

THE WORLD OF BUDDHISM

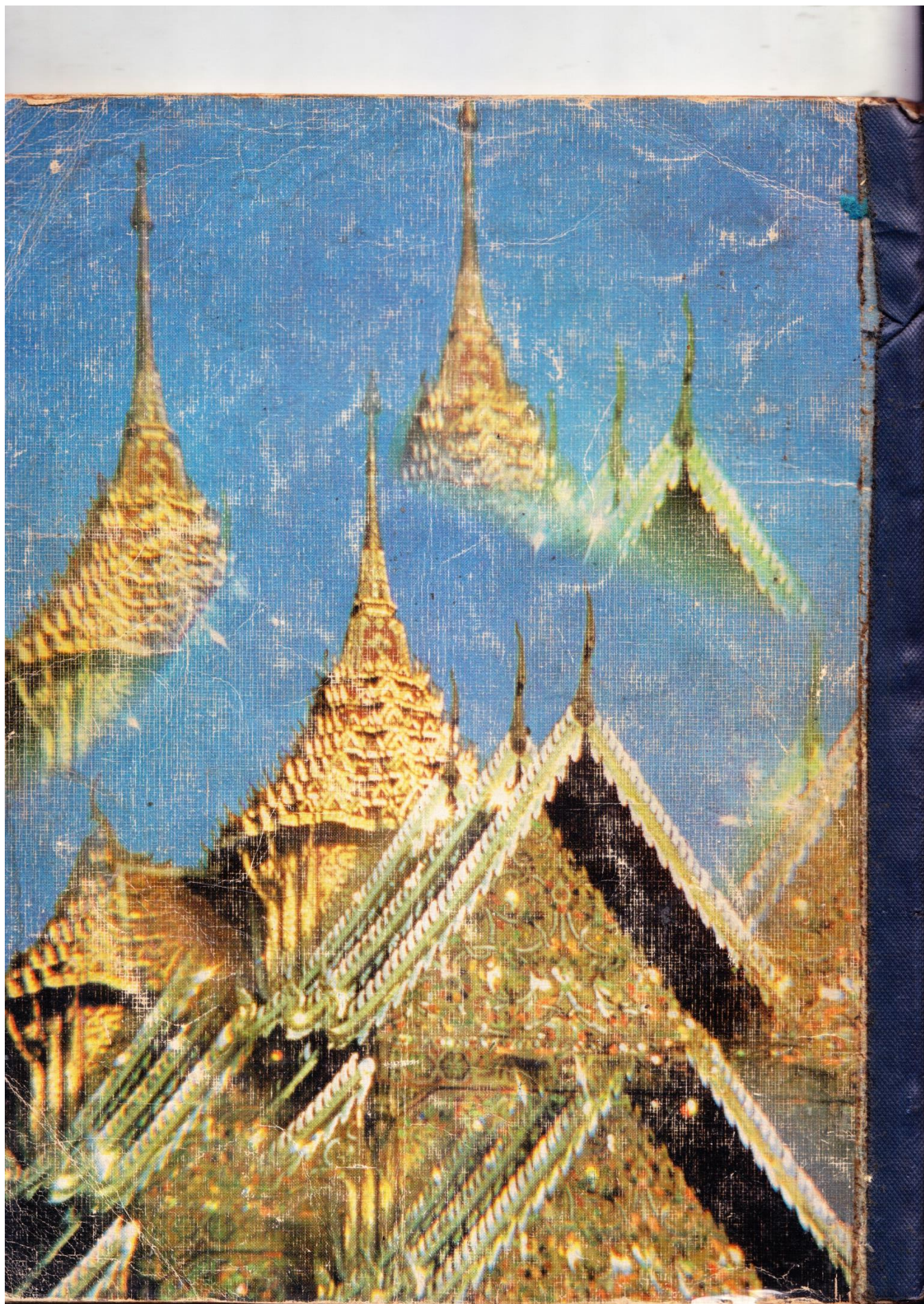
A Pictorial Presentation

by

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Dear friends in the Dharma, I thank you one and all from the bottom of my heart.

John Blofeld
New Year's Day, 1980

Preface

by H.S.H. PRINCESS POON PISMAI DISKUL,
President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists

I have great pleasure in introducing to the public a work which illustrates pictorially some of the splendid achievements of Buddhism, both past and present. Compiled by John Blofeld, whose works on Buddhism and Oriental traditions generally are sufficiently well known for him to need no introduction, *The World of Buddhism* consists mainly of pictures. In one sense, these illustrations are very far from comprehensive, for the riches of Buddhism are so vast that many large volumes would be needed to do justice to the subject; and, inevitably, great numbers of world-renowned temples and statues, etc., have had to be omitted from a work of such small compass as this one; moreover, the aim has not been necessarily to show the best, but rather a *representative* variety of Buddhist edifices, artifacts and activities. Nevertheless, in another sense, an enormously wide field has been covered in a way that, to my knowledge, has never been attempted before; the scope includes:—

1. time — Buddhist art and architecture from surviving remnants of their earliest beginnings up to the present day;
2. space — visual manifestations of the beneficent spirit of Buddhism in a huge region stretching from what is now Afghanistan in the west to Japan in the east and from Mongolia in the north to Indonesia in the south;
3. depth — besides temples and artifacts, the contemporary activities of monks and laymen in different countries are pictured in such a way as to indicate vividly that Buddhism remains a vibrantly active force in our 20th century world.

• The brief explanatory text at the beginning covers the growth (and, in some countries, decline) of Buddhism from the beginning until today. We can see at a glance what countries have, at one time or another in the past, been Buddhist; what countries have cherished Buddhism down through the ages; and what countries have, within recent years, witnessed the transplantation of some precious seeds of the Buddha Dhamma to their soil. The author rightly emphasizes that, despite diversity at the surface level, The undying Truths of the Dhamma lie at the root of all Buddhist manifestations everywhere; and that, the deeper one penetrates, the more one becomes assured of an underlying unity. Finally, he pays just tribute to the World Fellowship of Buddhists as a living symbol of that unity.

I have no hesitation in recommending this book to all who are proud of being followers of a great world-tradition and to all those others who desire to become better acquainted with a faith remarkable for wisdom, compassion and loftiness of spirit.

Introduction

The Buddhist era dates from a momentous episode which occurred some two thousand five hundred years ago in one of the kingdoms of northern India close to the boundary of Nepal. After a long and arduous search for a key to the mysteries of life and death the thirty-year-old Sakya Prince, Gautama, having seated himself beneath a Bodhi tree and vowing to die there unless success attended this final effort, achieved the supreme mystical experience known as Enlightenment or Liberation. Thenceforth he devoted his life to proclaiming the Dharma or Universal Law for the conquest of life's ills and achievement of the blissful spiritual state known as Nirvana. Today his followers comprise some 300 million people; they honour him as Sakyamuni, Buddha, Sage of the Sakya Clan, the Supremely Enlightened One. The pillars of his doctrine are wisdom and compassion; its practice involves a turning inwards of the mind towards the fount of unique wisdom whereby sorrow is vanquished through the negation of the ego. The fruit of the doctrine is the development of boundless compassion for sentient beings accompanied by the growth of intuitive wisdom which brings with it the bliss of unexcelled and imperturbable tranquility.

From the kingdoms that lay about Buddhagaya, the place of Enlightenment, the teaching spread like a flame across Asia; since then, the boundaries of the Buddhist world have fluctuated over huge expanses; today they embrace more than ten countries in the eastern and southern parts of Asia and the doctrine is beginning to take firm root in the distant West. Of the traditionally Buddhist countries, there are some where the Dharma commands the allegiance of nearly all the people; some where it flourishes side by side with other faiths; and a few from which it has virtually been supplanted by Hinduism, Islam or (very recently) communism.

The following grouping reveals the present situation, except that no notice has been taken of the changes wrought in some countries by the introduction of communist rule. The resurgence of Christianity in wartime Russia demonstrates the extent to which a religion may survive for at least several

decades after it has apparently come close to vanishing point.

In Moscow recently, Easter church attendance — some sixty years after the 1917 revolution — seems to have evoked anti-church picketing and film shows to attempt to keep it in check!

In *Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan* and parts of the *Soviet Union*, the remaining Buddhists comprise a small minority. But surviving sculptures and ruined edifices testify to past glories.

In *Burma, Kampuchea, Laos, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Thailand* and *Tibet*, Buddhism is still by far the most widespread religion. Sri Lanka has a large Hindu minority; in the others, Buddhists comprise almost the entire population, except in a few special areas such as the extreme south of Thailand (Moslem).

In *China, Japan, Korea, Nepal* and *Vietnam*, Buddhism has traditionally been one of several faiths including Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism or Hinduism. Indeed, many people there subscribe to more than one religion simultaneously, finding each of them useful for dealing with particular aspects of life. This makes it impossible to calculate the number of Buddhists, but it is certainly very large.

In *Malaysia* and *Singapore* and, to a smaller extent, in *Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines* and *Thailand*, etc., there are sizeable Chinese communities which follow the tradition of subscribing to several faiths including Buddhism. In Singapore, the Chinese constitute an overwhelming majority; in Malaysia, close on half the population; but the relative strength of Buddhism is hard to assess. The same is true of *Hong Kong* with its 99.9 per cent Chinese population.

Some of the non-Asian countries where Buddhism has recently taken root in this century are *Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom* and *the United States*. In all of them, though indigenous Buddhists are few, rapid expansion is taking place in terms of new adherents and of published material on Buddhism. The reasons for this rather unexpected development are given elsewhere in this book.

Buddhism in 20th Century Asia

For convenience sake, information about Asian countries is tabulated here. M and T stand for Mahayana and Theravada, the two main schools of Buddhist thought, whose characteristics are described in the explanatory chapters.

	Formerly Buddhist	Mainly Buddhist	Partly Buddhist	Chinese Buddhist Communities	What to See
Afghanistan	M				Ruins and artifacts
Bangladesh			T		Small temples, active Buddhist associations
Burma		T		M	Temples everywhere, esp. the Shwedagon in Rangoon and those at Pagan, Pegu and Mandalay
China*			M		Temples, museums, sacred mountains, rock-temples, laymen's associations, etc.
India	M and T		T (converted Harijans) and M (Tibetan refugee communities)		Temples, esp. at Buddhagaya, Sarnath and Sanchi, ruins of Nalanda University and rock-temples at Ellora, Ajanta, etc.
Indonesia	M				The great ruins at Borobudur
Japan			M		Temples, museums, sacred mountains, etc., esp. at Kyoto, Nara and Kamakura
Kampuchea*		T		M	Temples everywhere, Silver Temple and Museum at Phnompenh, lovely Hindu-cum-Buddhist ruins at Angkor
Korea			M		Temples and sacred mountains
Laos*		T		M	Temples everywhere, especially at Luang Prabang
Malaysia				M	Small Chinese temples, hillside monastery near Penang and active lay associations in main cities
Mongolia		M			Lamaist monasteries, esp. at Ulan Bator
Nepal			M and T		Tibetan temples in the hills, Newari temples in the cities
Pakistan	M and T				Karachi Museum, ruins of Taxila University
Philippines				M	Small Chinese temples
Singapore				M	Small Chinese temples, very active lay associations
Sri Lanka		T			Temples everywhere, esp. at Kandy, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, etc.
Thailand		T		M	Innumerable temples, esp. at Bangkok, Nakorn Phatom and Chiang Mai; two Buddhist universities; HQ of the World Fellowship of Buddhists
Tibet*		M			Monasteries and temples in great profusion
USSR (some areas)			M		Monasteries and research institutes, esp. in the Buriat Republic
Vietnam*			M and T	M	Temples, a Buddhist university, etc.

LEGEND: M = principally Mahayana T = principally Theravada
 * Recent effects of communist rule not taken into account

Glossary

(Terms used only once in the text and clearly defined there are not included.)

BODHI,

Enlightenment in the Buddhist sense of ultimate spiritual attainment; also used to denote the species of tree under which the Buddha achieved Enlightenment.

BODHISATTVA,

an Enlightened being, generally used of beings very close to Buddhahood or those who have renounced Nirvana in order to remain in the universe and guide other beings towards Enlightenment.

BUDDHA,

a Supremely Enlightened One, generally used to denote the founder of the Buddhist religion or other beings who have attained the same status in this or other aeons and worlds, but also means the abstract principle or spiritual power of Buddhahood.

CH'AN (ZEN),

the name of a sect, developed first in China and then in Japan, which places great stress on meditation and relatively less on other modes of spiritual endeavour.

DHARMA,

the Doctrine of the Buddha, also used as a synonym for the Buddhist religion, or to mean the universal principle whereby perfect tranquillity and freedom from suffering are attained.

HINAYANA,

see THERAVADA.

KARMA,

the force created by past thoughts, words and actions which largely determines one's present and future destiny.

MAHAYANA,

the Greater Vehicle, the name given to one of the two great schools of Buddhism; this form is prevalent throughout Buddhist Asia except in five countries in the South-Eastern part of the continent.

MYSTICISM,

here used to denote all religious striving, whether Buddhist or otherwise, which is directed not towards worship in the ordinary sense but towards direct experiential perception of spiritual reality.

NIRVANA,

the goal of Buddhism, the omnipresent, eternal and undifferentiated state which is held to lie beyond sensory perception and beyond all such dualistic delusions as 'self' and 'other'.

PALI,

a language spoken in many parts of India during or shortly after the period when Buddhism first came into being; it is the sacred language of the Theravadins (followers of Theravada).

PURE LAND,

the name of a sect prevalent in East Asia which emphasises the attainment of Liberation by repeated concentration on certain sacred words and mental images.

SANGHA,

the Order of Buddhist Monks and, by extension, the entire sacred community including all those, past or present, who have attained Nirvana's brink.

SANSKRIT,

the literary language of ancient India which became the sacred language of the Mahayana School.

TANTRA,

a special section of the Tibetan version of the Buddhist Canon which deals with vigorous methods of conquering the ego and achieving Enlightenment in this life.

THERAVADA,

the school of Buddhism prevalent in Southeast Asia which bases its teaching upon the Pali Canon; also called Hinayana, the Lesser Vehicle, because it does not accept the doctrine that Nirvana can be temporarily renounced in order to help other beings to reach it also.

TRIPITAKA,

the Three Baskets, the name given to the Buddhist Canon of which there are three versions extant, the Pali, Chinese and Tibetan. It is so called because of the division of the sacred writings into three divisions (baskets): Sutra or sacred discourses; Vinaya or discipline; and Abhidharma or metaphysical commentaries.

VAJRA,

"adamantine", used to describe the Dharma and its upholders as pertaining to unchanging and unchangeable reality.

VAJRAYANA,

the sub-division of the Mahayana School prevalent in Tibet, Mongolia and the Himalayan kingdoms.

YANA,

a vehicle, used in the sense of a major school of doctrine.

ZEN,

see CH'AN.

Chapter 1

THE DOCTRINE OF THE BUDDHA

The religions which had their birth in western Asia, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have several features which distinguish them sharply from Buddhism. They are founded on what are held to be divinely revealed scriptures: they take the universe to be the creation of a supreme deity credited with omnipotence and, usually, with loving-kindness; and they see man's redemption as dependent on divine grace. Buddhism (like some other Eastern religions such as Taoism) accepts none of these doctrines. For that reason it has sometimes been unjustly dubbed a non-religion; Western people seem to have difficulty in grasping the concept of a genuine religion that is nevertheless unconcerned with the existence of a deity.

The story of Buddhism generally begins with the birth of Prince Gautama, son of the ruler of Kapilavastu, a tiny state adjoining the frontier of Nepal. This auspicious event took place just about two thousand six hundred years ago. While still a youth, the prince grew sated with unwanted luxury and became gravely concerned about life's inherent woe. Believing that there must be a cure for the sorrows resulting from such ills as sickness, decay, parting, grief, old age and death, he left his young wife and son to his father's care and retired into the jungle where he spent some years as a recluse. Sometimes studying under holy men encountered in the forest, but more often meditating, reasoning and analysing in solitude, he yearned to discover life's secrets and a remedy for its ills.

As the years passed, he experimented with all sorts of austerities and other methods of achieving higher states of consciousness until, feeling himself on the verge of a momentous discovery, he sat down beneath the now famous Bodhi Tree, vowing never to rise unless the great mystery was solved. That the dazzling solution then dawned on him is attributed by his followers not merely to his steadfast search during those years of solitude but also to his having

pursued it through many former lives; like most Asians with the exception of Moslems, Buddhists do not doubt that unenlightened beings undergo rebirth aeon upon aeon.

Seated beneath the sheltering branches, the Prince underwent a profound mystical experience henceforth to be known as Supreme Unexcelled Enlightenment, in a word, Bodhi. During the hours it lasted, he perceived the whole of life's mystery, the cause of our being chained to the round of birth and death and the means of exchanging that dreary servitude for the everlasting bliss that dawns at the moment when the ego is finally negated. Preceded by ecstasy came a great awakening to the real nature of his own being and, by extension, of *being* itself. Recognizing that suffering is inevitable for as long as sentient creatures remain deluded by their sense impressions, he saw that, with the destruction of desire and aversion, comes everlasting tranquillity that extends beyond birth and death, beyond the bounds of individual being.

Henceforth, the attainment of Liberation through Enlightenment was to become the ultimate goal of all Buddhists, but it is a goal hard indeed to attain, involving as it does the elimination of every trace of ego-centred thought and feeling. Those who reach it become so free from selfishness that compassion impels them to spend the rest of their existence communicating the means of bliss to others. So it was that the Buddha, or Enlightened One, spent his fifty remaining years preaching the way of deliverance with as much zeal as he had formerly brought to bear on making the great discovery. The first sermon of all began by noting that two extremes ought not to be cultivated. These, were 'devotion to indulgence of pleasure in the objects of sensual desire', and 'devotion to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble and leads to no good'. The 'Middle Way' was, therefore, the right path. The fundamentals of his teaching based on this

premise and known to Buddhists as the sacred Dharma, are as follows.

Everything perceptible is subject to or the cause of 'suffering', taking that term to embrace every sort of unsatisfactory condition from disappointment and mild frustration to bitter agony of mind or body. Moreover, everything perceptible is transient and lacking in own-being or selfhood, being in fact the ever-changing product of a whole network of preceding and concurrent causes without which it could neither come into existence nor remain for a single moment. The suffering which each so-called entity causes or undergoes results from desire for things to be other than they are, that is to say, longing for things or circumstances that are absent or aversion for whatever is present, and often both of these together. With careful training it is possible to rise above desire/aversion and thereby achieve unparalleled serenity united with a lively compassion for those yet to be freed from its clutches.

