



Religions and Cultures of East Asia

J. N. Hooker
Osher Course
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Outline

- China
 - Traditional practices
 - Daoism
 - Confucianism
- Buddhism
 - Mahayana
 - Theravada

Byodo-In
Buddhist
Temple,
Hawaii



China - Family

- Life is all about **family, family, family**.
- Respect for parents, grandparents, ancestors.
- Care for children.
- Source of security.



China - Family

- Everyone dotes on small children.
- But older children are strictly disciplined.
- May be different in “little emperor” families.



China - Family

- There is a hierarchy in the family
 - Grandfathers – 爺爺 (yé yé), 老爺 (lǎo yé)
 - Grandmothers – 奶奶 (nǎi nǎi), 姥姥 (lǎo lǎo)
 - Father, mother – 爸爸 (bà bà), 媽媽 (mā mā)
 - Older brother, sister – 哥哥 (gē gē), 姐姐 (jiě jie)
 - Younger brother, sister – 弟弟 (dì dì), 妹妹 (mèi mèi)



China - Family

- Taiwan (as well as Korea) is famous for cram schools.
- Children attend until late at night.
- Their success provides security and honor for the family.



China - Family

- Honor ancestors at New Year's (Spring Festival).
- Incense is for ancestors and good luck.



China - Family

- Burn fake money for ancestors.
- May also burn cell phones, etc.



China - Family

- Chinese prefer long-range planning, to take care of future generations.
- They save their money.
- This is why we are in debt to them.



China - Superstition

- Avoid clocks, knives, or flowers as gifts (watch is OK).
- Don't give four of anything.
- Don't put chopsticks upright in rice bowl.



China - Superstition

- Buildings follow principles of *fēng shuǐ*.
 - For example, *baqua* mirrors.



Hong Kong
University of
Science and
Technology

Superstition



- Lucky (or unlucky) numbers
 - 8 = wealth, 9 = longevity, 4 = death
 - Good sequences: 168, 289, 518



Jinmao
Tower,
Shanghai
88 floors



China - Superstition

Elevator
in China



China - Superstition



Incense coils in Buddhist temple

China - Superstition



Fortune sticks in Buddhist temple
Draw one at random.
The stick costs more if the fortune is good.

Daoism

- ◆ Dào = the way, path
- Founded(?) by Lǎozì, author of *Dǎodéjīng*.
- Yīn/yáng
 - **Not** good vs. evil – Universe is good.
 - Dark/light, female/male, cold/hot, etc.
 - Interaction of forces. Nothing is 100%.



Yin/yang symbol

Daoism

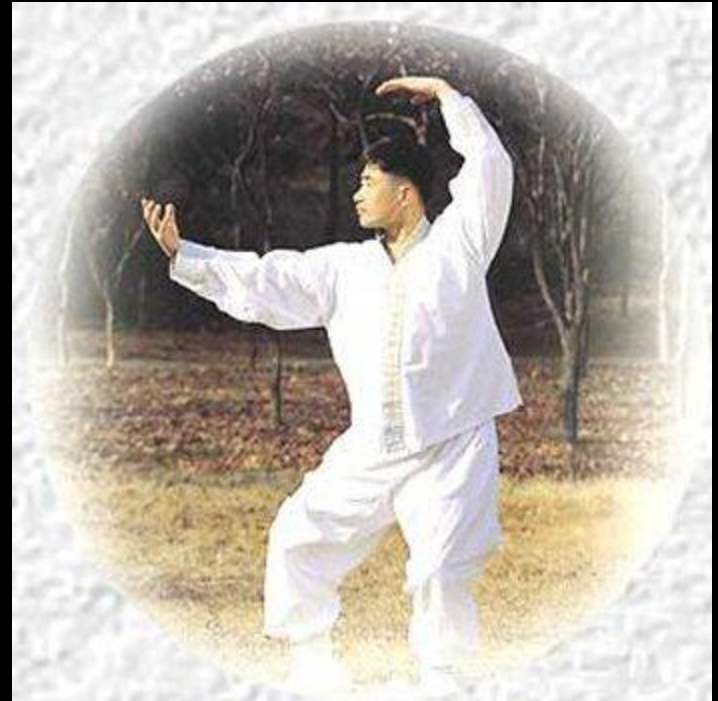
- Wúwéi
 - Go with the flow.
 - Harness natural forces.
- Folk religion
 - Large pantheon.



Religious parade,
Taiwan

Health

- ◆ Exercise regimens
 - Chi gong (*qìgōng*)
 - Tai chi, or tai chi chuan (*tàijíquán*)





Health

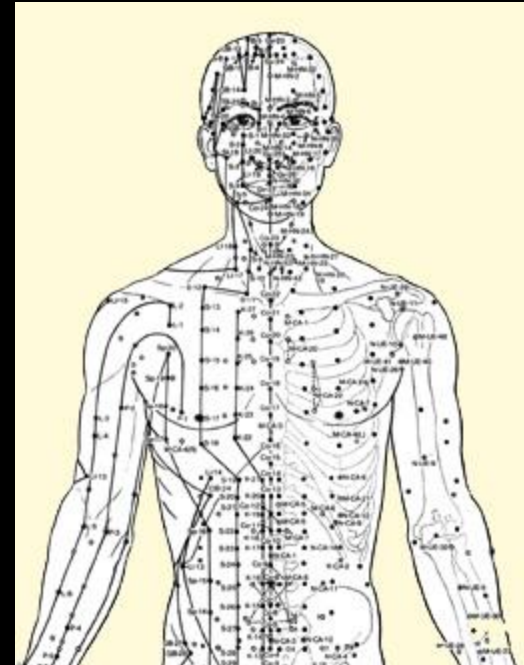
- ◆ Regimens develop a sense of equanimity, balance.



