

## 1 □ Theravāda Buddhism

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## 2 □ Schools of Buddhism Overview

- ▀ Goals
  - ▀ Review of three main “schools” of Buddhism—Distinctive features, historical development, and practices
  - ▀ Appreciate development and evolution of Buddhism as a world religion
- ▀ Schools
  - ▀ *Theravāda*: Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Laos, Cambodia
  - ▀ *Mahāyāna*: China, Korea, Japan
  - ▀ *Vajrayāna*: Tibet, Mongolia, Japan
  - ▀ *American Buddhism*: Analogous to Chinese or Japanese Buddhism

## 3 □ Theravada Overview

- ▀ “Way of the Elders” (Skt. Sthaviravāda; Pali. Theravāda)
  - ▀ Surviving member of Eighteen Schools of early Buddhism
  - ▀ Dominant form in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia
  - ▀ According to tradition, the “original” Buddhism
  - ▀ Monastic ordination lineage (vs. sectarian denomination based on doctrinal “beliefs”)
  - ▀ Ortho-praxis vs. Orthodoxy

## 4 □ Theravāda—Origins and Early Development

- ▀ 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE schisms: Sthaviras (“elders”) vs. Mahāsāṃghikas (“great assembly”)
  - ▀ Conservative vs. populist
  - ▀ Doctrine, practice (*vinaya*), communal structure
  - ▀ Enlightened status of an *arahant*
  - ▀ Buddha’s status
- ▀ Transmission to Sri Lanka (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE)
- ▀ Late 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, orally transmitted Pali Canon put into writing
  - ▀ Tipitaka/Tripitika (“three baskets”)
  - ▀ Sutta, Vinaya, Abhidhamma (“Higher Teaching”)
- ▀ Established tradition in Burma and Thailand by 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> centuries
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## 5 □ Theravāda—Origins and Early Development

- ▀ Buddhaghosa (5<sup>th</sup> century) authoritative arbiter of Theravāda orthodoxy (think Augustine or Thomas Aquinas in Catholic tradition)
- ▀ Buddhaghosa authored the *Visuddhimagga*, a systematic compilation of earlier commentaries...but also elaborations
- ▀ E.g., *metta* practice
- ▀ Kingship becomes gradually more exalted; portrayed as a *bodhisattva* (future Buddha)
- ▀ Order of nuns dies out in Sri Lanka (11<sup>th</sup> century) and Burma (13<sup>th</sup> century)
  - ▀ Revival efforts: Sri Lanka (1996), Thailand (2002), Australia (2009), USA (2010)
- ▀ 14<sup>th</sup> century CE—preeminent form among Khmer (Cambodia) and Laos
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6  **Theravāda—Origins and Early Development**7  **Theravāda—Key Features**

- ▀ Centrality of the monastic order—preserves distinction between monastics & laity
- ▀ Devotion to Pali Canon (rejects authenticity of Mahāyāna sutras)
- ▀ Ordination tradition based on *Vinaya Pitaka* (code of monastic conduct)
- ▀ Symbiotic relationship between monastics & lay community
- ▀ Aim to attain the status of the *arahant* (Skt. *Arhat*)
- ▀ Historical distinction between urban and rural monastics
- ▀ Urban more text based; rural more meditation oriented
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8  **The Long Search: Forest Monks (Sri Lanka)**9  **Theravāda—Other Features**

- ▀ Other Features
  - ▀ Devotion to relics of the Buddha (e.g., tooth and alms bowl)
  - ▀ Pilgrimage to sacred stupas (reliquaries)
  - ▀ Annual festival of Wesak (April/May) celebrating Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death
  - ▀ Monastic ideal (preservers & communicators of Dharma)—ordination commitment varies by country
  - ▀ Syncretism with local gods
  - ▀ Proximate goals of practice
    - ▀ Nibbanic—realization of Nirvana
    - ▀ Kammatic—merit making for a better rebirth
    - ▀ Apotropaic—protection from evil spirits (amulets, talismans, recitation mantras)
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10 11  **Monastic life: Ordination & Meditation**12 13 14 15 16 17  **Buddha Day (Viśākhā) Festival**18  **Great Stupa at Sanchi**19  **Great Stupa at Sanchi**20  **Great Stūpa at Sarnath**21  **Worship at a Stūpa**22

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