During the last century, it became fashionable in Europe to regard the Buddha as a supreme rationalist to whom the attainment of tranquillity through the conquest of desire/aversion applied only to the rest of this life span, whereafter extinction would supervene; however, Asian Buddhists seldom view the matter in that limited perspective and the Buddha's own utterances show that his meaning was much more profound. He fully accepted his contemporaries' belief in an infinite chain of rebirths extending aeon upon aeon backwards and forwards from this present existence, each of them closely determined by the impact of thoughts, words and deeds occurring in previous lives. The nirvanic tranquillity proclaimed by the Buddha is the ultimate tranquillity of one who has sundered the bonds of karma (causal conditioning) and freed himself for eternity. However, it is a state lying beyond the confines of individual existence.

Nirvana has been widely misunderstood; non-Buddhists suppose it to be either total extinction or similar to the eternal life to which Christians and Moslems aspire. This misapprehension no doubt arises from the absolute impossibility of stating what Nirvana is; even the Buddha spoke of it only in negative terms. In this, no deliberate obscurity is involved; it is just that an exalted state transcending all the experiences to which language puts a name can no more be described than red and blue can be satisfactorily explained to a man born blind. However, the Dharma states in no uncertain terms

what Nirvana is not; it is not eternal life, nor is it extinction; belief in either of them is held to be the gravest error. From the canonic texts and from intuitions sometimes experienced during meditation, it is clear that there is nothing to be extinguished and nothing to survive; for, at the point when Nirvana is attained, the distinction between I and other, upon which the notions of individual extinction or survival must depend, is recognized as pure illusion. That which is real is not subject to distinctions, being immaculate, intangible and infinite.

Another aspect of the Dharma which sets it apart from the revealed religions is that it is not to be accepted in a spirit of unquestioning faith; each of its tenets must be put to the test of the devotee's experience. The Buddha discouraged his followers from believing any doctrine merely on the grounds that he, the Enlightened One, had propounded it. They were to subject his discourses to analysis in the light of their own reasoning and mystical experience.

The whole doctrine is based on the premise that desire/aversion is the prime cause of woe, to which some of the corollaries are as follows. Liberation ultimately depends on a man's *own* spiritual endeavours. Good works and pious practices, however wholesome, will not avail one jot unless a person succeeds in acquiring full insight into his true nature and recognizes it to be identical with the nature of his fellow beings and of the universe itself. He must recognize everything as transient, lacking in independent being and inseparable from some degree of disappointment, frustration, grief or pain. By wise control of thought, word and deed; by strenuously expanding the scope and depth of his compassion; by profound introspection into the workings of his mind and body, including investigation of the causes of his passions, desires and aversions; by mystical entry into higher states of consciousness wherein intuitive wisdom dawns; by all these methods, often prolonged through a whole series of existences, the devotee gradually attains the wisdom that reveals his own true being as something not *his* at all, but *being* itself. The lovely expressions frequently depicted on the faces of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, eyes half-closed, lips smiling as it were a secret smile, testify to the bliss which follows the arising of this wisdom.

That desire/aversion must be overcome primarily through one's own endeavours is a conviction that deeply colours the attitude of Buddhists to

whatever gods and other supernatural forces there may be. The Buddha did not dispute the existence of the hosts of deities or manifold aspects of deity in which his Hindu contemporaries believed; but he assured his followers that no deity could bestow upon them Liberation; indeed all beings, natural and supernatural, including the highest gods, are subject to the universal laws of transience, lack of own-being and suffering/frustration. The gods, having exhausted their stock of merit, must, like everyone else, revolve upon the wheel of becoming, undergoing rebirth in higher or lower states of existence, but always subject to the ego-delusion brought about by primordial ignorance until they attain Liberation through the conquest of desire/aversion. Buddhists find it hard to understand how theists can attribute a world of living beings, many of which are perpetually engaged in devouring others until they themselves are devoured on land, at sea and in the air, to a benevolent deity!

As to the origin of the universe, the Buddha seldom spoke of it. He taught that time spent on speculation is wasted and could be much better spent on seeking to acquire experiential and intuitive wisdom. However, there have been many metaphysicians among his followers. Not the universe itself, but *our perception of it* is taken to result from the action of *avidhya* or primordial delusion leading to desire/aversion for phantom objects and thus to passions and many other ills. That is not to say that Buddhists regard the universe itself as pure illusion. They hold it to be real enough but grossly distorted by our faulty perception.

In reality, it consists of a limitless succession of minute impulses of energy that come into being, attain their culmination and give place to others in a time too brief for them to be individually perceived. Even seemingly solid objects, as well as abstract entities such as feelings and ideas, are composed of these impulses, of which myriads upon myriads flash into being and are gone in less than a moment. Analysis of any seemingly self-existent object reveals it to be transient, devoid of own-being and a cause of suffering/frustration. It is transient not only in the sense of being composed of swiftly vanishing impulses but also in that, sooner or later, it must cease to be. It is devoid of own-being in that it does not exist as something independent of countless preceding and concurrent causes which link its existence to that of a million other entities; and also in the sense that it contains no essence standing apart

from mere qualities such as colour, density, size, shape, constituent materials and so on. Furthermore, to the extent that it excites or undergoes desire/aversion, it is inseparably linked to some form of frustration, pain or other cause of dissatisfaction, if not of actual woe.

All this applies no less to living beings than to inanimate objects. If, step by step, an individual analyses and mentally dismisses all transient components of his physical, emotional and spiritual being, nothing remains to constitute a unique entity that could be called his ego or soul. The individual has no more reality than the ocean wave which, during its transient existence, retains a mere appearance of continuing identity; yet, on the other hand, the wave cannot be held not to exist. The water is real enough, only the wave's appearance of being a separate entity is misleading.

Such then, in simplified form, is the essence of what may be called the doctrinal aspects of Buddhism. None of them are dogmas, however. No Buddhist is compelled to reason along those lines or faces anything like excommunication if his experience teaches him to reject them. In fact, there is a certain amount of doctrinal divergence within the Buddhist community, but no disunity or hard feelings result from it as every devotee has been taught to respect the beliefs of others and to regard doctrine as being of less consequence than practice. The value of a given doctrine is tested by the votary's analysis of mental, emotional and physical processes; by sustained awareness of what is going on in his mind; and by watchfulness for those intuitions of the real nature of being, which arise in his mind when it is serenely composed and guarded from the promptings of the ego and the senses.

Westerners encountering these doctrines for the first time often find the concept of rebirth particularly difficult to accept, although belief in it comes easily to almost half the population of the world, including Buddhists, Hindus, Taoists and devotees of several less widespread faiths. Admittedly it is a belief no easier to prove than the Christian contention that the soul undergoes eternal life in heaven or hell.

There are many curious stories, some of them emanating from modern Western sources, of children who apparently recall their previous lives so clearly that they are able to relate details of unfamiliar places, people and events which are later checked and found to be correct in the most minute parti-

culars. However, certain theists relate stories of a Christian type of after-life which they claim to have received from beyond the grave. Neither sort would be acceptable as evidence in a court of law; there is always a suspicion of collusion or fraud. Therefore, the most reasonable way of approaching the problem, except in the case of people who have had special revelations, is to rely cautiously on the law of probability.

Western reluctance to accept the doctrine of rebirth is doubtless due to its novelty in countries where, except by certain church fathers such as Origen (who was accordingly excommunicated), it has not been widely taught since Platonists propounded it. Nevertheless, there is some reason for regarding rebirth as probable. Everything observable is governed by the physical laws of conservation which make matter and energy subject to transformation but never to destruction; and it would seem more natural to suppose that what is not observable follows the same laws than that it does not.

Then again, Christians postulate a soul finite in its origin but infinite in its continuance, whereas it would seem more reasonable to suppose that what has no end cannot have had a beginning. To this may be added the thought that sudden transition from the worldly to the heavenly state involves too precipitous a change for it to be at all likely. A surly fellow who equates joy only with possession of a woman or a bottle might find the atmosphere of heaven a sad reward for his virtuous death-bed repentance; it is hard to imagine his sudden metamorphosis into an angelic being. However that may be, belief in rebirth is an integral part of Buddhism; it is not imposed on votaries, but much of the Dharma can be understood only in that context.

As to *what* is reborn, there is wide divergence of opinion, for all Buddhists reject the idea of a soul, at least in the sense of a permanent entity, so it is difficult to envisage what continues after death. The general conception seems to be that a sentient being is at any given moment a conglomeration of varied factors and forces none of which is constant, so that a moment later he is already somewhat different; however none of those factors or forces can vanish suddenly, so the conglomeration remains in existence, though in perpetually changing form; it is not dispersed by death and continues its wave-like existence until its final release into Nirvana, which occurs when no traces are left of an individual entity for changes in the concurrent causes to

modify. At this point, individually (always illusory) is left behind, whereas the real (that is, non-individual) component continues for ever.

The law of karma or causal conditioning is another integral part of the Buddhists' faith borrowed from the beliefs of the Buddha's contemporaries. According to this doctrine, an individual's thoughts, words and actions have a profound reflexive action on his character. For example, a murderer who escapes the legal consequences of his crime cannot escape its imprint on his mind. Every thought, word or deed serves to coarsen or refine the personality which, at death, enters upon a new existence exactly consonant with its final state in the previous life.

This law should not be equated with fatalism; true, each of us is living a life largely governed by the effects of karma accumulated in this or previous existences, but he is free to make choices that will lead to a diminution or increase of those favourable or unfavourable effects; moreover, as his sustained conquest of the ego proceeds, his load of karma diminishes until, with the attainment of liberation, it vanishes altogether, since nothing remains for karma to affect.

Side by side with the concept of karma is that of merit; indeed they are two sides of the same coin. Every wholesome thought, word and deed produces beneficial results which, though they cannot cancel out the unfortunate effects of karma, ensure that the future will contain good as well as bad. It is held that those with merit can choose what shall become of it; it can be used to hasten the process of Liberation, to bring about favourable circumstances in this or future lives, or else, by an act of will, it can be transferred for the benefit of others. In some Buddhist countries, youths who enter monasteries during the period between finishing their education and embarking upon careers or marriage dedicate the resulting merit to their parents, as a thank-offering for the care bestowed on them as children.

Buddhists who follow the Vajrayana go further than that by daily offering up all their merit, past, present and future, for the good of sentient beings standing in special need of it. The idea that merit can be transferred like sums of money may seem bizarre until it is remembered that the perceptible universe is regarded as more or less a mental creation and that, in the ultimate sense, all good and bad take place in the mind. If that is so, then conscious acts

of will can, of course, have a profound influence on the outcome of events.

Some people have dubbed Buddhism pessimistic on the grounds that its central doctrines proceed from the premise that life is inherently unsatisfactory. But surely no thinking person can believe the contrary? Though at certain moments life can be beautiful and joyous, there is no escape from pain, disease, illness, old age and death, nor from varying degrees of disappointment, boredom, frustration and grief; and there are hosts of unfortunate people, especially in the poorer countries, who can find no escape from fearful poverty and back-breaking toil, to say nothing of those who are sent by their governments to kill and be killed or run the risk of lifelong injury. A man must be incredibly blind to the misfortunes of others if he can honestly say that life is satisfactory. In facing up to this truth, Buddhists are not exhibiting undue pessimism, for their whole preoccupation is with winning Liberation and doing all in their power to assist others to that blissful goal.

Buddhists have also been accused of selfishness, because of their concern with self-redemption. That, too, is a matter of common sense. With the best will in the world, I cannot bring about in someone else the freedom from desire/aversion on which Liberation depends. At best I can perform my duty of cultivating relative and absolute compassion. The former denotes doing everything possible to alleviate all kinds of distress; the latter means strenuously assisting others to discover the necessity for conquering desire/aversion and thereafter, doing all that can be done to help them succeed. Mahayana Buddhists take the supremely compassionate vow to refrain from entering Nirvana when the goal is won and to undergo voluntary rebirth aeon after aeon so as to be of service to other beings; yet even they know well they cannot tread the path of ego-negation on someone else's behalf.

The rarity of Buddhist missionary activities,

though these do exist, is due to the fact that Buddhists, always eager to be tolerant, do not share the conviction commonly found among followers of the revealed religions that their faith is the only means to redemption. They readily suppose that the devotees of other faiths can awaken to a true understanding of life's meaning; hence it is common to find in Buddhist temples statues of deities of non-Buddhist significance; it is as though Christian churches were to house altars to the Buddha and Mohammed. There are comparatively few temples in Buddhist lands which house no effigies of Hindu, Taoist or local origin; in China, both St. Thomas and Marco Polo can be seen taking their ease among the Arahants and, if Buddhism had long ago been introduced into Christian lands, there is no doubt that Jesus, Mary and some of the more benevolent saints would have been represented in the temple halls or gardens.

That, Enlightenment is not the exclusive possession of any one religion is borne out by the astonishing similarity of the experiences recorded by mystics of many faiths. Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist and Moslem Sufi writings have much in common with those of such Christian mystics as Eckhart, St. John of the Cross and the author of *"The Cloud of Unknowing"*, to say nothing of mystical writers belonging to the Greek and Russian branches of the Orthodox Church. It is thought that similar revelations were experienced by votaries of the ancient Greek and Egyptian mysteries; and, more recently, there has been evidence that certain American Indian sects know of that experience.

What may perhaps be unique about Buddhism is that, whereas in other religions the mystical approach has generally been confined to a relatively small number of votaries, it is taught openly by all sects of Buddhists as the *only* means of achieving high spiritual results. Hence the importance in Buddhism of meditative practices as opposed to prayer.

Chapter 2

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Triple Gem

During its founder's lifetime, the Buddhist faith was firmly established on lines which have been followed to this day. Since the emphasis is on spiritual progress achieved by the votary's own efforts and as no supreme deity is recognized, the central object of devotion has from the first been the Triple Gem, namely:

The Buddha conceived of as the Enlightened One and also as the Principle of Enlightenment;

The Dharma conceived of as the sacred Doctrine and also as the Universal Law by conformity with which Liberation is attained;

The Sangha or Sacred Community, which embraces all those beings, past and present, who have attained, or reached the brink of Liberation and also the Buddhist Order of Monks.

In every country except Japan, the custodians of the Dharma are monks. (They used to include nuns also, but the female line of ordination was unfortunately broken, except (it is believed) among Chinese Buddhist communities, since when nuns in most Buddhist countries have not ranked as full members of the Sangha.) It is not taught that layfolk are incapable of attaining Liberation, but as this is a stupendous task involving the utter negation of the ego, it is hardly within the power of people with family ties or social responsibilities that occupy their time and energy. The functions of the monks, in addition to or as part of their efforts to attain Liberation, are to study, preserve, defend and propagate the Dharma and to form, as it were, a spiritual reservoir, the existence of which creates a vast store of collective merit from which all sentient beings benefit.

The Canon and the Schools

The doctrines proclaimed by the Buddha were not recorded until several centuries later, up to which time they had been memorized and transmitted from teacher to disciple. Moreover, as India had no uniform language, two separate versions of the Canon or Tripitaka came into being, one in Pali and one in Sanskrit. Both run into numerous volumes divided into Sutras or discourses of the Buddha, Vinaya or monastic discipline, and Abhidharma or metaphysical commentaries. It used to be generally assumed by Western scholars that the Pali version was older and closer to the original teaching, but research has revealed that both versions contain works whose dates span several centuries and there is no certain guide to the relative authenticity of any individual work. What is of much more consequence is that, by and large, both versions present the same fundamental doctrines; important divergences are comparatively few.

Based respectively on the Pali and Sanskrit versions of the Canon, two schools emerged, namely the Theravada and the Mahayana, of which the former now embraces Burma, Kampuchea, Laos, Sri Lanka and Thailand, the latter being current in all the other Buddhist countries as well as among the Chinese communities scattered throughout Southeast Asia. Formerly, Western converts to Buddhism usually became Theravadins, but Mahayana converts are now increasing rapidly, especially followers of the form of Mahayana known as Ch'an or Zen.

Whereas the Pali Canon has been preserved in its present form since ancient times, the Sanskrit version perished during the Moslem invasions of India; it now exists in two translations, the Chinese and Tibetan. Of these, the latter has an important additional section not found elsewhere; it is called

Tantra and expounds some powerfully effective techniques of meditation.

The differences between the Mahayana and Theravadin Schools are greatly exaggerated because of many notable divergences at the superficial level. Comparing Buddhism with Christianity from this point of view, one finds that the external differences between the Buddhist schools are as wide as those dividing the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches, but that the doctrinal differences are of very much less consequence.

The outward differences have arisen partly in response to climatic, social and political factors in the various Buddhist countries; most of them, however, belong to the level of *popular* Buddhism where very real divergencies exist because Buddhism, being at once pacific and enormously tolerant, has at that level absorbed iconography, practices and beliefs from the religions already current when Buddhism was first introduced. As to doctrinal differences, there are at most two or three that are of real significance and, at the deepest level, they can perhaps all be reconciled or reduced to just one difference, of which something will be said later. For all Buddhists, the means of attaining the common goal are the cultivation of intuitive wisdom by turning the mind in upon itself, the development of boundless compassion extending even to the non-human realms, and the progressive negation of the ego through the conquest of desire/aversion.

Theravada

Travellers to Buddhist countries will of course be interested in the colourful differences in religious practice. Within the Theravadin School there is so much homogeneity that the five Southeast Asian Buddhist countries can be dealt with together. There, Buddhism is firmly based on the Pali Canon and, as climate, culture and social institutions are very similar in all of them (with some unimportant exceptions as regards Sri Lanka), no diversionary factors exist. Even at the popular level, the admixture of Hindu and animistic borrowings is fairly uniform. All the monks, whatever their rank, wear identical robes consisting of lengths of yellow, orange or brownish cloth, the difference in colour resulting simply from what dyes happen to be used. Every morning, they sally forth from the monasteries to receive offerings of food which householders, standing before their gateways, respectfully ladle into their

bowls. Everything offered is accepted, whether vegetarian or not and regardless of its quality. Once a year, the layfolk go in procession to each temple, bearing gifts of clothes and other necessities, and these offerings are supplemented from time to time by individual gifts; but the monks may not possess money or any property of their own beyond their robes, a razor, a needle and one or two equally essential items.

During the rainy season, the monks must pass the nights beneath the roof of the monastery to which each belongs. In the dry season, they often wander about the country, making pilgrimages, preaching or else meditating in lonely caves or forest clearings. Some carry enormous umbrellas which, opened up and draped with cloth or mosquito netting form sleeping tents. Except when they are travelling, their time is passed studying the Dharma and the Pali language, meditating and, in some cases, writing or teaching. No food touches their lips between noon and the following day; so, after their return from the morning round of neighbouring houses, their day is punctuated only by the one or two morning meals and by attendance at temple rites which do not, however, take up much of their time. Being concerned with inward development, the more zealous monks devote much of their time to meditation.

In the Theravadin countries, particularly in Thailand, many youths become monks for a short interval before starting their careers. This custom allows them time to make spiritual preparation for dealing with life's problems. Of course, those with a special longing for liberation or a taste for a calm, secluded life remain monks for many years, perhaps permanently.

Services to the laity are of three kinds. The Sangha propagates the Dharma by means of sermons, meetings, discussions and by holding public ceremonies on appropriate occasions; it performs funeral rites and certain other ceremonies such as intoning auspicious Sutras in a newly acquired dwelling or newly opened enterprise; and the merit acquired by its pious activities is believed to confer great benefits upon the entire nation.