Morning tai chi chuan in park

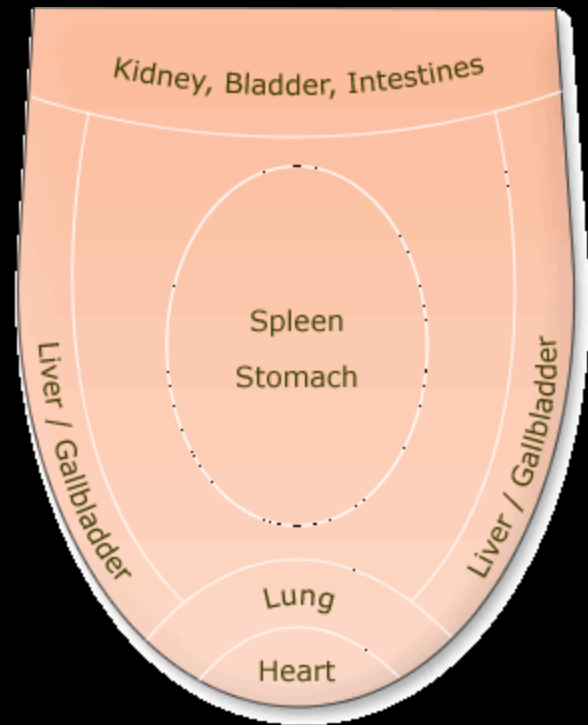
Health

- ◆ Acupuncture
 - Redirects *qi* along 365 meridians.



Health

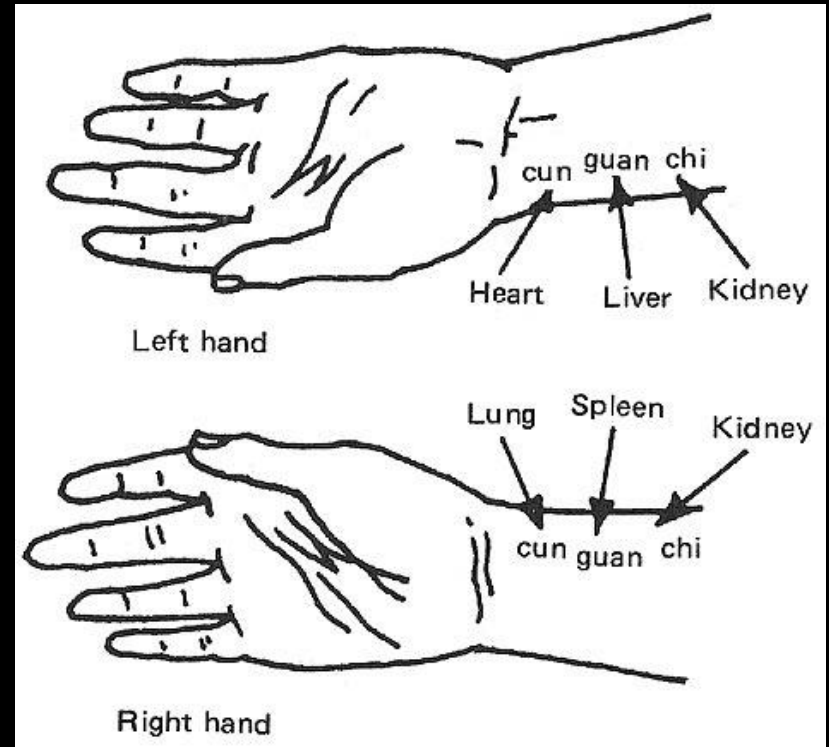
- ◆ Tongue diagnosis.
 - Some meridians reach the tongue.
 - Indications: color, shape, features, moisture, coating, coat thickness, cracks, coat adhesion



Health

◆ Pulse diagnosis

- Scattered, intermittent, swift, hollow, faint, surging, hidden, knotted, hurried, long, short, fine, hesitant, slippery, relaxed, moderate, tense, stringy, replete, weak, soggy, feeble, rapid, slow, sinking, floating





Ethics

- China & the West have developed complementary moral sensibilities.
 - Westerners are concerned with universal rules and justice.
 - Chinese are concerned about the feelings of the people in the room.



Ethics

- China & the West have developed complementary moral sensibilities.
 - Westerners are concerned with universal rules and justice.
 - Chinese are concerned about the feelings of the people in the room.
 - Westerners worry about the plight of people on the other side of the globe.
 - Chinese are bound by duties to family and associates.



Ethics

- ◆ Why?

- Egalitarian Western cultures must convince people to obey the rules.
 - The rules must be seen as based on universal principles of reason and fairness.



Ethics

◆ Why?

- Egalitarian Western cultures must convince people to obey the rules.
 - The rules must be seen as based on universal principles of reason and fairness.
- Authoritarian Confucian cultures regulate behavior through relationships.

