddhartha restored his former health immediately, displaying 32 marks and 80 minor sights of enlightenment.

One the same night after the day Siddhartha received milk from a maiden, he made a strong vow to practice under a Bodhi tree. *In Mahasaccaka Sutra*, Buddha mentioned that after drinking milk, he started to remember the peaceful moment of his mind when he was sitting under a tree when he was a child. He thought that it was the way to attain the peaceful state of the mind by skipping desire and thinking about bad actions. And then, Siddhartha sat under a tree in Bodhgaya and spent the whole night in meditation. He vowed to himself to make one last effort and that he would not move the spot until he had fulfilled his quest for enlightenment. During 49 days and nights of contemplation, he finally achieved ultimate enlightenment. But when Buddha Was going to just achieve his enlightenment, Mara appeared to persuade Buddha to give up his quest.

This Mara is the symbol of the difficulties every individual will encounter in the struggle toward enlightenment; it represents our fears, doubts, and the desire to return to the worldly pursuits and pleasures. But the Buddha took no notice of this display since Buddha, by his perfect wisdom, realized that all things are like magic illusions. Buddha had gained enough merit and self-control to overcome those temptations.

However, in the first days of fully enlightenment, Buddha was reluctant to help others to realize what he realized since he thought that what he realized is very profound and it is very difficult to be believed or understood. Therefore, he walked around to decide whether he would attain Nirvana without teaching others. And it is believed that Brahma Sahampati, the king of heaven, appeared in front of Buddha and requested him to teach what he realized to others. In *Ayacana Sutra* mentions that at first, Buddha refused him since Buddha said that what he realized is very profound, and it is uneasy for ordinary people to believe and practice. Finally Buddha accepted to teach others what he realized when Sahampati requested him to teach to those who lack mundane desire or who lack dust in their eyes.

To know who was lax of desire, Buddha used his meditative power to find out the people who deserve to receive his teaching first. At first he thought of his old meditation teachers who he considered that had come closest to the truth, but soon he discovered that they all died. His thoughts then turned to five of his ascetic friends. Buddha set out to Deer Park where the five ascetic monks were living. However, at first, they refused his teachings, and even though they did greet him. Later on, they were impressed by the wise words of Buddha, and then they realized that they were receiving the truth. Soon after that, they became the first five monks of Buddhist Sangha.

According to Mahayana, for the next 49 years, he spent nine months every year roaring the truth to others. He attained Mahaparinirvana at the age of 80 at Kusinara. After the funeral, his relics were separated into eight parts. And it is said that during his lifetime, thousands of people had achieved enlightenment by practicing his methods.

2. The first Council

After 3 months of Buddha's Maha-parinirvana, Venerable. Maha Kassapa held a council of 500 Arahats to recite Buddha's teachings. The council was organized in a cave in Rajagha, India. The purpose of this council was to avoid Buddha's teachings losing or changing their meanings.

It is said that Ananda was the monk who recited all the teachings of Buddha on how to practice, and how to behave peacefully in society; this discourse is called ‘’ Suttana pitaka’’ in Pali, and ‘’ Sutta pitaka’’ in Sankrit. Upali was the monk who recited the Vinaya discourse which was the Buddha's teachings on how to train the action of body, speech, and the mind by keeping precepts. No evidence surviving that can show how Buddha's teachings recited in this council, but the most reasonable theory has been noticed is that the council must have participation of all 500 Arahats, not only Venerable Ananda and venerable. Upali. Venerable Ananda and Venerable Upali must recite what they could remember, and after every Sutra, they would ask all other members to confirm whether their responses were the same as Buddha talked.

Moreover, in this council, people did not use any languages to write down Sutra and Vinaya Pitaka. Sutra and Vinaya Pitaka were recited by oral speech, and people, at that time, tried to remember all those teachings of Buddha by their memory. Of course, this is not a good way to archive teachings of Buddha. Many people were wondering why monks did not use any

language to write down Buddha's teachings while Sanskrit was the most popular language at that time.

3. The second Council

The second council took place around 100 years after Buddha's Mahanirvana. It was held at Vaisali, a modern India state of Bihar. On the purpose to tackle the ideological conflict inside Sangha, especially about minor rules in Vinaya, Venerable Yasa organized this second council with the patron of king Kalakosa, and 700 monks' participation.

Many modern scholars asserted that this problem in Vinaya was not resolved, and this result led to the separation of two schools, Mahayana and Theravada. But, undoubtedly, this is the wrong understanding about separation of Buddhists schools, and they might just read documents created by one school only. For example, about the rules that monks cannot go to get alms twice a day. Yes, at the Buddha time, there were also many cases in which monks still go to get alms twice.