Mahayana

In the countries where Mahayana flourishes, with the exception of Tibet and Mongolia, Buddhism has seldom been the universally accepted religion or adopted by the state; consequently, it has had to

go to greater lengths to keep on good terms with the authorities. Superficially, Mahayana practice differs widely from country to country, reflecting surrounding differences in climate, culture and social or political structure. To discover its true homogeneity, one has to penetrate well beneath the surface. In matters pertaining to food, dress, the monastic economy, administration and so on, the Sangha in each Mahayanist country has evolved special characteristics. On account of the cold and because the Indian costume of the Theravadin monks would have seemed too bizarre in the eyes of society and of the authorities, two kinds of compromise have been arrived at. In the countries of East Asia, the monks wear a black or grey costume of antique Chinese pattern over which, on formal occasions, they drape a garment of yellowish-brown cloth which symbolizes the yellow robe. In Tibet and Mongolia, where Buddhists have no prejudices to contend with, the intense cold has been the decisive factor; the monks have evolved a dress much closer to the Indian pattern but warm. However, some of them wear robes rather Chinese in appearance. In those two countries, since the entire population is Buddhist, lay support is generous, but the monasteries are often very large and the settlements of laymen too small and scattered for it to be practicable to rely on the neighbouring householders for daily offerings of food; therefore the monasteries have had to acquire landed property as a means of support.

The monasteries in China and the other Mahayanist countries have done the same, but for different reasons; there, the bulk of the laity are not Buddhist and would be unlikely to provide sufficient daily food offerings. There is some advantage in having abandoned the ancient way of obtaining food; for, in China and to a lesser extent in some of the other countries, the monks are very strict vegetarians out of compassionate feeling towards the animal realm. Among these Mahayanist countries, Japan is a very special case; the custodians of the Dharma are not monks, but persons with minor ordinations who are often married and who may wear ordinary Western businessmen's suits when not residing in the temple precincts. More unusual still, the temples are often the property of individual families and are inherited like business concerns or private houses. This is a situation unknown elsewhere in the Buddhist world. The allegation that Tibetan monks also marry is not true; the misunderstanding has arisen from the fact that there are both monks and lay-priests in Tibet,

both of whom are respectfully referred to as Lamas (teachers).

Doctrinal Differences

In matters of belief and spiritual practice, the differences between the two schools or between one Mahayanist country and another are relatively few; and, for all the seeming diversity, there is no departure from the Dharma's central theme. Meditation, study and teaching are the principal pursuits of monks and pious layfolk, though there is a tendency among some of them to attach undue importance to rites which have real value only if they support the spiritual practice that takes place in the mind. Moreover, as Buddhism is mainly concerned with mind, which is imperceptible, and as its doctrines are not easy to explain to people of limited intelligence or learning, a great deal of symbolism is involved; it is the colourful and extraordinarily varied symbols which create an appearance of wide diversity, so that strangers visiting a Chinese, a Thai and a Tibetan temple could be forgiven for wondering whether they were all temples of the same religion. The only symbols that are more or less constant are the Buddha statues themselves and even these differ quite considerably from country to country.

The one really important doctrinal difference between the Mahayana and the Theravada concerns the concept of Bodhisattvas. The former school holds that one should compassionately vow not to enter Nirvana at the time of Enlightenment but to remain in the endless round of birth and death as a potent force for guiding other sentient creatures towards Liberation. The universe is conceived of as being so vast that this world is as small as a grain of sand in comparison with the whole; and it is believed that, in all the vast galaxies of worlds, there are innumerable Bodhisattvas, that is, beings who, on achieving Enlightenment, have renounced Nirvana out of compassion for the myriads of sentient beings still lost in darkness. This concept is unacceptable to the Theravadins, who hold that, as the attainment of Enlightenment involves total negation of the constituent parts of the personality; once death has supervened, nothing remains to undergo voluntary rebirth as a Bodhisattva. This difference really is important because a difference of aim (individual Enlightenment or the power to assist others towards Enlightenment) naturally affects the mental processes by which their goal is achieved. The Theravadin aim

seems rather limited in Mahayanist eyes; the Mahayana aim seems unrealistic to Theravadins.

In Buddhism as a whole, the emphasis has always been on self-Enlightenment. It is held that others may serve as guides but that not even a Buddha can bring about someone's entry into Nirvana before his ego has been negated by his own efforts. Nevertheless, in Mahayanist countries there are some sects, notably the Pure Land Sect found principally in China and Japan, whose doctrine seems quite to the contrary. They teach that those who have implicit faith in Amitabha Buddha (an aspect of the Buddha principle equated with Boundless Light) will be reborn in the Pure Land wherein Enlightenment can unfailingly be won. This would seem to be the very antithesis of Buddhism as ordinarily understood and there is no doubt that, at the popular level, a genuine conflict of doctrine is involved. However, many Buddhists regard the Pure Land teaching as an expedient means of leading votaries to liberate themselves.

On the surface, there is the difference between what are called self-power (ordinary Buddhist practice) and other-power (Pure Land practice); in reality, since both are concerned with mind, which is not subject to special distinctions, these two kinds of power are the same. It is a matter of words and visual concepts. Amitabha Buddha is held to be identical with that instinctive longing for and ability to achieve liberation which is present, whether recognized or not, in the mind of every man; the Pure Land is explained as a symbolical representation of mind in its purity, that is to say mind untrammelled by the delusion wrought by the senses and unconfined by an illusory selfhood.

The two schools differ as to the connotation of the term 'Buddha'. The Theravadins are in general agreement that no Buddha has appeared in this world since Sakyamuni (Gautama) Buddha. Those who have attained Enlightenment since then are known to them as Arahants, the title 'Buddha' being reserved for one who inaugurates a new age of Dharma when, after the passage of thousands of thousands of years, the teaching has vanished from the world. The Mahayanists, on the contrary, stress that all beings are potential Buddhas and, indeed, beneath the illusory accretions of individual personality, Buddhas from beginningless time. Hence any fully Enlightened being may be termed a Buddha, though out of respect for Sakyamuni Buddha, it is more usual to employ the rather more modest term, Bodhisattva. What is more, Mahayanists tend to conceive of the Buddha

less as a person (the erstwhile Prince Gautama) and more as the abstract, but exceedingly potent, principle of Enlightenment; and this principle is viewed under various aspects to each of which a name is given and, for iconographic purposes, a recognizable form.

The aspects commonly portrayed as though they were separate beings include boundless light, healing power and intuitive wisdom. In fact, Mahayanists speak of Buddhas of the ten directions (the zenith, nadir and eight compass points) with reference to an immense universe of which the whole segment known to, or guessed at by, astronomers is an insignificant part. This explains the iconographic representations of a large number of separately named Buddhas; any well-informed Mahayanist Buddhist recognizes them as mere symbols of limitless, immaculate, undifferentiated mind.

Popular Buddhism and Iconography

Visitors to Buddhist countries, if they are to have some understanding of what they see, must bear in mind these differences between the Mahayana and Theravada and within the Mahayana itself. They should remember that the most vital Buddhist activities occur during the long hours spent in solitude, whether in monastic cells, the caves of hermits or the shrine-rooms and private quarters of Buddhist householders. What is to be seen in the temples represents a compromise between the austerity of the Dharma, with its emphasis on discipline and meditation, and the popular desire for mystery and magic.

The Buddha taught the usefulness of skilful means for drawing men from their mundane concerns, means graded to suit their varying levels of intelligence and understanding; his followers have seen no harm in using elaborate symbols, including those of other faiths, wherever these are likely to assist their aim of setting men face to face with their own minds.

The following observations will serve as a rough guide to the iconography in the temples.

In Theravadin countries, though there may be hundreds of Buddha figures in a temple, almost every one of them represents Sakyamuni (Gautama) Buddha. The figures of various orders of supernatural beings can be distinguished from Buddha

figures at a glance. The different postures and gestures of the Buddha have reference to particular episodes in his life or to particular activities, such as meditation, preaching and subduing temptation. In Mahayanist temples, on the contrary, different postures and gestures are a means of identifying *different* Buddhas or different aspects of the Enlightenment principle.

As regards statues of other beings, those in Theravadin temples generally comprise Arahants (beings who have attained Enlightenment) or notable disciples, former abbots of the monastery, etc., all of whom look very much like ordinary monks; *devas* (gods), *apsaras* (splendidly bosomed narrow-waisted female angels), *yakshas* (demons now converted into Dharma Protectors who ward off evil influences), *nagas* (serpents or the serpentine equivalents of mermaids), *garudas* (birdmen) and *rishis* (hermits with extraordinary powers). Such statues always occupy a subordinate position and, for the most part, attract little attention from the votaries, though a few of them have something of a local reputation, such as the gate-gods at a certain temple in Thailand who are said to be responsive to petitions if a little opium is smeared on their lips.

In Mahayana temples, the principal shrine-room usually contains the statues of three Buddhas side by side; these are likely to be *Shakyamuni* (Gautama) Buddha with Amitabha Buddha (Boundless Light) to his right and Bhaisajya Buddha (Healing Power) to his left; or else Amitabha Buddha is seen standing with Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Compassion) on his right and Mahasthamaprabhata (Wisdom) on his left. Of the Bodhisattvas (beings who have renounced Nirvana out of compassion), the most beloved is Avalokitesvara (Kuan Yin), a lovely lady with a high head-dress and Chinese robes, much sought after by people in distress and particularly by barren women who long for children.

Statues of Arahants often wear rather smug expressions, as though the sculptors had been gently smiling at beings content to seek their own Enlightenment rather than attempt the arduous Bodhisattva path. Other notable figures include Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva (distinguishable by a long staff and a sort of crown) who rescues beings from purgatory; the Bodhisattvas Manjusri (Sacred Learning) and Samantabhadra (Sacred Action) one of whom rides a lion and the other, an elephant; Maitreya Bodhisattva (stout and genial) who is to become the Buddha of the next Dharma age; Weit'o Bodhisattva (a hand-

some warrior) who stands with his back to the gateway as a Protector of the Dharma; two ferocious-looking Vajra Beings who often stand outside the main gateway warding off evil influences; and the Four Heavenly Kings, Guardians of the Four Quarters, who sit two on each side of the interior of the gatehouse.

In all countries, Buddhist temples often contain effigies of subsidiary deities incorporated from other religions, Hindu or Taoist for the most part. These are seldom difficult to distinguish from those more properly belonging to Buddhism. Their presence is due to the transcendental nature of Buddhism, which is not much concerned with mundane matters; people seeking supernatural assistance for accomplishing worldly ends therefore turn to the gods of other religions. This facet of popular Buddhism is tolerated by the monks because it makes people happy, but they themselves keep aloof from the homage paid to these minor deities. It is difficult, however, to draw a line between what is or is not genuinely Buddhist practice; for example, the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Kuan Yin) receives petitions exactly like those addressed to the gods, and yet she is undoubtedly a Buddhist figure with no Hindu or Taoist counterpart. This illustrates the kind of concession which Buddhism of both schools has chosen to make to popular demand.

In Tibetan-style temples, the iconography is especially varied and astonishing. In addition to all the kinds of beings mentioned already, there are many not encountered elsewhere, some sweetly beneficent, others striding amidst flames of wrath. Their true purpose is to symbolize the conflicting ideals and passions within the human mind. Such figures are primarily used as supports for Tantric meditational techniques aimed at negating the ego and attaining the precious intuitive knowledge whereby Enlightenment is won, but there must be many uninstructed followers who mistake these beings for individually existing deities.

On the whole, the wealth of imagery found in Buddhist temples, some of it crude, some exquisitely refined, is bewildering to the uninstructed. For learned or spiritually advanced Buddhists, it has but slight importance. Yet it would be wrong to regard it as having no importance at all. Among Tibetans especially, there are many techniques for gradually transforming the ignorant worship of deities into a search for Enlightenment, during which process mental practice gradually replaces

the former devotion to external objects. Furthermore, there is no traditional form of Buddhism in which rites play no part at all; even votaries with deep understanding of the true principles of the Dharma incorporate some ritual into their practice, for it is believed that meditation would otherwise have its dangers. Such thoughts as *I* have achieved this or that tend to inflate the ego and thus augment the chief impediment to Liberation; so a dual process has been evolved, that of alternating meditation, during which the Buddha is recognized as the Enlightenment principle within one's own mind, with rituals wherewith homage is paid to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha as the refuges upon which progress towards Enlightenment depends.

Recent Trends

A development which has taken place throughout the Buddhist world, but especially among Chinese Buddhists in Southeast Asia, has been the emergence of lay societies engaged in educational or welfare work. There have always been lay societies, but formerly their members aimed chiefly at giving or receiving instruction in the Dharma and creating opportunities for collective meditation or devotional activities; today there are societies whose *main* activities are of a welfare nature. Schools, hospitals, clinics and various kinds of welfare centres have been established and there is no attempt to limit the beneficiaries to votaries of Buddhism or to people of Chinese race.

In Thailand, for example, a great many Thai women of the poorer class make use of the free maternity homes operated by Chinese Buddhists. The Buddhist schools give instruction to very poor children in all subjects, though of course advantage is taken of the opportunity to propagate the Dharma. Even the old-style lay associations often had their welfare side. In Hong Kong and among the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, there are societies for lay women who, in their old age, can go to live free of charge in institutions called Halls of Virtue, which provide accommodation, pleasant vegetarian food and regular opportunities for communal devotion, meditation and Dharma study. Some Halls of Virtue are quite magnificent and could easily be mistaken for temples.

Another development has been the emergence in some countries of Buddhism as a political force, a departure from tradition that is often deplored, not

only because political involvements endanger stability, but also because a strenuous attempt to transcend the world is likely to be hindered by association with efforts to achieve the transient goals of states and nations. This novel situation results from often tragic circumstances. In Burma and Sri Lanka, Buddhism as a traditional force inevitably found itself aligned with other forces opposed to the breaks with tradition resulting from alien rule; this involvement, once started, did not automatically cease with the withdrawal of the British, since when there have been notable cases of political activity on the part of monks.

In Vietnam where the Catholic Church waxed strong under French rule, Buddhists felt themselves economically and politically at a disadvantage and this situation persisted after the French withdrawal. Coupled with the Buddhist attitude to war (even taking the life of an animal is held to be *grave* wrongdoing) it led to political involvements which were marked by the shattering spectacle of monks burning themselves to death as the ultimate form of protest. Such self-immolation, possibly done as an extreme act of merit-making, seems occasionally to have taken place in earlier times. A century ago, King Rama IV (King Mongkut) of Thailand pointed out it was not in accord with the Dharma. In Tibet, where the whole population was devoted to Buddhism to an extent perhaps unparalleled in any other country, it was inevitable that monks should align themselves with the struggle against invaders who often appeared to be bent on total destruction of the religion.

Whether Buddhism will constitute an important political force in the future remains to be seen. Were that to happen, it would, besides being a reversal of tradition, involve great risks (as the Catholic Church has ruefully discovered). Though one may sympathize with Buddhist monks who, because of tragic circumstances, are drawn into the political arena, it is very difficult to reconcile any kind of conflict with the pacific teachings of the Dharma; nor can the passions roused, however noble and disinterested the objective, be conducive to that inner serenity without which Liberation cannot be won.

No discussion of the historical development of Buddhism would be complete without some reference to its recent popularity in the West. Some forty years ago, Buddhists in all the Western countries taken together could scarcely have numbered more than just a few hundred, and publications on Buddhist

subjects were few and far between. Today, there must be several tens of thousands of non-immigrant Buddhists in Europe and America, and translations of Buddhist texts as well as original publications concerning all aspects of the Dharma have increased by leaps and bounds. The factors assisting Buddhism's advance into new territory include its freedom from dogma, its scientific practice of putting doctrines to the test of experience, its emphasis on mind as the only reality (which accords with the findings of a good many progressive thinkers), its traditional conception of the universe which can easily be adjusted to fit in with the views now widely held in the West,* and a growing recognition of the effectiveness of Buddhist meditational practices in coming to understand and master the workings of mind and senses.

The prime causes, however, is the insistent prompting of man's innate spiritual thirst which can no longer be satisfied by the teachings of the old dogmatic religions, still less ignored. It may be years before the number of Buddhists in the West attains significant proportions, but the rate of growth has been phenomenal.

Hitherto, for various historical reasons, the

two forms of Buddhism most popular in the West have been Theravada and, within the Mahayana School, the Sino-Japanese branch known as Ch'an or Zen, which gives supreme importance to meditation and lays relatively little emphasis on either doctrine or ritual. This trend is likely to continue; but it is quite possible that the Vajrayana or Tibetan form of Mahayana, once greatly misunderstood and looked at askance as though it were a kind of Buddhist heresy, will henceforth make headway because of the excellence of its meditational techniques for analysing mental processes and subduing inordinate desires and passions. On the other hand, the Vajrayana's elaborate symbolism and its emphasis on the need for symbolic rites until a very advanced stage is reached are bound to be displeasing to the kind of people who have welcomed Zen just because of its opposite approach. There is a distinct possibility that the West will evolve a *yana*, or vehicle, of its own, combining certain features of each of the traditional schools and perhaps adding some novel features as well. No Buddhist could reasonably object to that, provided that all the essentials of the Dharma were maintained; for that is a process which has already taken place in so many Buddhist countries.

* Ancient Buddhist works speak of time in terms of countless aeons, of there being 'thousands of creatures' in a single drop of water on the one hand and of limitless galaxies of worlds on the other: then again, the analysis of the perceptible universe into minute impulses of energy proceeding in wave-like form is astonishingly up to date. In these and other ways, the Dharma antecedes modern discoveries at the micro- and macrocosmic levels; much more important, it does not oblige its votaries to entertain any fixed beliefs about the physical universe which would automatically bring it into conflict with enlightened scientific thought. Only the doctrine of rebirth is likely to pose a problem; and, as that is neither more nor less susceptible of proof than other doctrines concerning the existence or non-existence of an after-life, it is of little consequence in this particular context. Buddhism does indeed sharply conflict with purely materialistic conceptions of the universe; but, except among old-fashioned Marxists, these no longer have a strong following in the West.

Chapter 3

BUDDHISM IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Laity

A description of what travellers in eastern lands can easily see of Buddhism must be focused chiefly on temples and the adjacent monasteries, for temples are visible and often extremely picturesque, whereas what is really of *first class* importance is hidden since it occurs in the votaries' minds. Moreover, for every monk or 'nun', there are hundreds of layfolk; *these have nothing arresting to offer the casual visitor, but they should not be left altogether out of account.* So, before dealing in general with the sights of the Buddhist world, I shall say a few words about layfolk in general. It should not be supposed that anything like the majority of nominal Buddhists conform closely to this picture; for, as in Christian countries, ordinary people (especially those in the big cities) are rarely much concerned about religion, except in times of grief or anxiety. The kind of people I have in mind are Buddhists who, without going so far as to become monks, take the Dharma very seriously, ideal laymen, if you wish. And among Tibetans at least they probably do form a majority of the whole race.