Ethics

- Westerners can speak frankly and directly.
 - Differences can be ironed out by appeal to principles of reason and fairness (if all goes well).
 - More important to be **right** than **nice**.



Ethics

- In China, there is no such appeal.
 - One must take care not to give offense in the first place.
 - Relate to **associates** with courtesy, humility and care to save face.
 - More important to be **nice** than **right**.



Confucius

- Kǒng Zǐ (Confucius).
 - One of the most influential persons in world history.
 - Viewed himself a failure in life.
 - Articulated essence of Chinese culture



Confucius

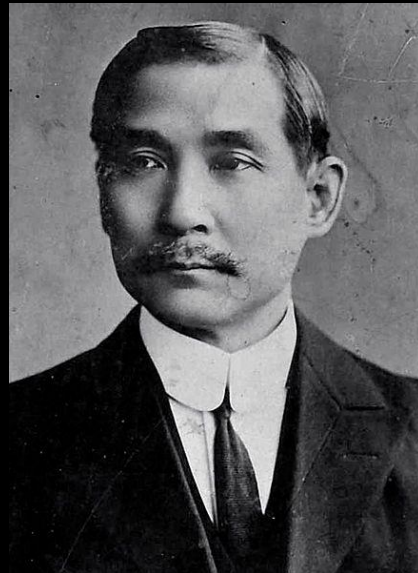
- Society is based on **respect** for elders, husband, superiors.
- They have correlative **obligations**.
- Most effective leadership quality is good character.



Site of Confucius' home in Qufu

Confucius

- Ideal leaders...
 - Duke of Zhou
 - Sun Yat-sen (Yixian)
 - Deng Xiaoping



Confucius

- Chinese protest when the government does not take care of them.
 - Historically, government must have "Mandate of Heaven."



Police break up protest against lack of government response to earthquake, Dujiangyan, Sichuan Province, 3 June 2008

Confucius

- When there is no relevant common authority...
 - Interpersonal behavior between associates is regulated by *guānxi*.



Confucius

- These conventions do not apply to relations between strangers.
 - Rude behavior, shoving, and shouting may be experienced in public.
 - Yet the crime rate is very low.



Confucius

- Key insight – Meaning in **ritual**
 - Ritual **connects** everyday life with the sacred.
 - Acknowledges the sacred in others.



Asian business card ritual

Confucius

- Family values
 - Sexually conservative
 - Except perhaps in Westernized settings.
 - Touching is inappropriate
 - But not Puritanical.



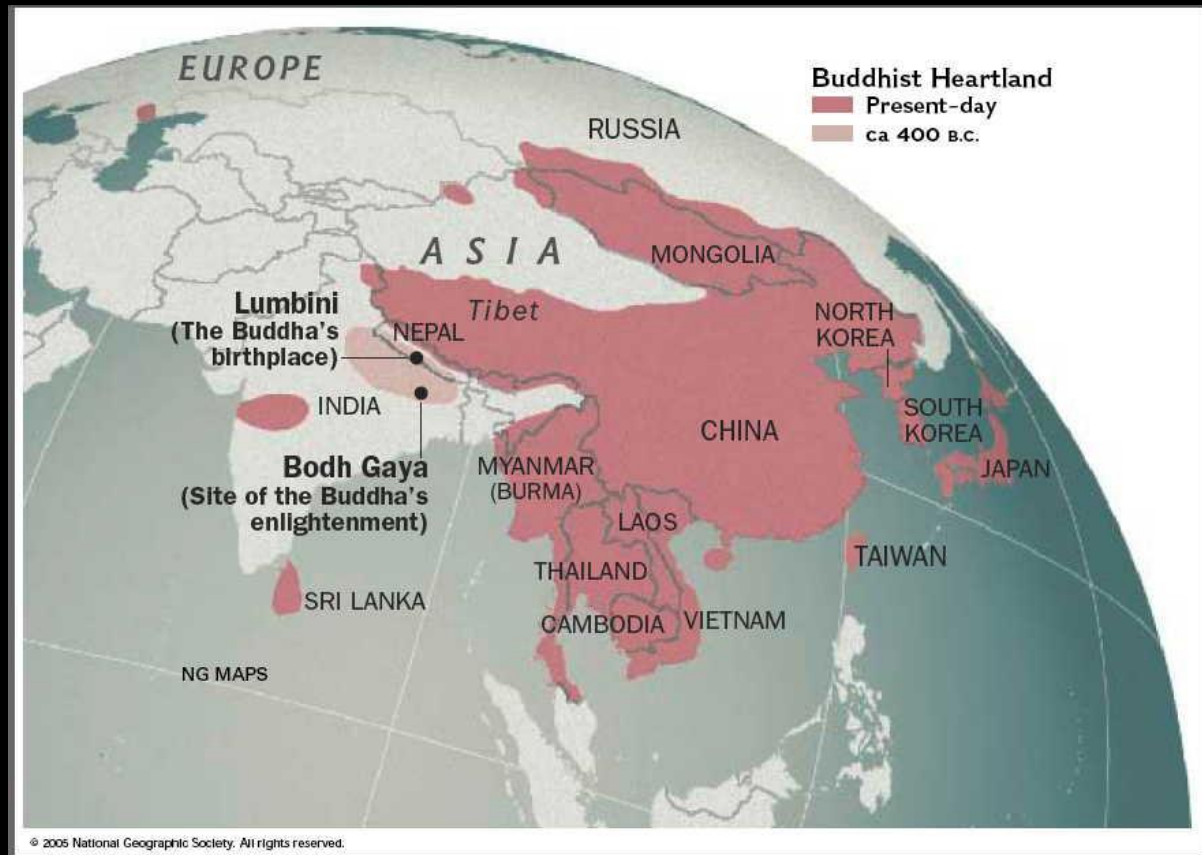
Confucius

- However
 - ...“Cool” 20-somethings.
 - Huge new market.