To turn back the main point, in this second council, Vinaya and Sutta Pitaka still recited by oral speech, and people again did not use any language to archive Buddha's teaching. Moreover, in this council, there were no surviving Abhidharma Pitaka.

4. The third Council

Legend tells that King Asoka wanted to study Buddha's teaching, and he visited many temples to ask for Buddha's teachings. He soon realized that Buddha's teachings had changed gradually.

As a devout Buddhist, he thought that he should do something to preserve Buddha's teachings. Therefore, he gathered monks to recite Buddha's teachings. And this assembly is the third Buddhist council.

This third council took place around 300 years after Buddha's Mahanirvana, and it is measured around 250 BC. In this council, there were participation of 1000 thousand monks, and Ven. Moggaliputta Tissa was the leader. Again, in this council, the oral traditional method was still the only method for reciting Buddha's teachings. However, in this council, the first time, there was the appearance of Abhidharma Pitaka.

After the success of the assembly, king Asoka sent his missionaries to other countries to propagate Buddha's teachings. Some of them went to Srilanka; some went to China; some went to Funan; some others went to those countries in the Middle of Asia.

II. Buddhism is on its way to spread to other countries.

After the third council, Buddhism was transferred to other countries. And king Asoka was the person who had a great contribution to the propagation of Buddhism to other countries. Asoka sent missionaries to other countries to teach Buddha's teachings, and almost all missionaries completed their missions well.

1. Buddhism in Sri Lanka

After the third council, Ven. Mahinda who was the son of Emperor Asoka brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka. It is believed that, at first, three discourses of Buddhism were translated into local language to make it easy for people to understand Buddha's teachings. And of course, there were also many other monks . Mahinda to Sri Lanka since it is possible that Mahinda could remember all three discourses.

Before long, Buddhism had developed strongly in Sri Lanka with patronage of kings and loyal families. However, during that time, Buddha's teachings were transmitted to people by just oral speech. People who wanted to study Buddha's teachings had to study directly with a master or a person who could remember Buddha's teachings since they had no other choice.

Unfortunately, Buddhism in Sri Lanka declined in one period of its history. It happened when invaders attacked Sri Lanka in the mid- first AD, and they had destroyed many Buddhist temples, and had killed many monks. Almost all monks fled from Sri Lanka to India. But some elder monks feared that Buddhism might lose its existence in Sri Lanka; therefore, they got together to recite Buddha's teachings. Tipitakas first were written down by using a language at Aluvihare rock temple.

However, undoubtedly, Buddha's teachings were written down by the local language, Sinhala; it is proved in Buddhaghosuppati, '*because Buddha's teachings have been taught in Sinhala language, so it may make people in other countries unable to study Buddha's teachings. Fortunately, a monk who had supreme power know that in the future, there will be a great monk who will translate Buddha's teaching into Magadha language, and he will use Magadha to teach Dharma to others.*'

Buddhaghosa appeared as the great monk who translated almost all Buddha's teachings from Sihala into Magadha, and he was the person who composed many commentaries and all of those commentaries have become main discourses in Abhidharma Pitaka of Theravada tradition.

However, after that Buddhism in Sri Lanka developed in distinct ways. There were some Buddhists schools which had survived in Sri Lanka, including some branches of Mahayana and Varajana, Himayana, before invaders attacked and destroyed almost all Buddhism in Sri Lanka during the 17th century.

In the last decades of the 17th century and the early decades of 18th century, the King of Sri Lanka sent a delegation to Thailand to study Buddhism and asked for help from Thai monks. A short time after the delegation of Sri Lanka visited Thailand, Thai king sent a delegation of monks to Sri Lanka on November 1751; however, this was an unsuccessful trip since they met a storm in the gulf of Thailand, and finally their ship ran aground at Nakhon Si Thammarat. The mission was unable to continue, and had to return to Ayutthaya.

One year later, in 1752 AD, a Siamese mission undertook the second journey to Sri Lanka- this time they were on the Dutch ship. After six months, the ship reached Trincomalee Harbor. It is estimated that during three years of staying in Sri Lanka, Venerable. Upali Mahathera and other Thai monks gave higher ordination for 700 monks and 3000 novices.

2. Buddhism in China

Buddhism had existed in China for more than 2000 years before it was destroyed by communists during 20 century. Many history books prove that Buddhism first entered China around 67 AD, during the Han dynasty (206 BC- 220 AD). Dharmaraksa and Kasyapa Matanga were the first two monks who translated the first Sutra from Sanskrit into Chinese, and White horse temple which is located in Wu Dai mountain is the first temple which was built as the place for them to teach Buddha's teachings. However, during that time, Chinese Sangha had not been able to establish.