Buddhists tend to be exceptionally accommodating people. With their strong distaste for hatred and violence, they easily adapt themselves to most forms of government or circumstance without creating any fuss. (I once met a Chinese Buddhist who had spent some years in prison, all of them in solitary confinement; he told me he had warmly welcomed that opportunity for intensive meditation!)

Laymen's rites and meditations are mostly performed in solitude or in small groups and, in many Buddhist dwellings, there are household shrines tucked away in some inconspicuous place, but always on the top floor if possible so that no one can 'pass over' the sacred symbols. Naturally such people earn their living in a wide variety of ways, but the rule of 'right livelihood' makes them eschew certain professions that are bound to cause harm to other sentient beings. Few Buddhist laymen become butchers,

money-lenders, owners of gaming establishments or brothels or even soldiers*, if they can avoid it. During working hours, they appear to behave like everybody else, but in fact they seek to *cultivate self-awareness* all the time, as this is an essential part of Buddhist mind-training. Above all, they try to avoid all occasions and activities that might entail distress for others. In the early mornings and also in the evenings around sunset, they spend some time in meditation similar to that practised at greater length by the monks.

Meditation

The form of meditative practice chosen will depend on circumstances, levels of attainment and the instruction previously received. One technique is to sit quietly observing the processes of body and mind, in order to develop the insight whereby the illusion of possessing any entity that can properly be called a self is systematically overcome. By watching the mind at work and recalling the transient, relative and dependent nature of everything perceptible, it is possible to achieve a state of extraordinary tranquillity which, unlike sleep or trance, *increases* the mind's alertness. A simpler exercise is the attainment of one-pointedness of mind, albeit without any diminution of awareness, which leads more quickly to tranquillity of a less exalted kind and is often used as a preliminary form of mind training. Or the processes of thought may be studied with the devotee dispassionately observing how thoughts arise, lead to other thoughts and pass away. There are dozens of techniques, all aimed at reaching tranquil equilibrium, not for its own sake but to open the way for the flow of intuitive knowledge

* As standing armies did not exist in the Buddha's time, scriptural references to the military profession are rare. Individual Buddhists differ as to the propriety of entering upon a military career.

whereby full understanding dawns, revealing one's own true nature and that of all sentient beings.

A different type of meditation, often practised in conjunction with one of the methods described, is used for developing compassion. Individuals or whole groups of people are pictured in various situations, and the votary directs to them four kinds of thought: loving-kindness, rejoicing in their happiness, sympathizing in their sorrows and regarding all these beings with equanimity, that is to say without special love or aversion for any of them. It is believed that the power of thought directed in this way has effects beneficial to the thinker and to the objects of his compassion. The combination of various practices for the development of wisdom and compassion presently carries the mind to a state in which dazzling revelations occur — revelations of the bliss that supervenes when all distinctions between 'I' and 'other' have been purged away. Profound meditation of this and more advanced kinds is the very core of Buddhist practice; without it, no amount of study or of progress in other directions is of much avail in the quest for Liberation. Those who meditate successfully have an almost palpable quietness about them which makes it a joyful experience to be in their company.

Whether Buddhism remains a great force in men's hearts for many centuries to come or whether it will one day become fossilized to the point of following many other religions into oblivion will depend on the extent to which Buddhists continue these vital practices. To Buddhists, sacred achievement is first and last achievement of the mind, though not at all in the sense of intellectual advancement. The intellect is not despised, but it is far from being regarded as the highest faculty of mind. If the search for sacred intuition is relaxed, Buddhism will perish; all that will be left to mark the coming and passing of the sublime Dharma will be the lovely paintings and sculptures adorning our museums and the marvellous rock-temples, such as those at Ellora and Ajanta in India or at Tun Huang and Ta Tung in China, which testify to a once glorious wave of spiritual aspiration comparable to that which gave birth to the super cathedrals of mediaeval Europe.

Fortunately, Buddhism is not likely to vanish in the foreseeable future; in several countries there have been signs of a revival of the ancient teaching which give fresh heart to those overwhelmed by the tragedies that have overtaken Buddhism in several Asian countries. This atomic age provides much evidence to support the cardinal Buddhist doctrine

that life and suffering are indivisible for as long as the great delusion of selfhood remains; thus the very horrors threatening mankind contain the seeds of regeneration.

The Buddhist World

The countries of the Buddhist world may be divided into five main groups: those from which Buddhism has largely receded but not without leaving splendid traces of its passing (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan); those where the Mahayana flourishes or did so until the coming of communism (China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam) together with countries containing large Chinese communities (nearly all Southeast Asian countries); those which follow the type of Mahayana sometimes known as Vajrayana (Mongolia, Tibet and, to some extent, Nepal); the five Theravadin countries where Buddhism is the principal religion (Burma, Kampuchea, Laos, Sri Lanka and Thailand); and countries where Buddhism has begun to take root (many parts of the Western world).

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, there are ruins of monasteries such as Taxila and some magnificent specimens of Buddhist sculpture; but, with the important exception of some small Tibetan enclaves in the western Himalayas, there are scarcely any signs of living Buddhism. Taxila in Pakistan was, like Nalanda in India a mighty seat of Buddhist learning at a time when the Dark Ages had closed upon the West. In Bangladesh, close to the Burmese frontier, there are some Buddhist communities but no temples of note. In Indonesia, except for the island of Bali, where Mahayana Buddhism is inextricably interwoven with the predominant Hinduism, and for a few cities where Buddhism has recently been re-introduced, there is but one reminder of the days when Buddhism flourished in those islands, the magnificent ruined temple at Borobudur, but that alone will richly reward the traveller. Smaller than the famous Angkor temples in Kampuchea, it is scarcely less rich in marvellous sculptures and bas-reliefs.

India is pre-eminent among this group of formerly Buddhist countries. Buddhist communities are few and far between, except for the immigrant Tibetans and for the millions of Harijans who became converts to Buddhism *en masse* some twenty years ago in the vain hope of escaping the tragic stigma of being classed as 'untouchables'. On the other hand,

there are many fascinating monuments to Buddhism's glorious past. At Ellora and Ajanta, the rows of great temples carved from the living rock, with their astonishing statues, bas-reliefs and frescos, are among the great sights of the world.

The ruins of Nalanda University are, alas, no longer spectacular; it is hard to imagine that it once housed thirty thousand students, each with two servants to swell the numbers, and countless professors some of whose names and writings still survive. However, there are many other places rewarding to the traveller or pilgrim: Bodhgaya, scene of the Buddha's Enlightenment; Sarnath, site of the deer park where the famous First Sermon was preached; Rajgriha, upon whose Vulture Peak the Buddha lived and taught for many years; and Kusinagara where he passed into ultimate Nirvana. There are other noted places, including Sanchi with its great *dagoba* and Asokan railing; details can be found in the tourist brochures.

Mahayana Buddhism flourished in mainland China for nearly two thousand years. Its influence there has been drastically curtailed since 1948; but Chinese-style Buddhism flourishes in Taiwan, Hong Kong and many Southeast Asian lands, especially Malaysia and Singapore. In all of them there are temples, though few are either large or old, as well as active lay associations. At Penang, there is a Buddhist monastery on a neighbouring hill-side. It is tiny compared with the great monasteries in China and yet by no means small. Chinese monks wear black robes of antique style, over which on formal occasions they place a yellowish-brown garment to symbolize the yellow robe worn in tropical countries. They take the monastic vows for life and at their ordination have nine or twelve holes burnt into the skin above their shaven skulls; these serve as a symbol of their renunciation; the pain caused by the burning is easy to endure if the mind is withdrawn and concentrated in a manner well-known to Buddhists.

The nuns wear a habit very similar to that of the monks. Ladies in white robes are generally pious laywomen who observe some but not all of the approximately three hundred and fifty nuns' monastic vows; often they dwell in the Halls of Virtue. All the monks and nuns are very strict vegetarians, whereas ordinary layfolk may please themselves and often choose to be vegetarian on certain days of the lunar month. In the main shrine-halls of most temples will be found three great Buddha statues, sometimes with rows of Arahants to either side. Often there

will be a separate shrine or building presided over by the compassionate Avalokita (Kuan Yin), who generally stands with a jar of nectar (Pure Wisdom) in her hands and rises from amidst waves or lotus flowers.

Chinese temples usually combine the practice of Ch'an (Zen) for use in meditation with that of the Pure Land Sect for public rituals; because, whereas the monks chiefly value meditation, many ordinary people prefer the easier Pure Land practice of concentrating the mind upon six sacred syllables repeated over and over again, sometimes with slow perambulation of the altar. There are rites at dawn and in the late afternoon, when the ancient liturgy is chanted to the accompaniment of percussion instruments which produce deep elemental sounds that help in achieving a heightened state of consciousness. In cities with large Chinese communities, there may also be nunneries, Halls of Virtue and vegetarian restaurants where laymen can get anything from a bowl of noodles to a ten-course banquet for which not even eggs or milk products, let alone the flesh of sentient creatures, are used. Schools and clinics run by the Chinese Buddhist layfolk are not uncommon.

In Japan (as on the Chinese mainland), there are countless magnificent temples and, on the sacred mountains, there are sights of breath-taking beauty, monasteries set amidst clumps of bamboo or groves of ancient pine cling to their slopes, surrounded by fantastic rocks and overlooking sheer ravines filled with clouds of iridescent spray from the foaming waterfalls below. In the older temples can be found statues and paintings of unimaginable beauty; the traveller rubs his eyes, unable to believe that so much beauty exists beyond the world of dreams. The arrangement of the shrine-halls is reminiscent of China, but the buildings themselves are more austere and derive much of their loveliness from being set amidst ancient gardens that have taken centuries to attain perfection.

On the other hand, there are hardly any monks in Japan. The votaries dressed in monastic garb are usually married priests who do not abstain from eating flesh or taking wine and who, on leaving the temple precincts, exchange their robes for Western dress complete with tie and collar; they have taken only minor vows and are therefore not full members of the Sangha.

The most famous temples attract such swarms of tourists from elsewhere in Japan that the shrine-

halls are often roped off from visitors and do not come to life except when funeral ceremonies or other popular rituals are being held. Thus, Japanese Buddhism is outwardly quite apart from that in other Buddhist countries. Of the numerous sects (mostly of Chinese origin), the Zen and Pure Land Sects are predominant, but they are not amalgamated as has happened in China. Besides temples, there are Buddhist universities and libraries; Buddhist research in Japan is of a very high order.

Korean Buddhism shows many signs of its Chinese origin, but the long Japanese occupation of the country has also left its mark. The monks are strictly celibate and eat purely vegetarian food, but there are also married priests in the Japanese style. Similarly, though the temple architecture has some wholly Korean characteristics, in the main its features recall those of either China or Japan. Many of the older temples contain statues and other objects of great beauty and antiquity. Here, too, there are sacred mountains with temples clustering along their slopes and graceful pagodas soaring above the trees.

In Vietnam, most Buddhists subscribe to Mahayana tenets and Chinese influence is very noticeable. However, the Theravada, recently introduced from neighbouring countries, has made some headway. Owing to the tragic war, many temples must have been destroyed and, of those that remain, few are easily accessible to the ordinary traveller. Those that can be visited betray strong Chinese influence, though modified. Temples of great antiquity or outstanding artistic merit are now few and far between. As is the case throughout East Asia, the Chinese version of the Tripitaka is used for study and for temple rites, with the result that Chinese forms of practice are predominant. Like Japan, Vietnam has its Buddhist universities and libraries. Ch'an (Zen) combined with Pure Land techniques is popular, but more or less spiritualistic practices are often introduced. Indeed, the Vietnamese are so fond of spiritualism that new religious sects have arisen in which Buddhism is synthesized with other faiths and overlaid with spirit evocation.

Now that Tibet and Mongolia are less accessible than ever to ordinary travellers, the Vajrayanist branch of the Mahayana can best be observed among the Tibetan communities in India, Nepal and the tiny Himalayan states of Bhutan and Sikkim. Nepal, where Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, is found, does still have a form of Buddhism of its own, that is to say among the non-Tibetan elements of its

population; but, as in the Indonesian island of Bali, it is inextricably blended with Hinduism and it is not always easy to view them apart. All in all, the Varayana is best observed among the Tibetan communities in India.

Strictly speaking, it is wrong to speak of the Vajrayana as something apart from the Mahayana, on whose teachings it is firmly based; however, the Tibeto-Mongol form of Buddhism is sufficiently distinctive in its organization and outward appearance to deserve a special name; furthermore, the Tibetan Canon is used, rather than the Chinese version common to other Mahayanists. The most characteristic feature of this version is a special section called Tantra which deals with strenuous meditational techniques for winning Liberation in a single life-span. The custodians of the Dharma are called Lamas, many of whom are monks observing strict monastic rules while others are married lay-priests analogous to those found in Japan. Among the leading monks, the standard of Buddhist learning is extraordinarily high; in the great monastic universities at Lhasa, it used to take some twenty years of intensive study to obtain a doctor's (Geshé) degree.

Tibetan architecture is not outstanding, but sculpture, bronze-casting and religious painting are magnificent. The temples may seem rather cluttered with painted scrolls and ritual objects; the supernatural beings depicted are so numerous that a guide to Tibetan iconography would run into several large volumes. Partly for this reason, ill-informed people have levelled charges of polytheism against Tibetan Buddhism; indeed, at the popular level it may well be that the countless supernatural beings are often regarded as separately existing divinities, whereas in fact they personify aspects of the human personality and votaries are taught to recognize them as proceeding from their own minds.

In all the countries to which large numbers of Tibetans have fled for sanctuary, they have set up small temples, monastic colleges and also handicraft centres where the sacred arts are preserved; but the exiles mostly live in great poverty; so, apart from lovely artifacts, there is nothing spectacular to be seen. On the other hand, visitors in search of profound teaching or powerful techniques of meditation will be well rewarded if, despite the language barrier, they can somehow secure a learned Tibetan teacher.

The five Theravadin countries are easy to describe collectively because of their very close similarity in matters of religion and much else

besides. They abound in temples, those in Thailand and Burma being especially magnificent. Of special interest are the Temple of the Tooth at Kandy and the famous ruins at Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka; the Shwe Dagon at Rangoon and the temples at Mandalay, Pagan and Pegu in Burma; the royal temples at Bangkok, the gigantic orange-tiled *chedi* (pagoda) at Nakorn Pathom, and the ancient temples at Chiang Mai and Lamphun in Thailand; the lovely temples lining the river at Luang Prabang in Laos; and the Silver Temple at Phnom Penh as well as the world-famous ruins of Buddhist-Hindu temples at Angkor in Kampuchea. The Angkor temples, with their marvellous sculptures and bas-reliefs, are without peer.

In the Theravadin countries, there are many hundreds or thousands of monasteries from which the yellow-robed monks issue forth at dawn to receive food offerings from the householders. In this and all other respects, the Sangha is liberally supported by the laity, who believe their pious gifts will earn them rich stores of merit. In every village, the temple-monastery is the centre of social life, and guidance from the monks is sought by the villagers in all their affairs. Temple ceremonies take place every day; on the four holy days during each lunar month, they are attended by large numbers of layfolk. Particularly colourful are the processions of layfolk bearing gifts to the monasteries when the rainy season is over, and the grand ordination ceremonies at which the candidates arrive (sometimes on horseback) dressed as princes to symbolize the mundane joys they are about to renounce. Most youths spend a few weeks or months as novices before entering upon their careers, but monastic vows are not taken for life as they are in the Mahayanist countries; people may stay in or leave the Sangha at will.

As these countries are predominantly Buddhist, Buddhist activities of all kinds are more frequent and widespread than in any of the Mahayana countries, except pre-communist Mongolia and Tibet, where a special situation prevailed. Few government or private celebrations take place without a chapter of monks to chant auspicious sutras and bless the occasion. In Thailand (as used to be the case in Laos and Kampuchea when they were monarchies), there are close relations between the King and the Sangha; and in Burma, too, the government is on good terms with the religious authorities. All that has been said under this heading applies a little less

to Sri Lanka than to the other four countries because, whereas the others are almost wholly Buddhist except in just a few areas, in Sri Lanka there are enough Hindus and Christians to make the Buddhist majority very much less overwhelming.

Traditionally, education was in the hands of the Sangha in all Theravadin countries. Though the governments have now taken it over, the monks still have a part to play. Moreover, there are a number of monastic colleges and universities, libraries, lay associations and so forth. Sermons and certain rites are even broadcast over radio and television. One could live in most of the Mahayanist countries without being very conscious of the part played by Buddhism, but that would scarcely be possible in a Theravadin country. Nevertheless it would be a mistake to suppose that the conduct of the layfolk (especially in urban areas) is profoundly affected by their religious beliefs. Selfishness, violence and absence of restraint are becoming as common as in non-Buddhist countries. Modern apathy towards all kinds of religion is exceedingly widespread; although, as in the West, there are now signs that some people are eager to restore all that was best in the old spiritual traditions, recognizing their value in dealing with the ills of modern life.

Regarding Buddhism in the West, it is impossible to generalize. Still in its infancy, it is well represented in some places and totally absent from very many others. In the British Isles, there are Sri Lankan, Thai and Tibetan temples or institutions besides the indigenous ones such as the famous Buddhist Society which established its headquarters in London during the very early part of this century. The introduction of the faith through such divers channels may prove something of a disadvantage; people trained in meditation at the Thai temple near London might be confused by the rather different training they would receive, say, at the Tibetan gompa in Scotland. There is, of course, a splendid opportunity to build in Britain a form of Buddhism that transcends all sectarian differences, but whether this will happen remains to be seen; the history of Christianity suggests that Westerners are more prone to quarrel about sectarian differences than Orientals; in Asia, there is some misunderstanding but no antagonism between Buddhists of different sects or schools.

In continental Europe, the situation is roughly similar to that in Britain except that, in most countries, Buddhism has made less headway. Of particular

interest is the fact that Vajrayanist Buddhism has a certain following in Hungary, where one might have expected it to be disallowed. France and Germany are probably the two continental countries with the largest number of Buddhists and Buddhist institutions and a fair number of books on Buddhism are published in both French and German.

In the United States and Canada, there has been a notable upsurge of interest in Buddhism. Apart from the temples established by Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan and Mongol immigrants, there are now some flourishing Buddhist institutions of native American origin. They include a rather large Zen centre at a mountain resort in the United States where both Japanese and American monks instruct the laymen who go to study there for weeks or months at a time. In Australia and New Zealand, Buddhist activity is growing; in the former country there are already some Thai, Chinese and Tibetan type temples and meditation centres. In Africa and South America, there is virtually nothing of the sort. In the Soviet Union, there are still Buddhists among the Asian population and a few Buddhist institutes and libraries, but the Dharma can scarcely be described as flourishing. The Soviet Union's contribution has been mostly in the form of scholarship in the fields of Mongolian and Tibetan studies. By far the greatest volume of Buddhist publications in the West is found in the United States, where literally hundreds of books on Buddhism have been published during the past few years.