Buddhism

- Primary religion of Asia



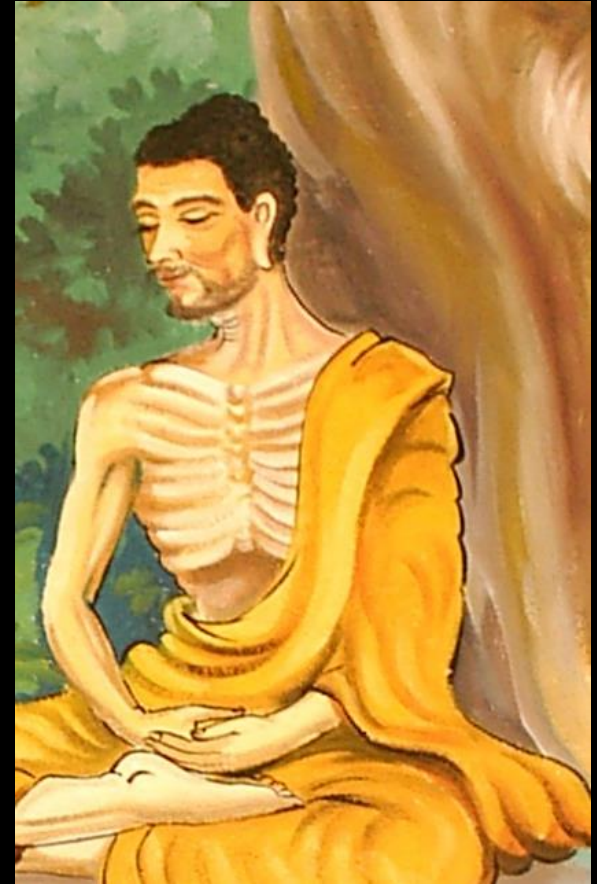
Buddhism

- Founded by Siddhartha Gautama
 - About 560-480 bce.
 - Privileged youth.
 - Existential crisis at age 29.
 - Sought answers from yogis, without success.



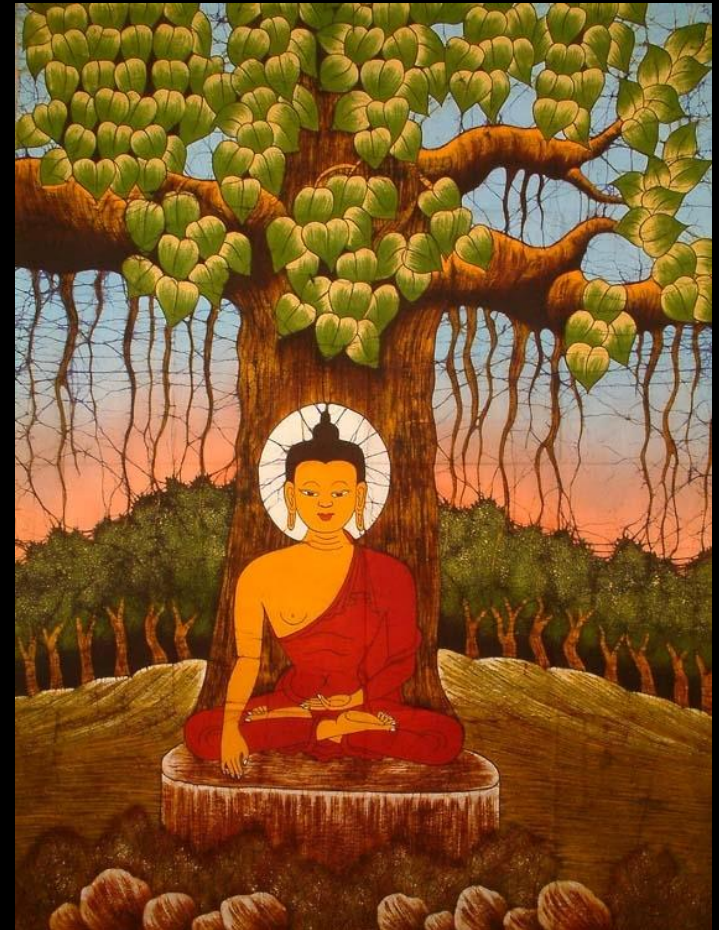
Buddhism

- Tried extreme asceticism.
 - Became a *sadhu* of sorts.
- Again without success.
- Sought a “middle way”
 - Between self-indulgence and asceticism.