Moreover, Chinese Buddhism has two main periods. The first period is the period of the 1st century to the early 5th century. During this time, three discourses of Buddhism gradually translated into Chinese from Sanskrit by some great masters; for example, Parthamasiris, Lokalaraksa, Kumarajiva. In this period, monks who translated Sutras into Chinese from Sanskrit also were foreigners. And the second period was the time during the 5th century to the

9th century. During this period, many Chinese monks started to travel to India to study Buddhism, and when they came back, they translated all the rest of Buddha's teachings into Chinese.

And during those two periods, some popular Buddhist schools were established by basing on background of some Sutras; such as, Pure Land sect was established by basing it on Amitaba sutra; Xian shou was established by basing it in Avatamsaka sutra; Tien Tai sect was established by basing it on Lotus sutra; Vinaya sec was established by basing it on the Dharmagataka Vinaya.

Buddhism was adopted strongly by Chinese even though at first it was rejected by people who followed Taoism and Confucius. However, by unchangeable methods of teachings, Buddhist monks had made Buddha's teachings suitable for people to study and practice. And, finally Buddhism had become the national religion of China for many centuries before it was destroyed by communists during the 19th century.

4. Buddhism in the Middle East

It is believed that Buddhism had existed in the Middle East for many hundreds of years before Muslims spread this area. Many monuments and Buddha's statues as well as Bodhisattva's statues have survived in Afhganistan, Pakistan, Israel and Arabia, Iraq and Iran as well; for instance, the Buddha's statue which was carved on the mountain in Afghanistan, named Buddha of Bamiyan. In addition, recently, Venerable Nakaya Thera, in his research proved that in Arabia was the hometown of great Buddhist monk Punna Thera who was one disciple of Sakya Muni Buddha.

In Afghanistan, Buddhism had become the major religion of this country before pre-Islamic state. Scriptures carved on the stones prove that Buddhism arrived in Afghanistan around 305 BC after Afghanistan and India had an alliance. And, before long, Buddhism was adopted by many people all over the country; it forced Buddhism to be the national religion of Afghanistan during the Kushan Empire. Moreover, people used Greek language to write down Buddha's teachings in Afghanistan at that time, and Buddhist Architecture of Afghanistan was very special and popular (around 2 AD, Afghanistan sent 30,000 monks to Sri Lanka to instruct Sinhalese on how to build stupas and temples)

It is proved that Buddhism had been transmitted to **Pakistan** after the third Buddhist council and in the Maurya regime of King Asoka. Main school of Buddhism in Pakistan was Mahayana.

There is still much evidence about the strong development of Buddhism in Pakistan in the past; such as Buddha's statues, Guan Yin's statue, Pictures of Buddha and bodhisattvas still can be found in Takht-I Bahi of Grandhara and Swat valley.

3. History of Buddhism in Korea and Japan.

Buddhism arrived in Japan and Korea around the 6th century AD. For a short time after arrival, Buddhism had developed strongly and Buddha's teachings had become the standard structure of morality in those two countries. In the early 18th century, Japanese and Korean monks had become pioneers and had contributed to the development of Buddhism in the west lately. However, during 20 century, due to changes in the economic system as well as people's concepts, Japanese and Koreans just have focused on development of economy and education, and they have ignored Buddhism since they thought that Buddha's teachings are not suitable for the development of their countries. In addition, in the policy of helping Japan and Korea, many Christianity was brought to those two countries by traders and politicians. Consequently, Buddhism in Japan and Korea declined gradually, and now there is no Sangha community in those two countries. Although there are still many people who shave their heads and perform in monk's robes in almost all temples in Japan and Korea, they are not Buddhist monks at all.

Buddhism arrived in Japan around 538 AD when a ruler of Beakje, a region of Korean, presented a Buddha's image along with scripture-scrolls and ornaments to Japanese Emperor Kimmei. And, after that 40 years Shotoku the regent of Empress Kuiso declared Buddhism as the official religion of Japan. But, it had been very difficult for him to do so. Because, like Korean and Vietnam, Japan was influenced by Confucius, and Shinto which is the indigenous religion of Japan was also very popular. So, in order to carry out his plans, Prince Shotoku issued the 17 Article Constitution in 604, which emphasized Buddhist and Confucian principles. Article II of this injunction reads, "Fervently respect the Three Treasures." Prince Shotoku stressed that everyone should faithfully revere the Three Treasures (the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) as the supreme and unmistakable guidance.