Naturally there is as yet very little specifically Buddhist architecture in western countries; most of the temples are converted private houses, though there are now a few in traditional Asian style. The impact of Buddhism is better gauged by the number of publications and of lectures and seminars on Buddhist subjects. It will be interesting to see whether the present upsurge of interest is a flash in the pan or whether, as seems more probable, Buddhism has taken firm root in the West and will increase its following as the years go by.

Such, then, is the Buddhist world. Like most other worlds, it is full of contrary trends. Dead, decaying or ruthlessly suppressed in some countries, flourishing in others and now taking root far from its homelands, Buddhism on the whole shows encouraging reactions to the conflicts of this age. Some scholars — such as the economist, the

late E.F. Schumacher — see it as one likely antidote for those conflicts, from noise pollution to nuclear proliferation. The historian, Arthur Toynbee has also drawn attention to its importance for the West. Free of dogma and firmly based on the twin principles of wisdom and compassion, Buddhism can do no harm to those unmoved by it and will greatly reward those who seek to penetrate beyond life's surface glitter to the very source of being. Entering upon those higher states of consciousness that culminate in lasting freedom from ill, they will triumph over that immensely powerful adversary, the ego, and behold the immaculate perfection that lies beyond.

The World Fellowship of Buddhists

This world body (now accorded Non-Governmental Organization, or 'NGO', status by UNESCO) seeks to 'make known the sublime doctrine of the Buddha so that its benign spirit of service and sacrifice may pervade the entire world.....so that there may be peace and harmony amongst men and happiness for all beings'. With its membership open to all Buddhist countries and organizations without distinction of sect, it has held twelve General Conferences to discuss the promotion of Buddhism and to enable Buddhists to play their part in the solution of world problems, besides disseminating valuable publications and undertaking cultural and welfare work. Founded in Colombo in 1950 under the presidency of a world-famed scholar, Dr. G.P. Malalasekera, it moved to Rangoon in 1959 and the Hon. U Chan Htoon became its President. In 1963, it moved to Bangkok, where it now has a very fine permanent headquarters; and, in the following year, its current President, the well-loved Princess Poon Pismai Diskul, took office. It is inspiring to see yellow-robed Theravadin monks, Tibetan and Mongolian lamas, and Chinese, Japanese and Korean monks in characteristic garb, together with Buddhist laymen from all parts of the globe working enthusiastically together. Never before has such an attempt been made to harmonize all the varied segments of that colourful, lovable and altogether admirable entity that I have called 'The World of Buddhism'.

Suggestions for Further Reading

The quantity of books on Buddhism published in the English-speaking and many other countries is now so great — owing to a great upsurge of interest in the subject during recent decades — that a satisfactory bibliography, even if confined just to English-language books, would require several dozen closely printed pages. Moreover, new works are coming out so fast that it would soon become out of date. Accordingly, the suggestions for further reading given here are confined to some remarks on sources.

Large towns in most English-speaking countries are likely to have libraries and general bookshops in which at least some works on Buddhism can be found; and, particularly in the USA and Canada, there are considerable numbers of bookshops specializing largely in works on Eastern philosophy, religion and art wherein Buddhism is very well represented, and orders can be placed there for Buddhist works from other countries. Furthermore, if advice is required in making choices among such a wealth of materials, many countries have Buddhist associations, groups or societies which are happy to provide advice and information. Should there be any difficulty in discovering the whereabouts of such bodies, a letter to the World Fellowship of Buddhists, 33 Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok 11, Thailand, would be a good way of eliciting the address of major Buddhist centres in a given area; and, from those centres, information about smaller and more local bodies could in most cases be obtained.

There are currently (1980) Regional Centres of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in twenty-six countries, namely:

Australia	France	Singapore
Austria	Hong Kong	Sri Lanka
Brazil	India	Sweden
Burma	Japan	Taiwan
Bangladesh	Malaysia	Thailand
Canada	Mongolia	U.K.
Federal Republic of	Nepal	U.S.A.
Germany	Philippines	U.S.S.R.
Finland	Republic of Korea	Vietnam

Some of these countries have more than one such centre. For example, there are three in France and similar number in the U.S.A. The latter country is known by the W.F.B. to have fifty-eight Buddhist institutions in all, and the total number is likely to be considerably larger. Such institutions have recently proliferated also in Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, as well as in a number of

non-English speaking countries both in Europe and South America, to say nothing of those in Asian countries (among them, Burma, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand) which are actively concerned with the spread of knowledge about Buddhism beyond, as well as within, their national territories. Unfortunately, not all of these institutions as yet have formal contact with the W.F.B. and there is probably no source from which *complete* information as to their distribution can be obtained. However, as the word Buddhist occurs in the names of most of them, it is often possible to discover the address of the nearest merely by glancing at the local telephone directory.

Countries with special bookshops devoted wholly to works on Buddhism (many of them in the English language) include Japan, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Another development in recent years has been the proliferation of Buddhist periodicals in English and other languages. The W.F.B. is in a position to supply the names of a considerable number of these journals. It would be invidious to give an arbitrary (because necessarily incomplete) list of them here, but special mention may be made of *The Middle Way* published by the Buddhist Society, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PH, England, as the oldest still existing Buddhist journal in any European language. It has been in existence for close on sixty years. A publication remarkable for the beauty of its illustrations as well as the interest of its written content is the annual *Visakha Puja* published under the auspices of The Buddhist Association of Thailand, in Bangkok.

An example of the extent to which Buddhism now arouses interest even in non-Buddhist circles is afforded by the 1974 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which contains seven articles on Buddhist subjects, amounting in all to seventy-two pages, of which nearly three are devoted to bibliography. The articles are to be found under the headings: Buddha, Buddhism, History of Buddhism and Buddhist, of which the last precedes the words Mysticism, Mythology, Philosophy and Sacred Literature.

That Buddhism and Eastern mysticism generally are now arousing the interest of eminent scientists — physicists in particular — is exemplified by the publication of, among other scientific works with a bearing on Buddhism, *The Tao of Physics* by Fritjof Capra, published by Shambhala Press, Boulder, Colorado, U.S.A., and Fontana/Collins, London. Dr. Capra is well-known in his native Europe and in the U.S.A. for his work on theoretical high-energy physics. Numerous other examples could be quoted. However, it should

be remembered that Buddhists take their stand upon knowledge gained initially through direct intuitive perception, of which the Buddha's Enlightenment is held to be the supreme example. While warmly welcoming scientific corroboration of their understanding of the nature of the universe and of life itself, they continue to rely on intuition won during meditation rather than on data obtained through the objective sciences, since these tend to deal with the external universe rather than with the inner development which is central to Buddhism.

This inner development is, of course, the fruit of practice. Buddhists hold that reading about the Dharma (Teachings) can show the way; but that, to be effective, *the way must be lived*. Though reading is of great value initially, no amount of book knowledge is spiritually worth while, unless it leads to action.

* The author is grateful to the Siam Society for much of the information contained in this part.

Facing: A lovely specimen of Buddhist Gandhara art (second century A.D.) now housed at Peshawar, Pakistan.

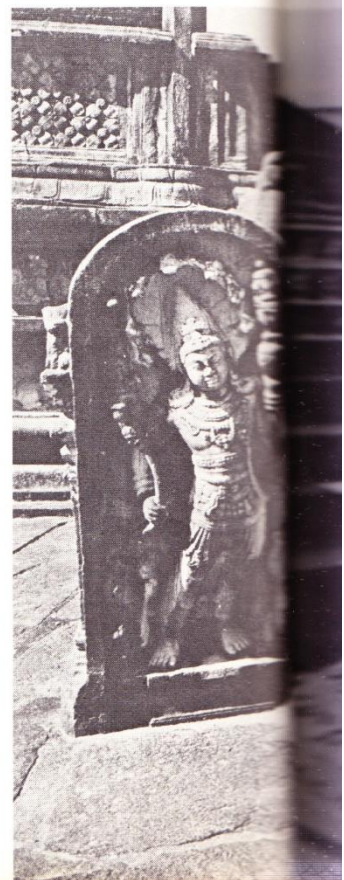
(i) Buddhist iconography

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Left: An ancient figure of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, or Buddha-to-come, housed at Karachi. The Greek influence on such sculptures of the Gandhara period is noticeable. Below: Part of a scene depicting the future Buddha's temptation by Mara just prior to his Enlightenment. From one of the cave temples at Ajanta, India. Above: Head of a reclining Buddha at Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka.



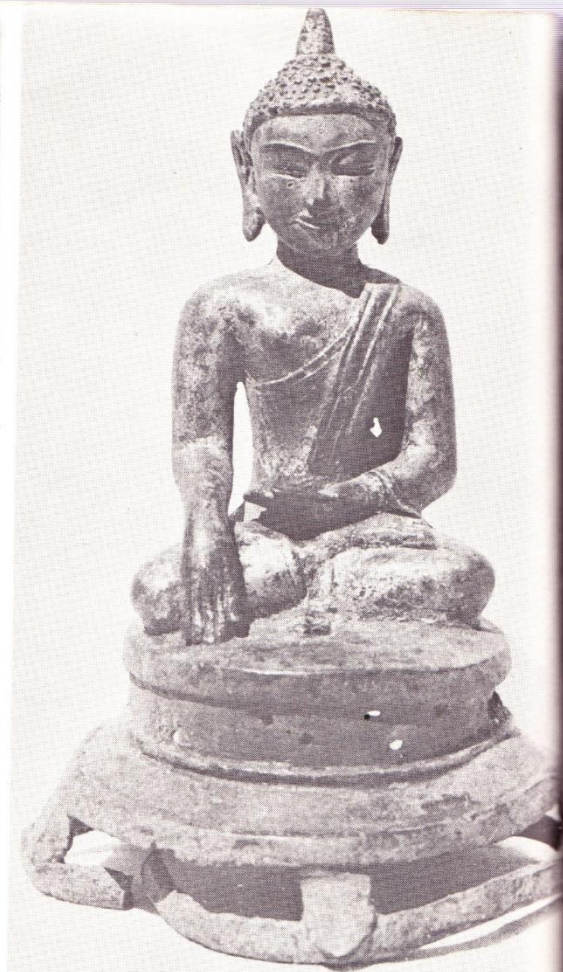


Above: Burmese statue of the goddess Tara, seventh century A.D.



Above: A stone Buddha statue at Buddhagaya, India, showing little trace of Grecian influence unlike the very earliest statues. Left: Buddha statue in background, guardian deities and sculptured stone at Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka.



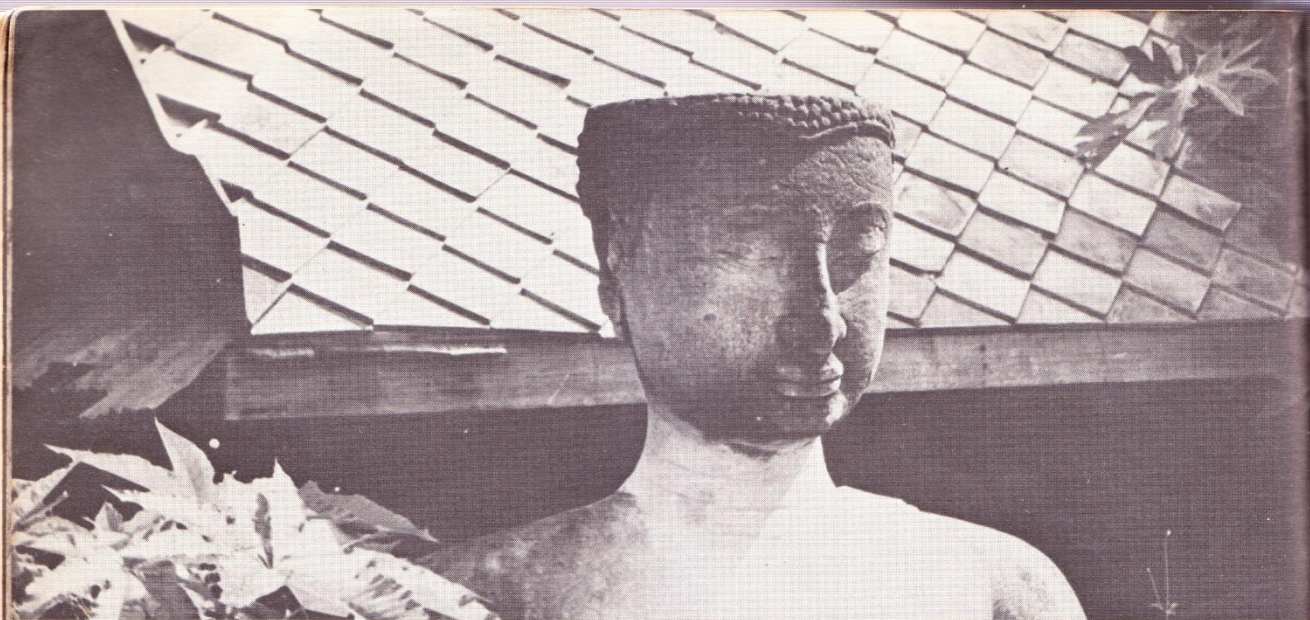


Above: A seated Buddha, said to be at least a thousand years old. Pagan, Burma. Above (left): A Burmese stone representation of the Buddha's nativity. His mother, Queen Maya, supported by a servant, holds on to a branch of a tree in the garden of Lumbini. The Buddha stands at her right hip. Left: This Bangkok statue is an exact replica of one of Thailand's most renowned statues — the Jinarat Buddha at Pitsanuloke. It is of a gleaming metal alloy somewhat like gold in appearance.





Above (left): An antique standing Buddha at Pagan, Burma. Above: The Prasrisakyamuni, 'Blessed Lord Sakyamuni', main Buddha statue in Wat Mahadhat, Sukhothai, ancient capital of Thailand. Left: Many Thai temples have courtyards surrounded by rows of Buddha statues, which, are identical in some cases.



Above: A remarkable Buddha statue with an expression that indicates pure equanimity combined with strength of purpose. Thailand. Below: Chinese guardian deity of stone. Bangkok. Right: One of the four guardian deities at Jade Cloud Monastery, Peking. It represents tremendous energy in protecting the Dharma from corruption.

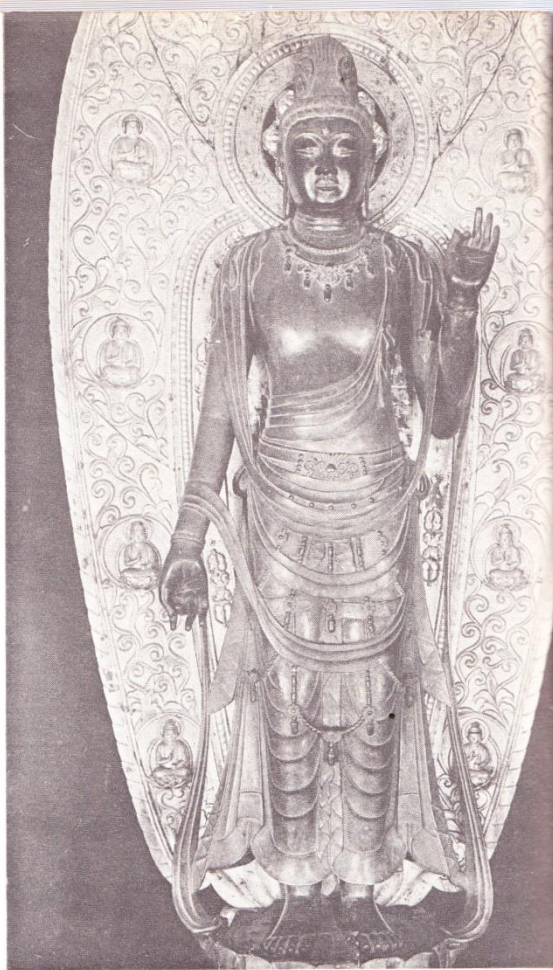


Below: Thai temple guardian deity, Bangkok. Right: Sung dynasty (960 - 1279 A.D.) Chinese wooden statue of the Bodhisattva Kuan Yin, an embodiment of the quality of compassion.

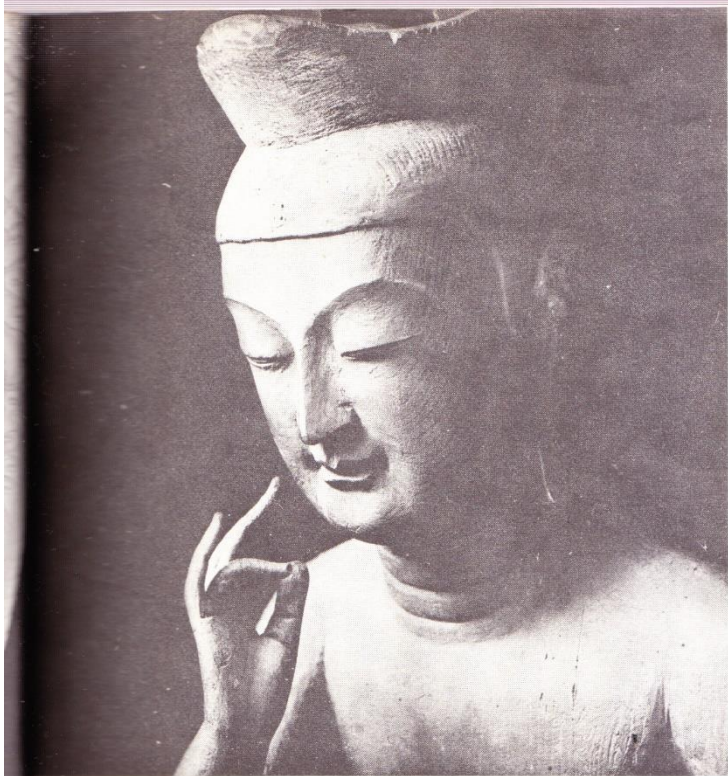


Right: Chinese guardian deity in the grounds of a Buddhist temple in Bangkok. The gourd in his hand suggests a Taoist origin.





Above (left): A Japanese statue of the Bodhisattva Maitreya or Buddha-to-come. Above: The gilded metal 'aura' of this Bodhisattva is typical of many Japanese statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Left: The features of this guardian of the Dharma depict stern determination to overcome all hindrances to the Enlightenment of sentient beings. Japan.