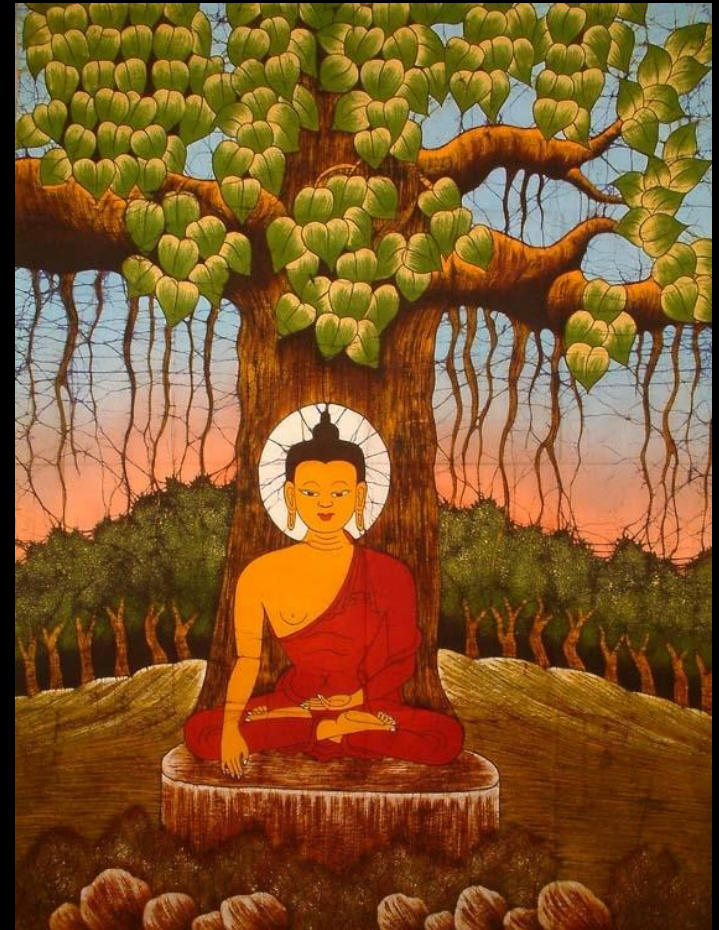
Buddhism

- Resolved to sit under a banyan tree until he found a solution.
 - He sat there 49 days.



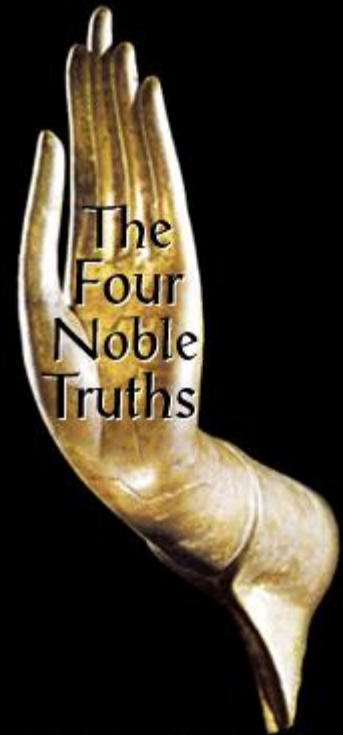
Buddhism

- Resolved to sit under a banyan tree until he found a solution.
 - He sat there 49 days.
- Then it came to him.
- He “woke up” and became the Buddha
 - “awakened one.”



Buddhism

- Arrived at four noble truths:
 - Life is all about suffering.
 - Desire causes suffering.
 - The cure is to get rid of desire (craving).
 - To do this, follow the **eightfold path**.



BuddhaNet Production

Buddhism

- Wean oneself from self-centered thinking and habits.
 - Detach oneself from everyday feelings and desires.
 - Through meditation and developing new patterns of thought and action.
 - Some parallels with psychology of moral development.

The Eight-Fold Path



Buddhism

- Why so gloomy?
 - The job of religion is to deal with the serious stuff in life.
- Buddha's basic insight:
 - The human mind is very trainable.
 - Even to the point of addressing our basic existential predicament.



Buddhism

- More therapy than religion?
 - Gods and ritual have no role in the Buddha's teaching.
 - Bypasses philosophical questions.
 - Explanation is part of religion.
 - Modern in tone - similar to our self-help approach.



Buddhism

- Initial boost from emperor Asoka
 - Ruled India 269-232 bce.
 - Converted to Buddhism.
 - After seeing battle carnage.
 - Sent missionaries to southeast and central Asia.