He also ordered the government to build many Buddhist temples among which the most famous is Horyu-ji temple, the world's oldest wooden structure now standing near the former capital of Nara. It was because of his patronage and devotion that Buddhism was firmly established on Japanese soil.

Buddhism was introduced to Korean around 372 AD from China. At that time, Korean was separated into three parts, Koguryo, Beakje and Shilla. At first, Buddhism was adopted by people in Koguryo, and gradually Buddhism was adopted by people in Beakje and Shilla.

During the 6th century AD, some Korean monks went to India to study more about Buddhism, and, after a long time of study, they brought back the doctrine of Tien Tai, and all vinaya pitaka. After that, some Buddhist schools were established in Korea, such as Sammon or Madhymaka school; Gyeyu or vinaya school; Yeolban or nirvana school; and wongyuan or hua-yan school.

During the 13th -19th century AD, Buddhism in Korean changed its form gradually. Many scriptures were adopted from China, leading to the emergence of Zen school in the early 13 century. And in Zen Buddhism was separated into two small sects, Jodo and Nichiren school. This separation was due to the difference in methods of practice between those schools; for example, Jodo focused on concentration and mindfulness. Whereas, Nichiren focuses on Ko-an in which practitioners are forced to find out the reality of themselves as well as nature of phenomena by contemplating on doubted states or doubted questions. During the late 18th century and early 19th century, there was the appearance of a new Buddhist school in Korea, based on Buddhism. Buddhism is a combination of Jodo and Nichiren school. Practitioners of Won school can apply any methods to calm the mind and to achieve enlightenment.

5. Overview of History of Buddhism in Tibet and Bhutan.

Buddhism first entered Tibet from China and India during the 2nd century, but Buddhism was not noticed since almost Tibetan at that time had a strong belief in Bon. Until the 6th century, under the young warrior king Songsten Gampo, Buddhism was again introduced to Tibet by two wives of the king, one Chinese princess, and one Nepalese princess. Legends has it that the two foreign brides converted Gampo from the Bon's faith to Buddhism.

Gampo is said to have sent an intelligent young man, Thomni Sambhota, to India to collect Buddhist texts and invent a Tibetan system of writing. The form of writing that Samdhota produced was an incredible intellectual achievement. Within 20 of its invention, Samdhota's system had come into wide use in Tibet for documents and laws as well as for writing translations of Buddhist texts.

The next four generations of kings after Gampo dedicated themselves to wars of conquest, and during this time, King TRisong Deutsen invited some Indian and China masters to Tibet to teach Buddha's teachings. And Ven. Padmasambhava was one of those. Padmasambhava was

a Tantric master; he spent almost his life travelling around Tibet to teach Buddha's teachings and the methods on how to practice Tantra correctly. Legends tell that by the supreme power of Tantra, Ven. Padmasambhava won all Bon masters, in both logical argumentative talk and magic. Also, Padmasambhava is considered as the greatest master in Tibet because during his lifetime, he could help many Tibetans to change their wrong view, converting to be devout Buddhists.

However, When King Lang Darma reigned Tibet from 836- 842 AD, he set about extinguishing Buddhism and returning the nation to the religion of Bon. Lang Darma persecuted Buddhists, destroyed monasteries and scriptures. For monks, Lang Darma forced them to disrobe, sent them into exile, and moreover, he forced them to join the army.

During the 9th -10th century, Buddhism in Tibet had its revival. King Lama Yeshe sent many people to India to study Buddhism, and Yeshe also invited many masters from India to come to Tibet to propagate Buddhism. And there were two prominent figures who highly contributed to the renaissance of Buddhism in Tibet, Rinchen Zangpo and Atisha. It is believed that during this time, three discourses of Buddhism were fully translated into Tibetan from Sanskrit.

6. Overview of History of Buddhism in Vietnam.

Buddhism, is believed, entered Vietnam around the 3rd or 2nd BC by basing on the folktale which was composed around the 2nd BC. The folktale, named "Nhat Da Trach" describes how *Chu Dong Tu* studied Buddha's teachings with a Buddhist monk, named Phat Quang, who came from India. And the first doctrine of Buddhism entered Vietnam was of Sarvastivada which was one of seven Mahayana schools.

In the first century AD, Vietnam lost in the battle with Chinese army, and Vietnamese government was under the control of Chinese government until the fifth century. During this time, Vietnam was influenced by Chinese Buddhism. Moreover, during this time, Vietnamese also used the letters for writing as Chinese although in speaking, Vietnamese sound was rather different from Chinese sound. Therefore, it was very easy for Vietnamese to study Buddhism in Chinese language during that time. Vietnamese hadn't translated Buddha's teachings from Chinese into Vietnamese at all until the 18th century.