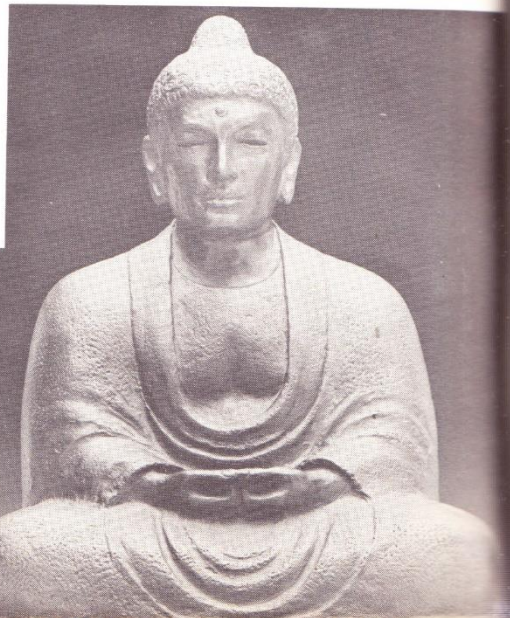
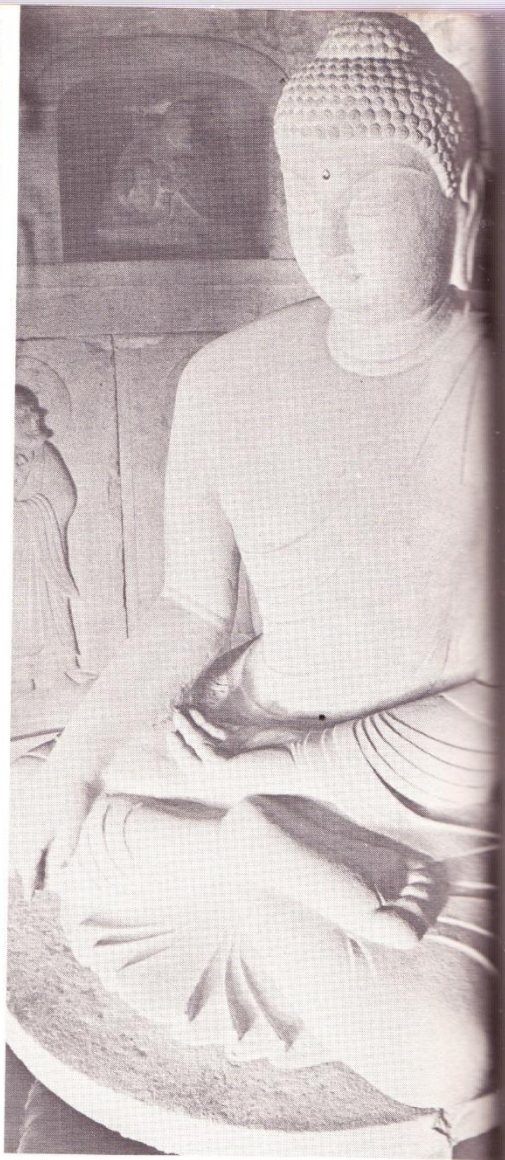
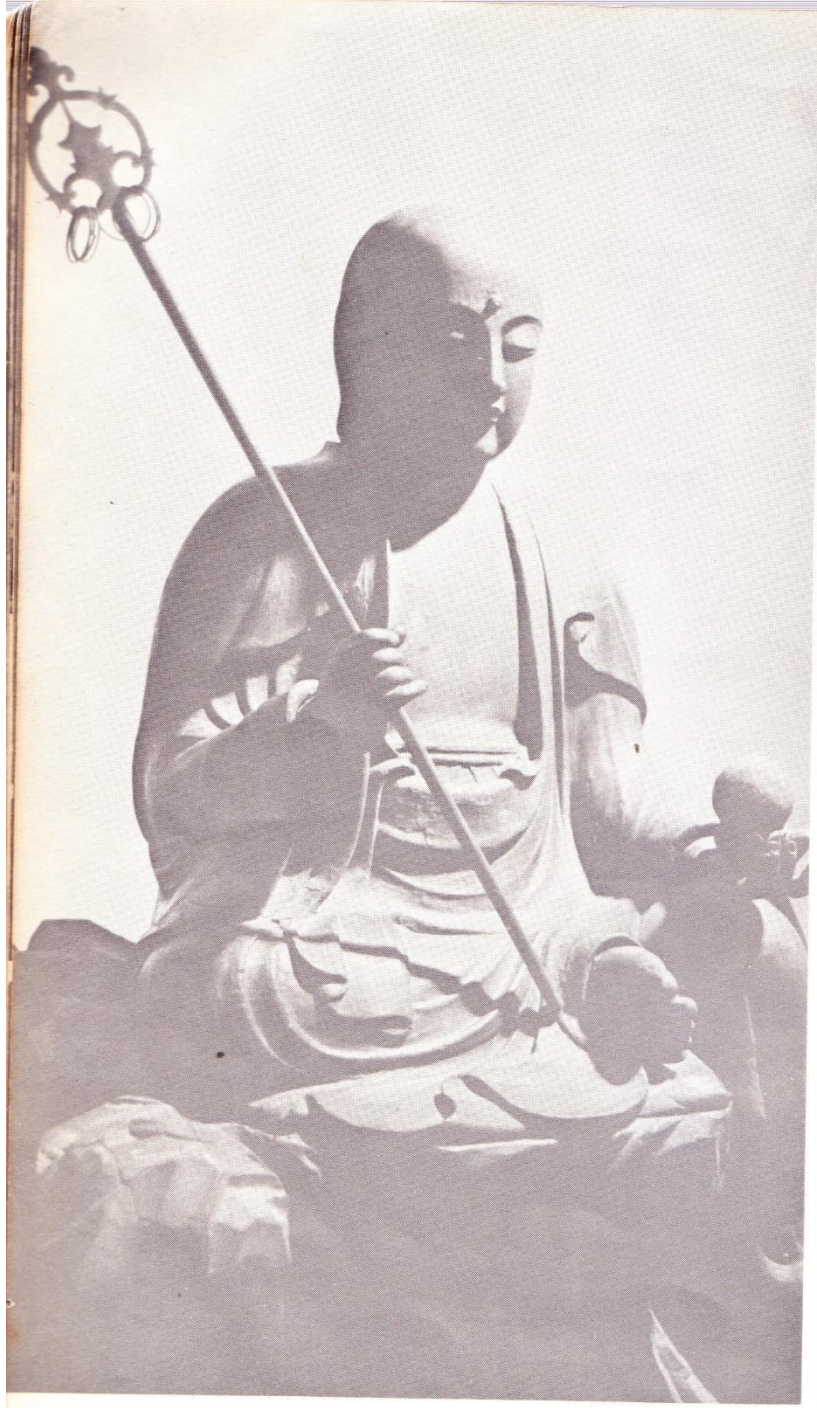


Above: A lovely wooden seventh-century statue of Maitreya, Japan. Below: A Japanese statue of Kannon (Kuan Yin or Avalokitesvara) showing a notable characteristic of much Chinese iconography – a way of portraying Bodhisattvas as being above distinctions of sex.



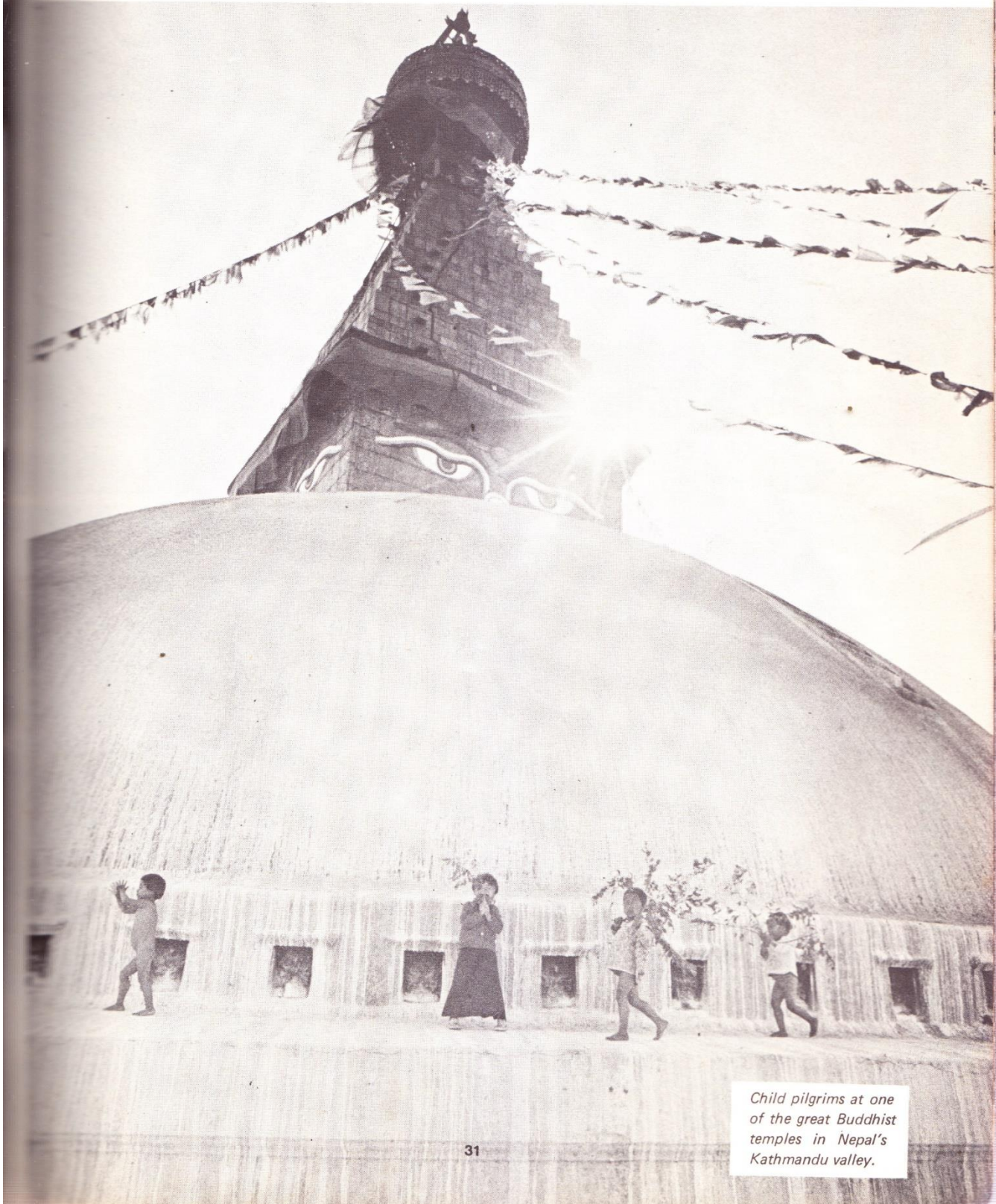
Above: 'The Moonlight Bodhisattva' rapt in meditation. Ancient Japanese.





Above: Fourteenth-century Japanese wood carving of Jizo, the patron of children and vanquisher of hell.
 Above (right): A magnificent eighth century white stone Buddha statue in Sokkuram Grotto, Korea.
 Right: A Buddha figure modelled by Cubitt Bevis FRBS in 1970 — one of the first notable Western Buddhist statues.

(ii) Buddhist temples



Child pilgrims at one of the great Buddhist temples in Nepal's Kathmandu valley.

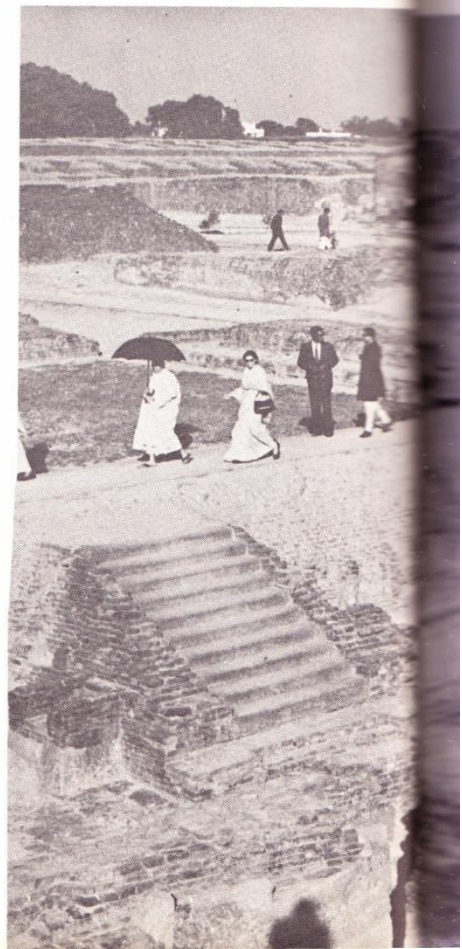
The sacked universities

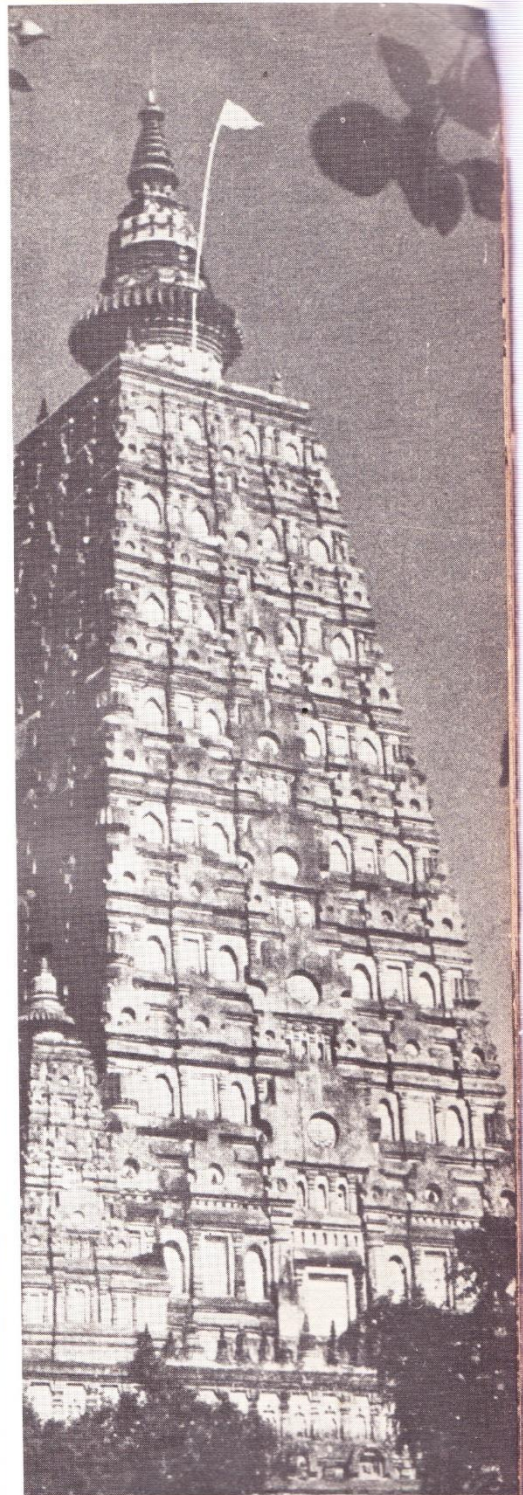
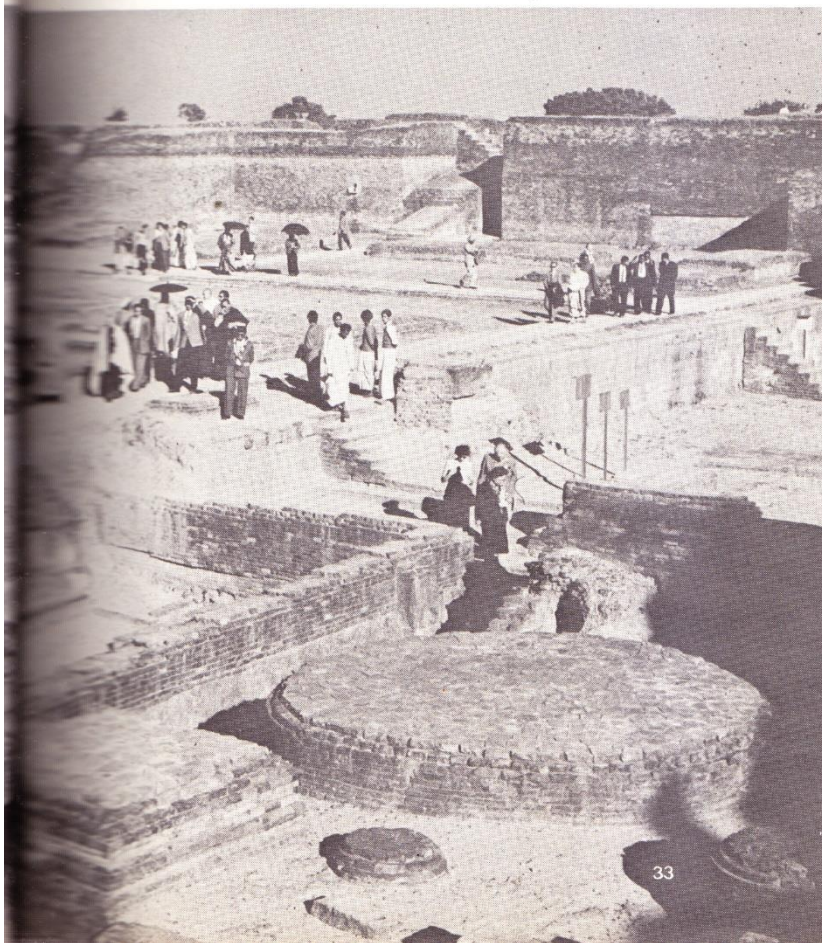
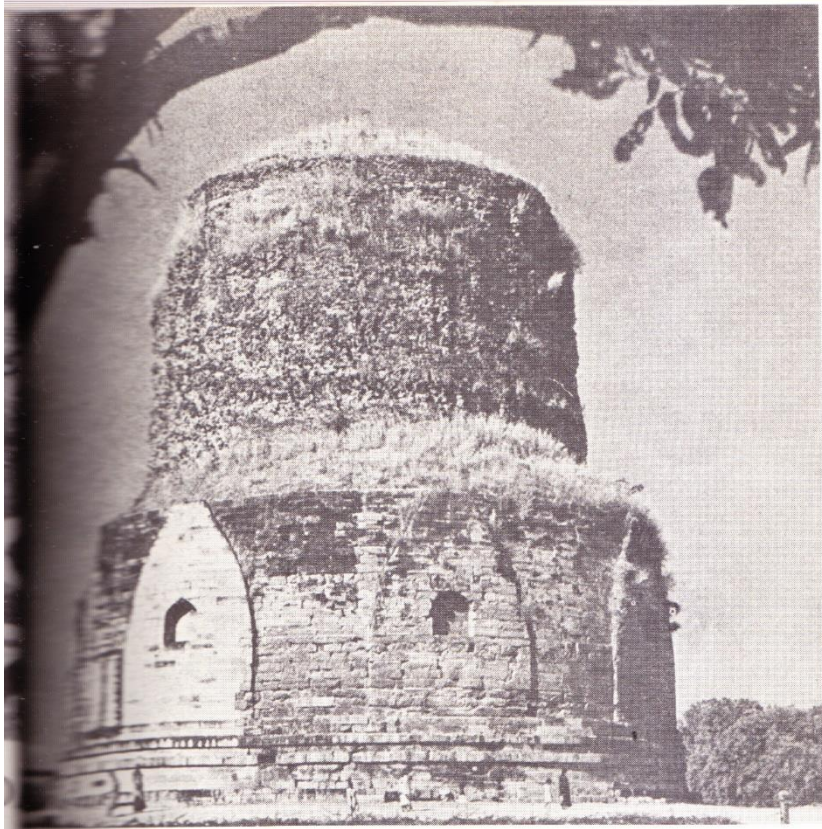
TAXILA...