Buddhism

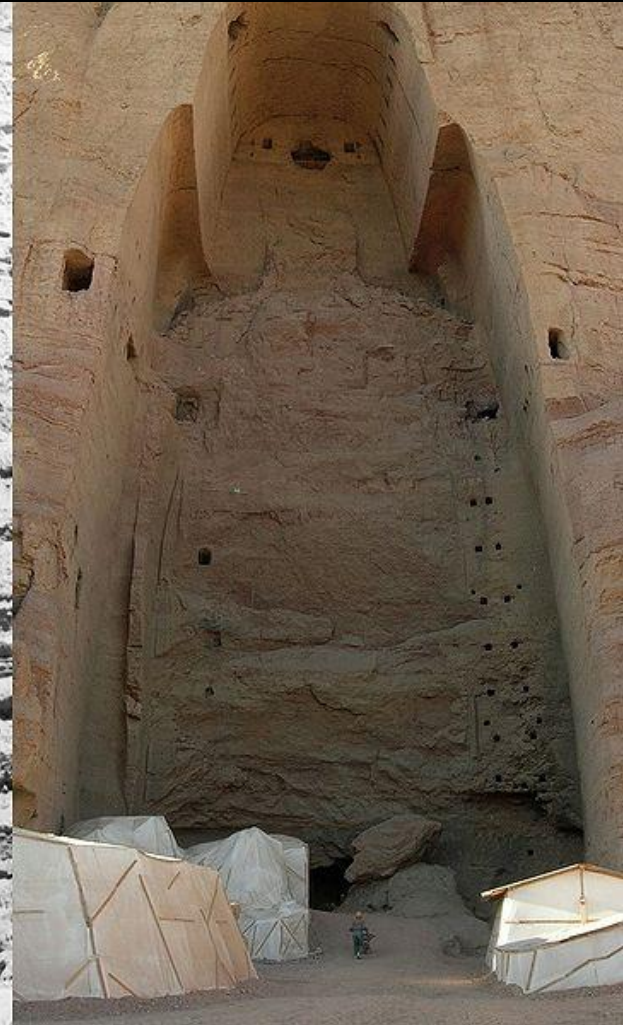
- Parallel with Christianity and emperor Constantine.
 - Distilled universalizable elements from ethnic religion.
 - Imperial sanction.



Buddhism

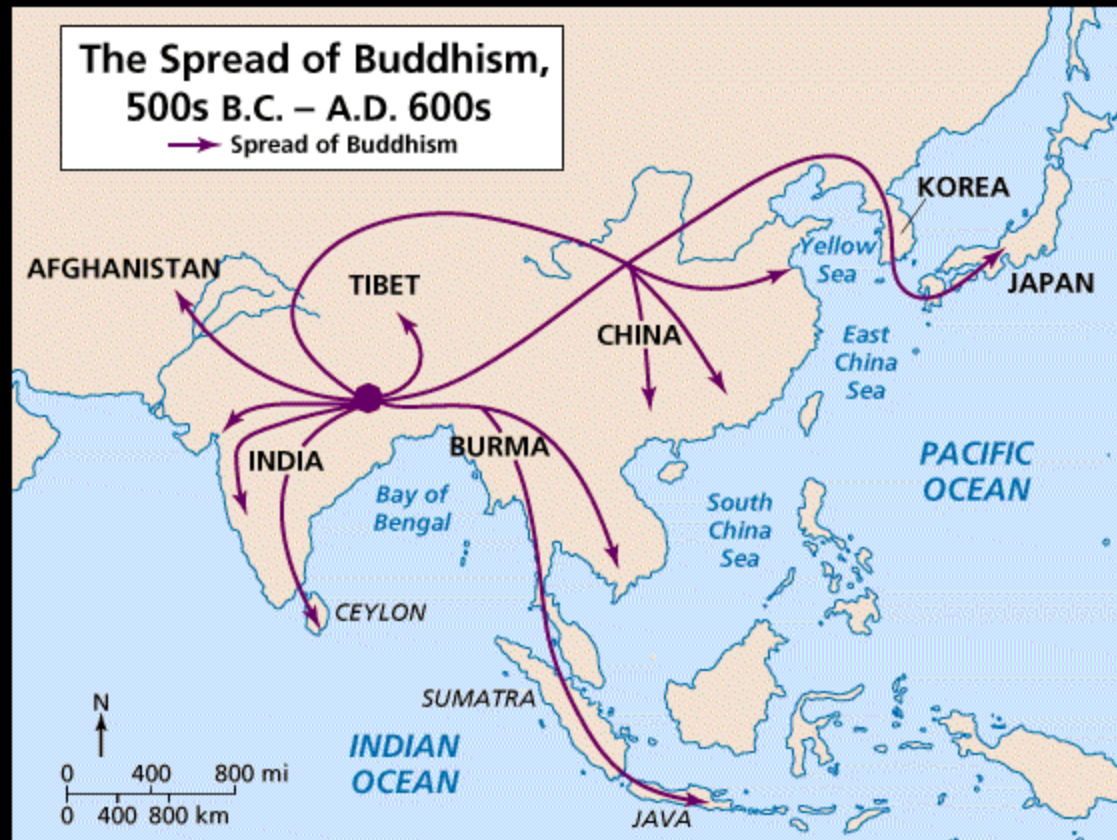
- Buddha images emerged 300-400 ce in Afghanistan

- Avatar of Vishnu.