However, besides adopting Buddhism in China, Vietnamese also adopted Buddhism from other countries. For instance, in the early 6th century, Nghia Tinh, Tri Hanh and Giai Thoat Thien, came to India to study Buddhism; Jnanaphadra, Hue Diem, Moksadeva, Citradeva,

Mahayanapradipa and many other monks contributed to the development of Buddhism in Vietnam.

In the early 9th century, Vietnamese regained control of their country, and Dinh Tien Hoang became the first king of Vietnam after nearly 1000 years under control of China. A Buddhist monk, Khuong Viet became the leader of Vietnamese Sangha, and Buddhism was the national religion of Vietnam.

During the 10th -14th century, Buddhism in Vietnam developed abundantly and splendidly. Temples were built around the country, and almost all people did not only study, but also applied Buddha's teachings in their activities. In 'Vietnam su Luoc' a main history book of Vietnam mentions that during this period, Vietnam was a peaceful country. Every citizen of Vietnamese society was living in moral standing. They kept five precepts, no stealing, no killing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, and no using stimulants.

Unfortunately, in the early 14th century, Chinese invaders attacked Vietnam. For twenty years, 1407-1427 Chinese invaders destroyed almost all the scriptures, books, and Arts of Vietnam. Especially all great explanations of Vietnamese masters about Buddha's teachings had been relinquished in this period. Chinese wanted to destroy the civilization of Vietnam as the Chinese king said, "Destroy all what was written by any letters. Destroy all custom and tradition of Vietnamese."

III. Brief History of Buddhism in Funan (Cambodia, Lao, Thailand, and southern Vietnam).

Funan is written by basing on the Chinese word "Wunan" which was the name of the largest countries in the past in Southeast Asia. Its territory including Cambodia, Lao, Thailand, and Southern Vietnam was the country of many ethnic groups, such as Khmer, Mon, and Lao, but the main population was Funan people.

Many fossil stones which were found in Southern Vietnam, and Thailand proved that Mahayana Buddhism somehow entered Funan during the 1st century AD. There is no evidence about the official language of Funan country at that time, but historic evidence proved that Sanskrit was the official language of Funan since scientists unearthed many scriptures which were written down on the stones by Sanskrit.

However, Funan was weaker, and Khmers again took control of the country around the late 5th century, and almost all Funan royal families ran to the Philippines and Indonesia. During the 6

-7th century, Khmers ruled Funan in a different way from Funan people, and during that time, Hinduism was the official language of the country.

Lately in the 7th century AD, Chams attacked Funan, and Cham people took control of Funan after they won Khmers easily. And during nearly 100 years under control of Champa Emperior, Hinduism was strongly developed. Khmers were able to regain control of Funan in the late 8th century, but Funan was separated into many smaller parts. However, Khmer still could control the large territory of Funan, and “ Khmer country” became the name of territory that Khmer controlled.

It is believed that Buddhism again entered Funan around the 9th century, but Theravada stead of Mahayana. And Theravada Buddhism had become the official religion of during the 11-13th century, Thai and Laotian immigrants fought against Khmers, and they established their own countries by taking control of some parts of Funan. Interestingly, Both Thais and Laotians still had considered Theravada Buddhism as their official religion for many hundreds of years.

After the Second World War, Communism which was first established in Russia by Lenin and Stalin was popular and it effectively influenced the thinking of people around Asia. Under the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, many Buddhist temples were destroyed; monks were persecuted and forced to disrobe. After Khmer rouge was beaten by Hunshen with helping of Vietnamese army, Buddhism have been revived again In Cambodia by helping of Thai Sangha.

Like Cambodia, **Lao was a Buddhist country**. For many hundreds of years, Buddhism was considered as the official religion of Tibet. However, by the domino effect of communism, Buddhism was also destroyed by communists during the 20th century. From 1975-1979, Buddhist monks had to study Marxism and Leninism in their temples instead of studying Buddha’s teachings. However, by the early 1990, Buddhism in Lao was on the resurgence; the WATS still remained the focus on social life. Monks could accept morning offerings from the faithful lay Buddhists, and they also could freely teach Buddha’s teachings in institutes although the Sangha community was still under the control of government policy.

Thais have followed Buddhism for hundreds of years. At the first time of establishment of the country, Buddhism was considered as the official religion of Thailand. And, because Thailand was not influenced by the Second World War and communism’s impact as Cambodia, Lao, and Vietnam, Buddhism has strongly affected people of many backgrounds for generations.