Right: Ruins of a great stupa at Taxila, Pakistan. Together with Nalanda in India, it was responsible for a great upsurge of Buddhist learning which began about 2,000 years ago and ended at both with their sacking. Below: Ruins of a great hall at Taxila. Below (right): The university site at Nalanda. More than 1,500 years ago it had over 20,000 students. Second right: Ruined stupa at Nalanda.

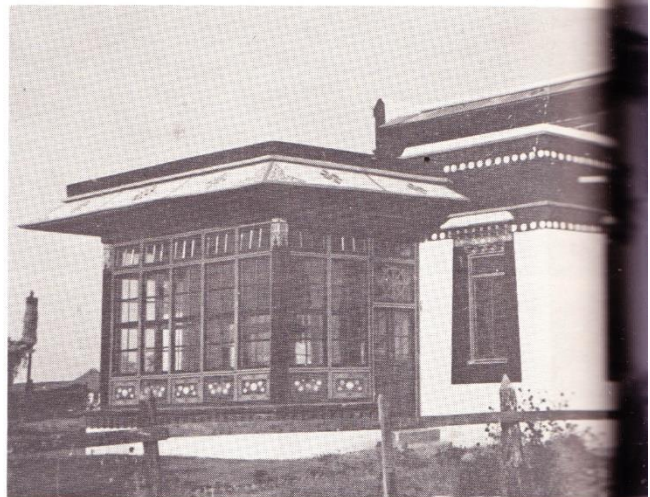
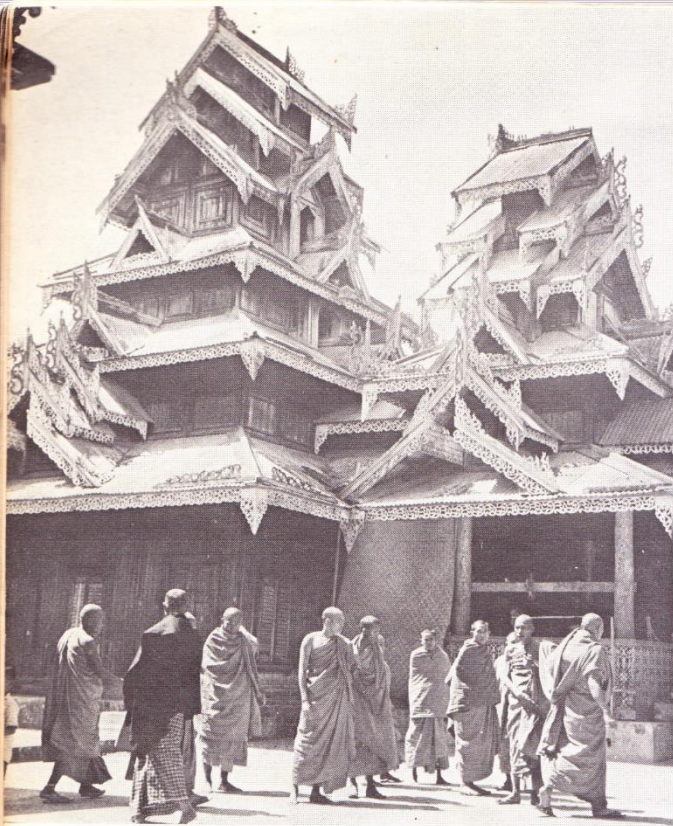


....and NALANDA



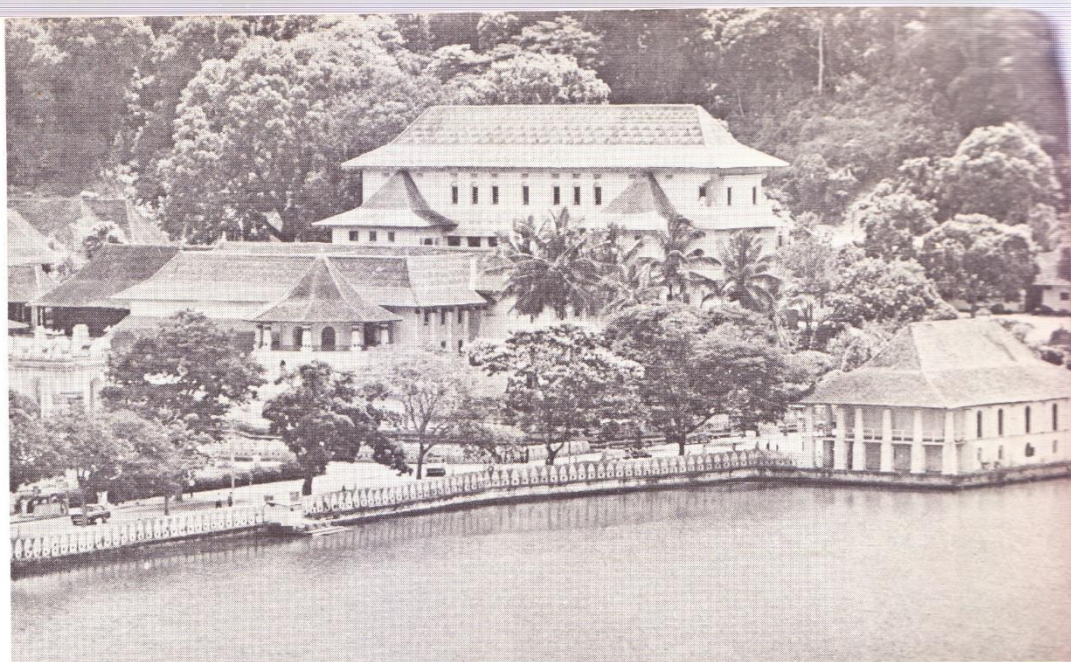


Above: The great spire of the Hindu temple at Buddhagaya, the Place of Enlightenment. Chiang Mai, Thailand, has a Buddhist temple with a structure modelled after it, built in 1447 A.D.



Above: Modern Buddhist temple at Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, showing strong Burmese influence. Buddhism never completely vanished from the mainland of the Indian sub-continent. Above (right): The Tibetan temple at Buddhagaya, India. Right: Modern Tibetan temple at Mainput, Madhya Pradesh, India, Below: A typical rural temple in Sri Lanka.





Above: The Temple of the Tooth, Kandy, Sri Lanka. It is believed to contain a sacred tooth relic of the Buddha.

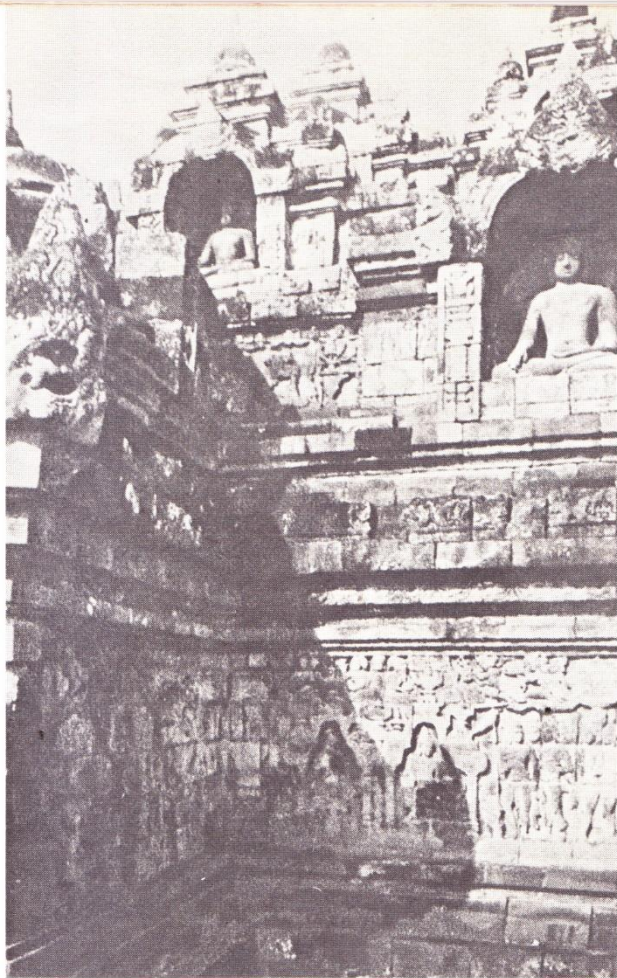


Above: The great stupa at Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. Left: One of the many mountain temples in Sri Lanka.



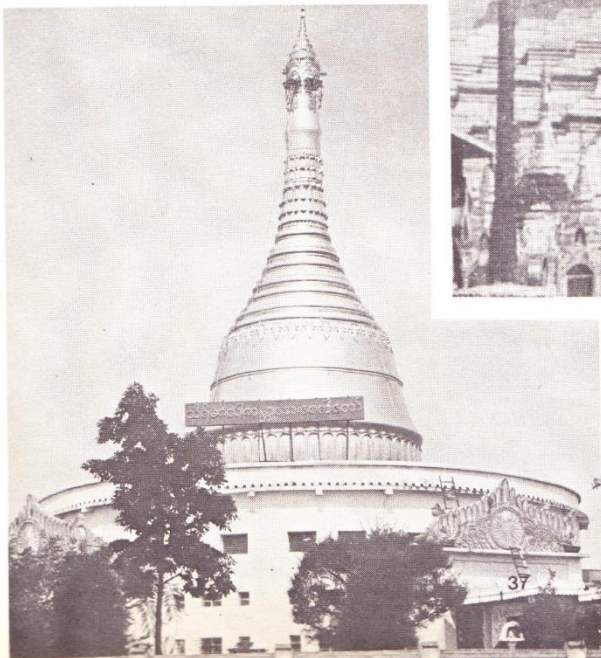
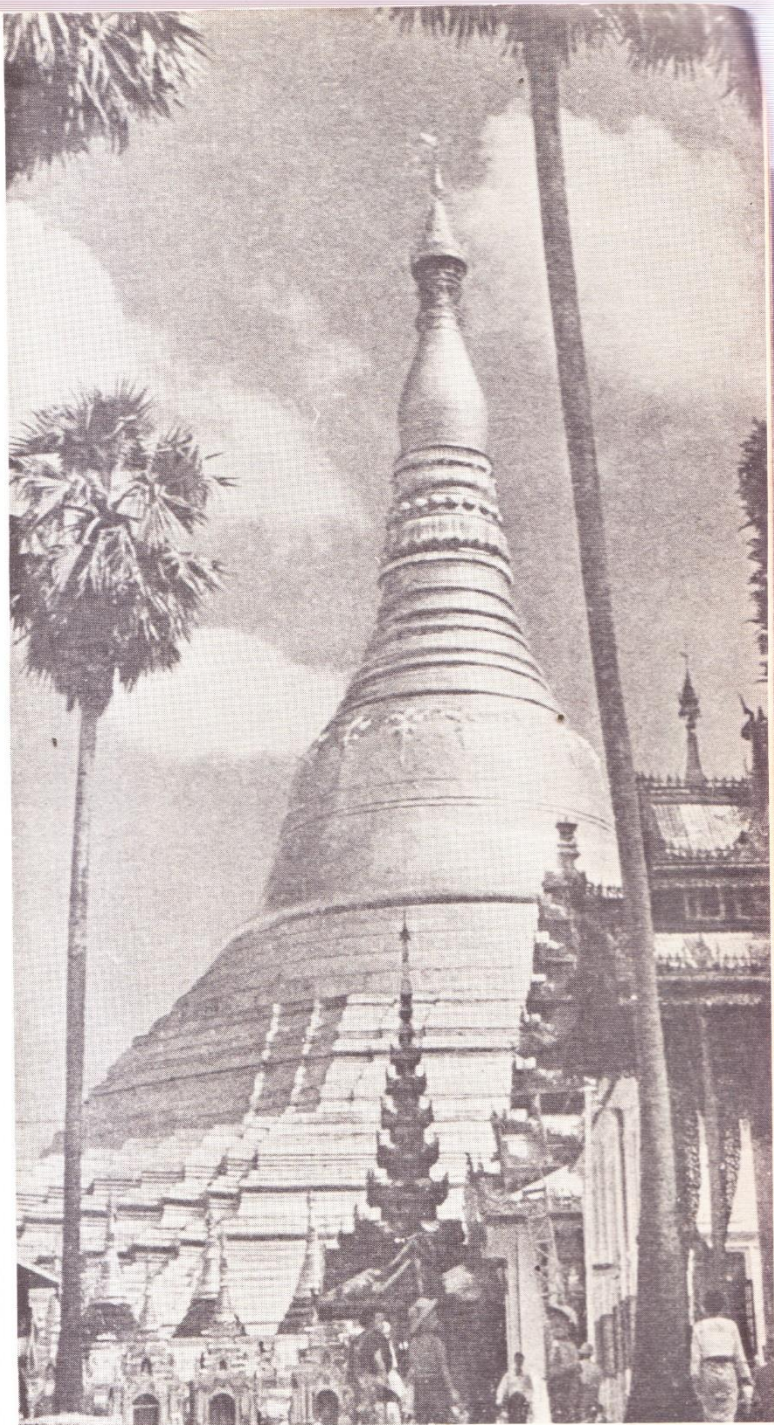
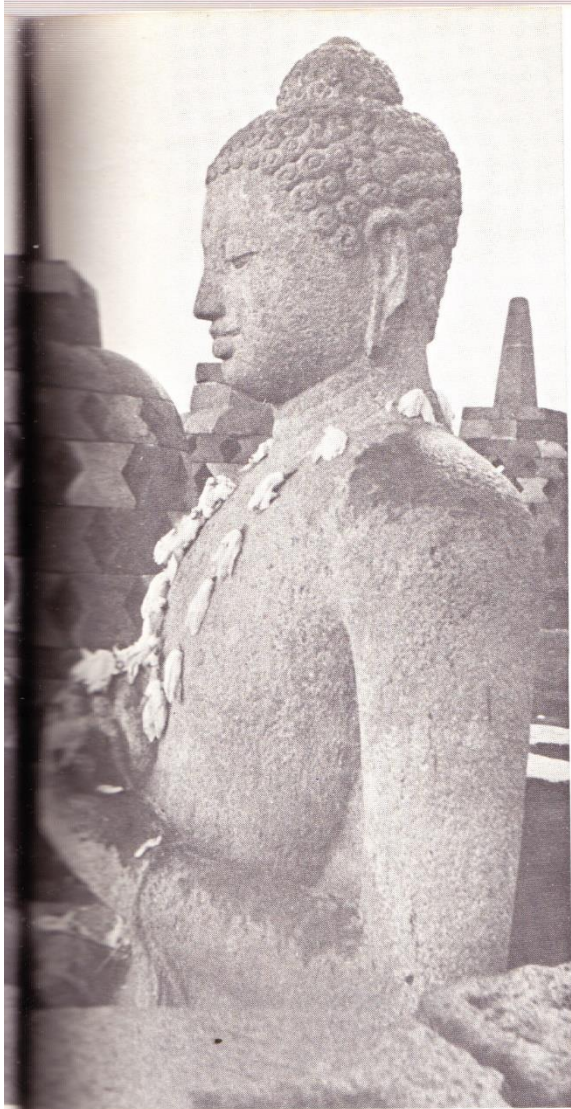


Right: Prambanan Mahayana Buddhist temple (main building) in the Borobudur area, near Solo, Java, Indonesia. Above: Wall sculptures at Borobudur.

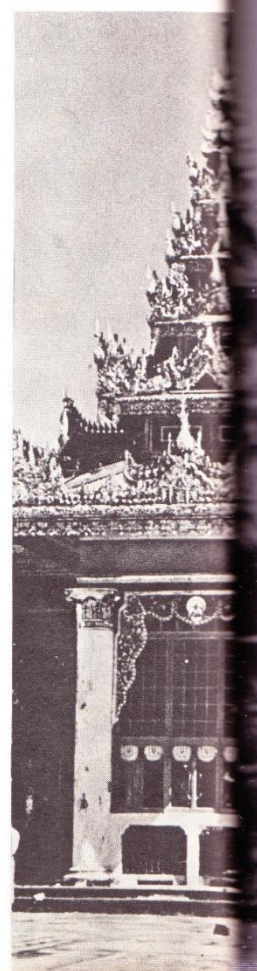
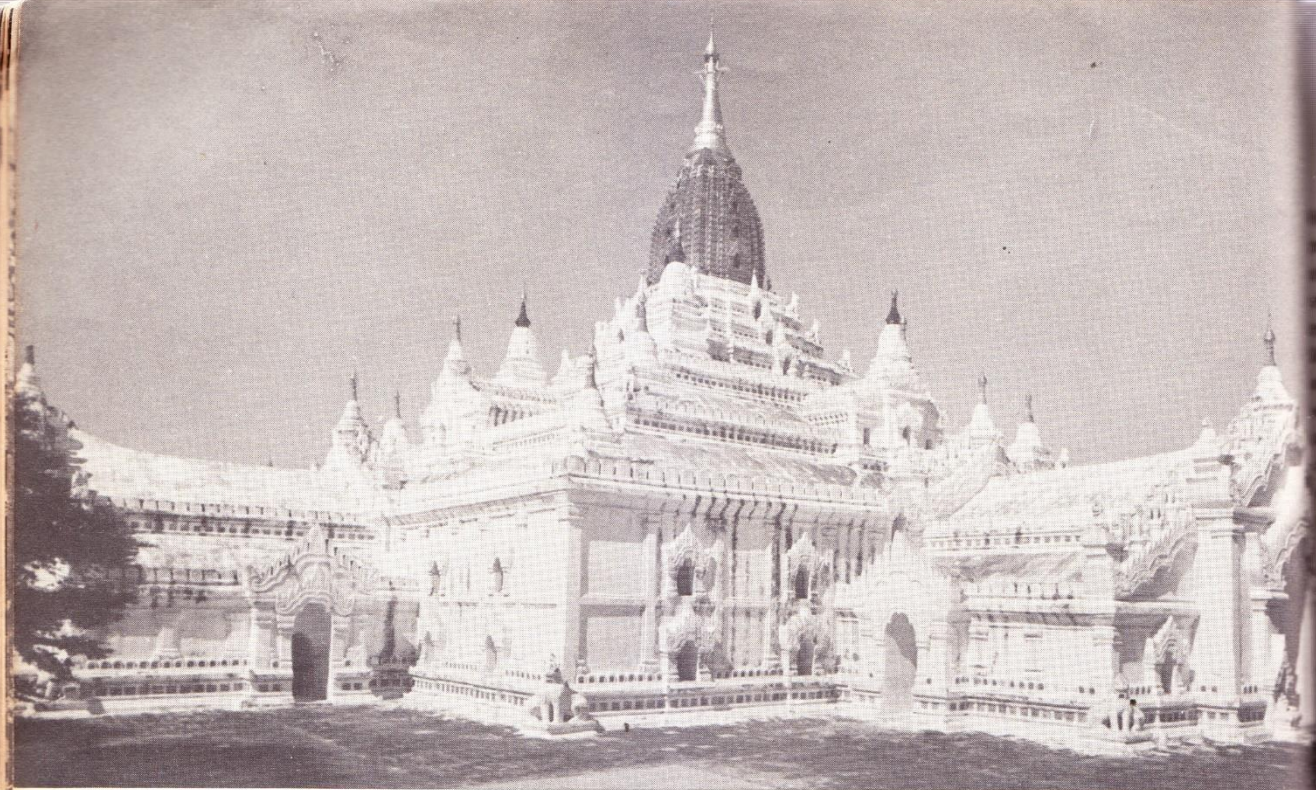


Right: Part of the magnificent Buddhist complex at Borobudur. Above: Another view of Borobudur in Java, Indonesia.