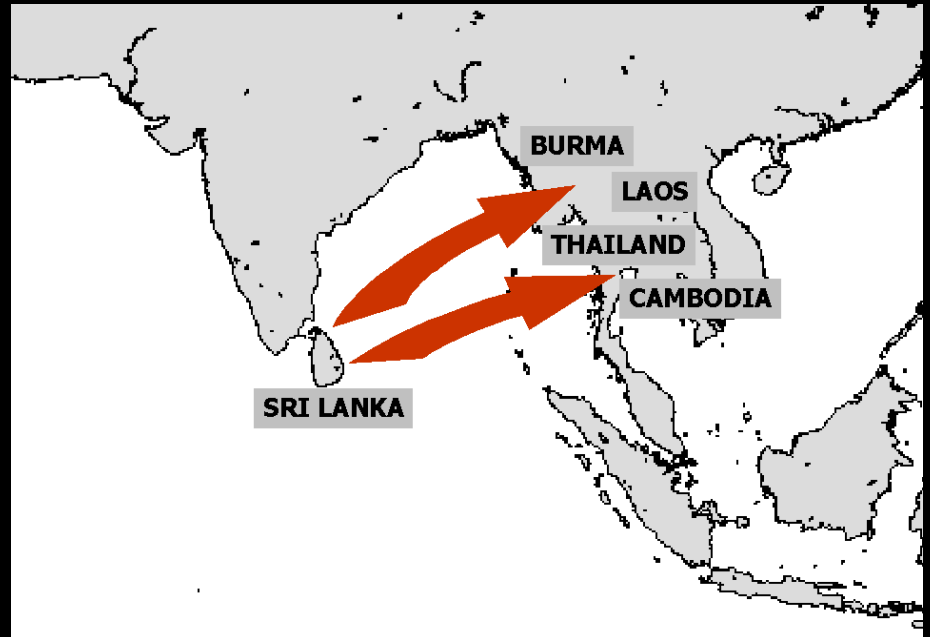
Buddha of Bamiyan, Afghanistan
Before and after destruction by Taliban in 2001.

Buddhism



Theravada Buddhism

- Southeast Asia.
 - “Way of the elders.”
 - Oldest surviving form of Buddhism.



Theravada Buddhism

- Many males in SE Asia become monks temporarily.



Pagoda and monastery,
Old Bagan,
Myanmar
(Burma)

Pagoda = *stupa* = site for Buddhist reliquary

Theravada Buddhism

- Thailand:
 - All males expected to enter monastery, perhaps only 3 months.
 - Often between school and marriage.
 - Makes them more eligible bachelors.
 - Women say they are “cooked.”





Theravada Buddhism

- Monastic life
 - About 200,000 monks & 85,000 novices at any one time in Thailand.
 - Novice can become a monk at age 20.
 - Can remain a monk any length of time, even 1 day. 3 months is more common.
 - Typically enter monastery after graduation from school.
 - 29,000 temple monasteries in Thailand.

Theravada Buddhism

- Boys may enter monastery.
 - Bestows honor on the family.
 - Free education.





Theravada Buddhism

- Day in the life of a monk
 - 4 am – *Meditate.*
 - 5 am – *Chant.*
 - 6 am – *Walk barefoot on streets, receive food offerings.*
 - 8 am – *Breakfast in monastery, blessing for world peace.*
 - 9 am – *Chores.*
 - Noon – *Last meal of the day.*

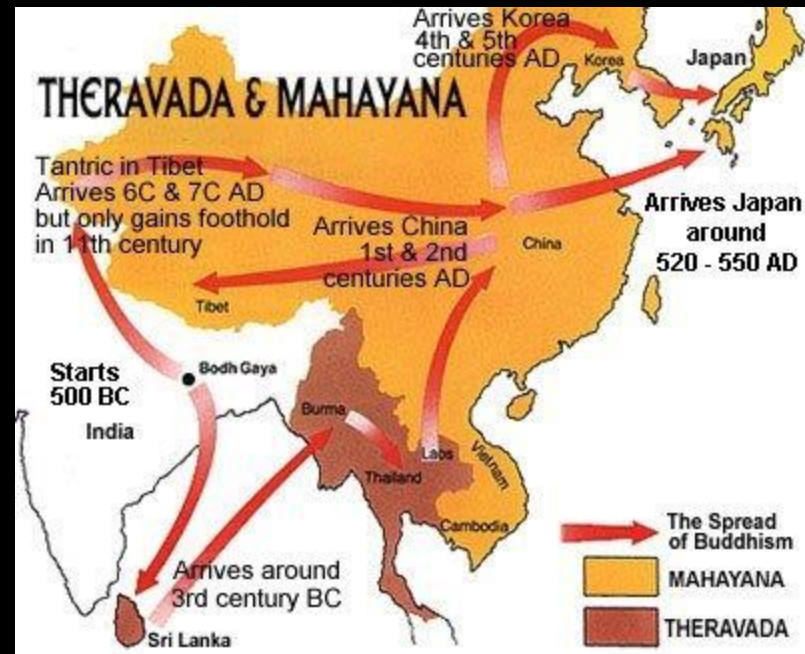
Theravada Buddhism

- Day in the life of a monk
 - 1 pm – *Classes in Buddhist teaching.*
 - 6 pm – *Meditation and prayer.*
 - 8 pm –
Homework.
 - 9 pm –
Bedtime.
- Here,
monasticism
is a rite of
passage.



Mahayana Buddhism

- Mahayana = large boat.
- Dominant in China, Japan, Vietnam.
 - Buddha treated as a divine figure, source of protection.



Mahayana Buddhism

- Chinese have less interest in the gloomy side of Buddhism.



Laughing Buddha, Tanzhe Temple, Beijing
These can be found all over China

Mahayana Buddhism



World's largest Buddha, Leshan

Mahayana Buddhism



Buddhist monastery, Emei Shan

Mahayana Buddhism



Buddhist funeral altar

Mahayana Buddhism



Incense sticks in Buddhist temple

Mahayana Buddhism



Fruit, flower, and incense offerings
in Buddhist temples

Mahayana Buddhism



Street shrine
Hong Kong



Shop shrine
Hong Kong

Tibetan Buddhism

- Youngest branch of Buddhism.
 - Came to Tibet 700-800 ce.
 - Combines Buddha's teaching with Tantric practices from India.

Tibetan prayer
wheel.
Contains many
copies of the
mantra *Om
Mani Padme
Hum*



Buddha's finger

- ◆ Prior to 874 ce, Buddha's middle finger was kept in a pagoda at Famen Temple, Shaanxi Province, China.
 - It was featured in an annual parade.
 - This was discontinued during suppression of Buddhism in China.
 - The finger was lost to history.



Buddha's finger

- The pagoda partially collapsed after a flood in 1981.
 - In 1987, excavations recovered the finger in an underground crypt.
 - It was inside the innermost of 8 nested boxes.



Buddha's finger

- ◆ The finger was taken on tour in Asia.



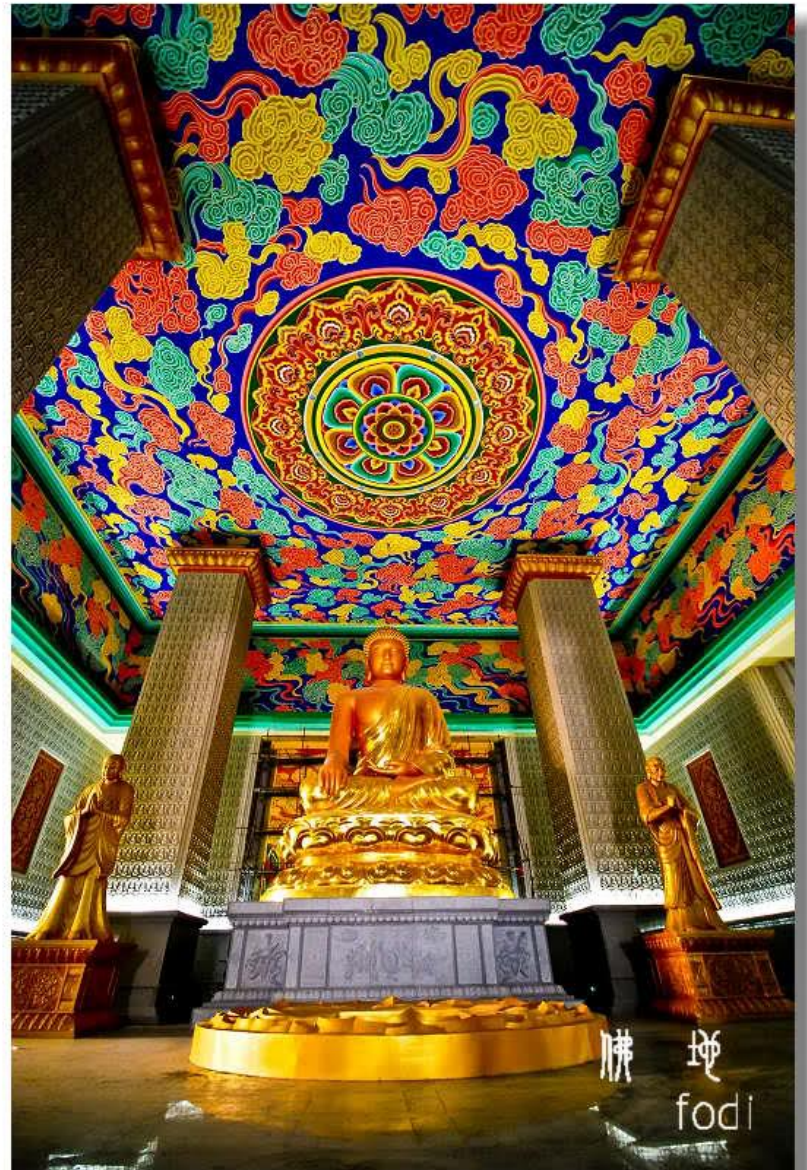
Buddha's finger

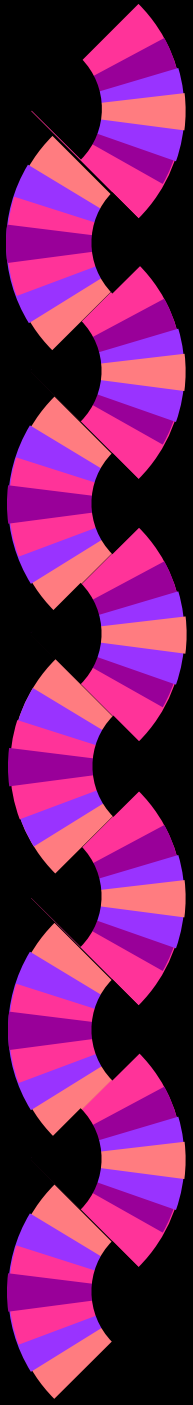


World's tallest pagoda at Famen,
constructed to house Buddha's finger

Buddha's finger

- ◆ Inside the pagoda.



- 
- ◆ Questions?
 - ◆ Comments?



Temple of Dawn, Bangkok