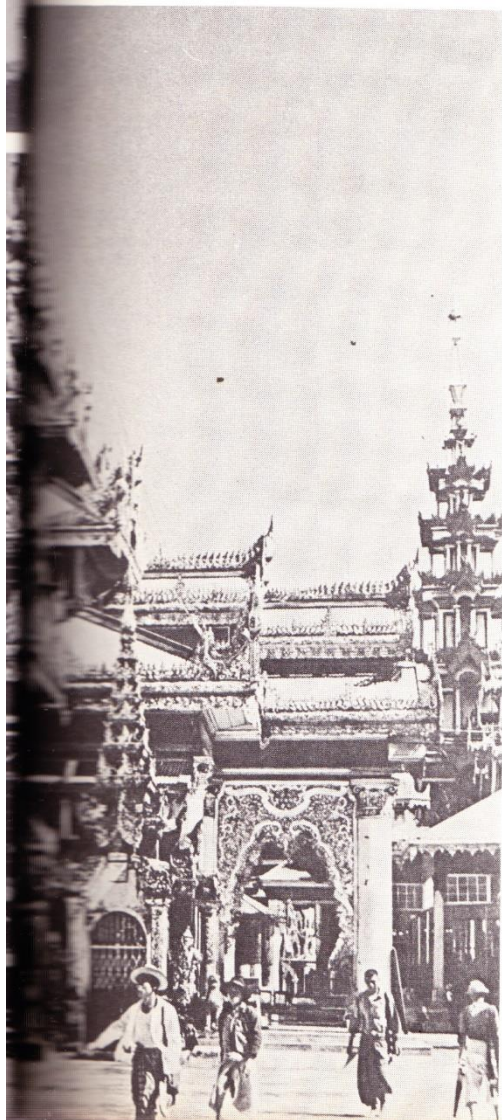


Chetiya or reliquary towers are widely prevalent in South East Asia. Above: The great gilded spire of the Shwe Dagon, Rangoon, Burma. Left: A more modern Burmese-style temple. It's spire is covered with gold leaf.

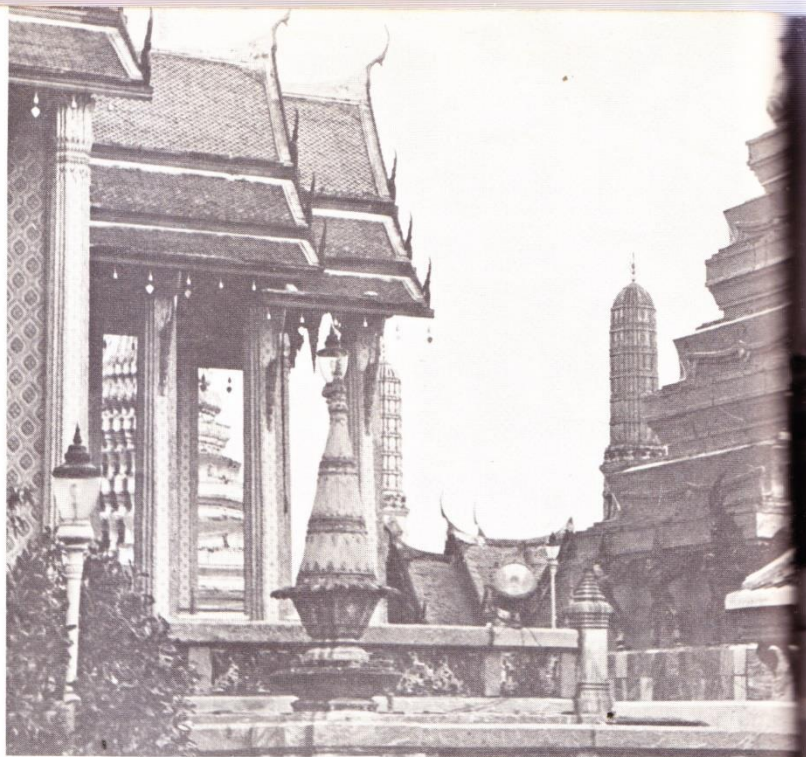
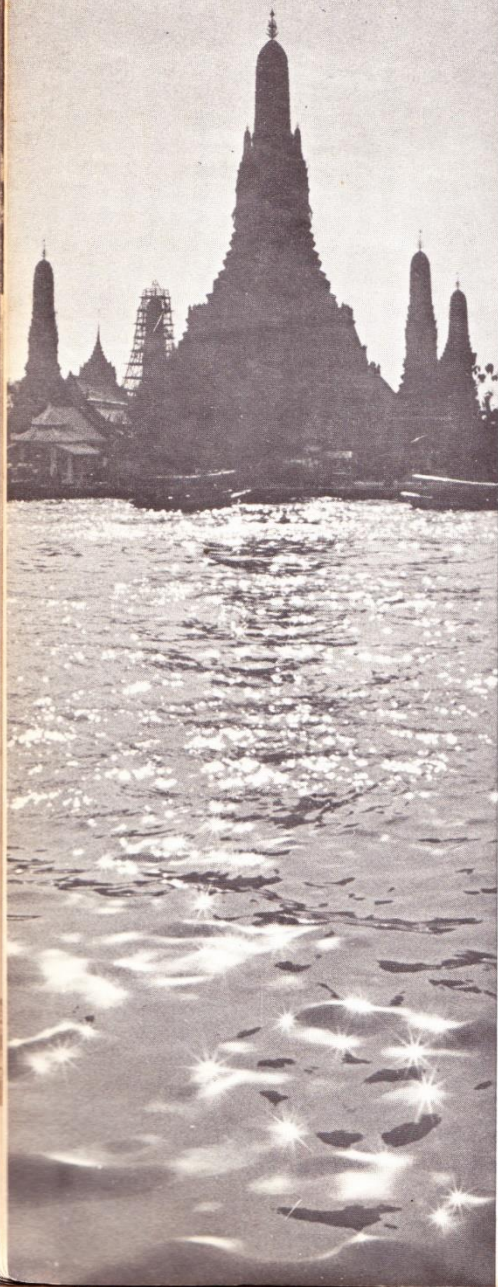


Top: The Ananda Temple, loveliest of all the temples in South East Asia, built in 1091 A.D. at Pagan, Burma. Above: Eleventh century A.D. temple at Pagan, Burma.

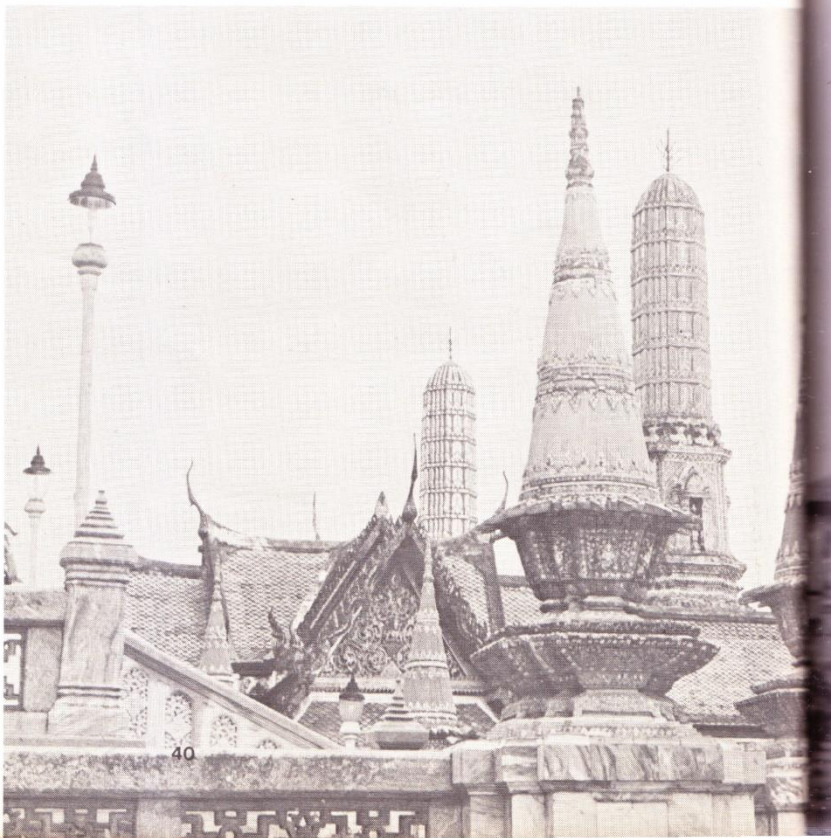
Right: Pagoda or
 stupa at Pagan
 in style typical
 of Burmese archi-
 tecture. Below:
 Burmese temples
 are often adorned
 with lavishly
 painted and gilded
 woodwork, inset
 with jewels or col-
 ored glass.

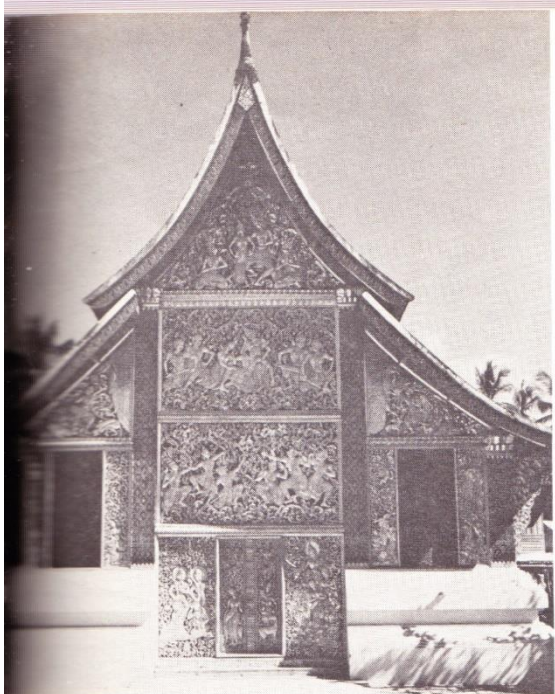


Gateway to a temple at
 Pagan, Burma.

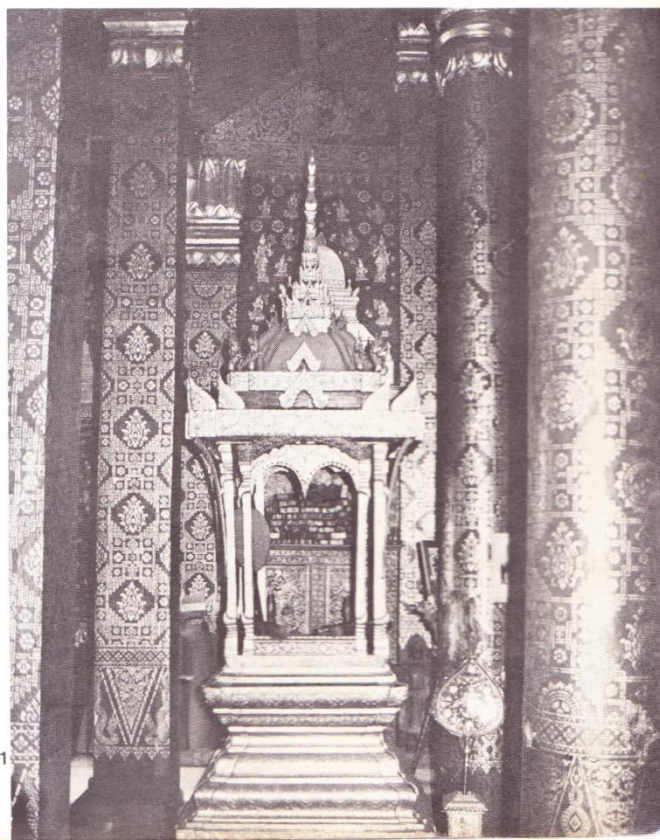


Left: Temple of the Dawn on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River, Bangkok. Above: A view in Bangkok's Temple of the Emerald Buddha which shows many typical components of Thai temple architecture, including melodious wind-bells. Below: Also in the Temple of the Emerald Buddha excellent examples of the elaborate decorations characteristic of Bangkok's Royal temples.





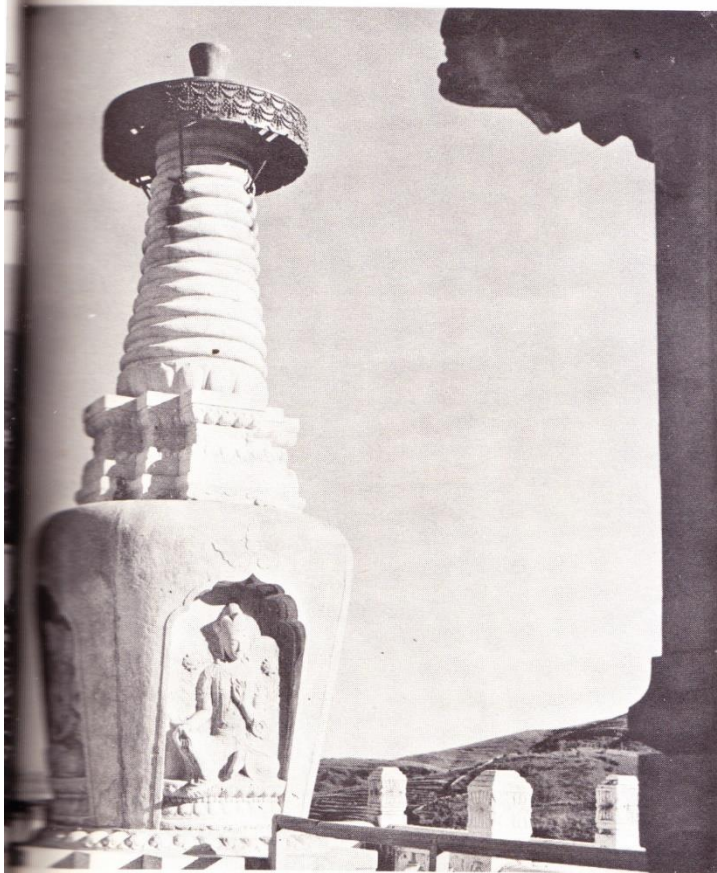
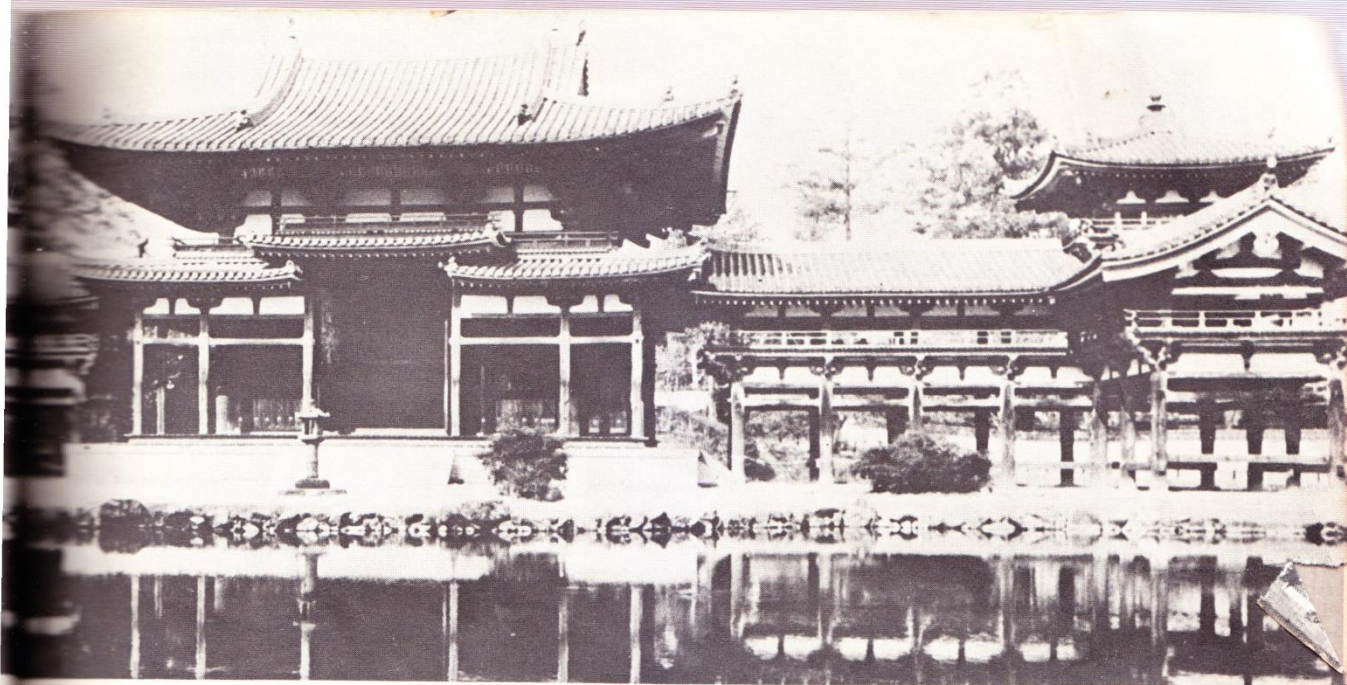
Below (left): Sights such as this may be seen in many parts of Thailand. Beautifully coloured stucco and yellow porcelain roof tiles are features of Thai architecture. Above (left): This lovely building houses the funeral carriage of the late King Sisavangvong of Laos. Multiple roofs are characteristic of Thai and Laotian architecture. Above: The Tat Luang, a famous edifice at Vientiane, Laos. Below: Gorgeous interior of a Laotian temple at Luang Prabang.





Left: The famous seventh century A.D. pagoda at the Horyuji temple at Nara, Japan. Above: The Phoenix Hall at Nara, Japan, showing typical Japanese modifications of Chinese temple architecture. Below: Japanese pagodas are characteristically square, and closer in style to Nepalese than to their Chinese, Tibetan and Indian counterparts.

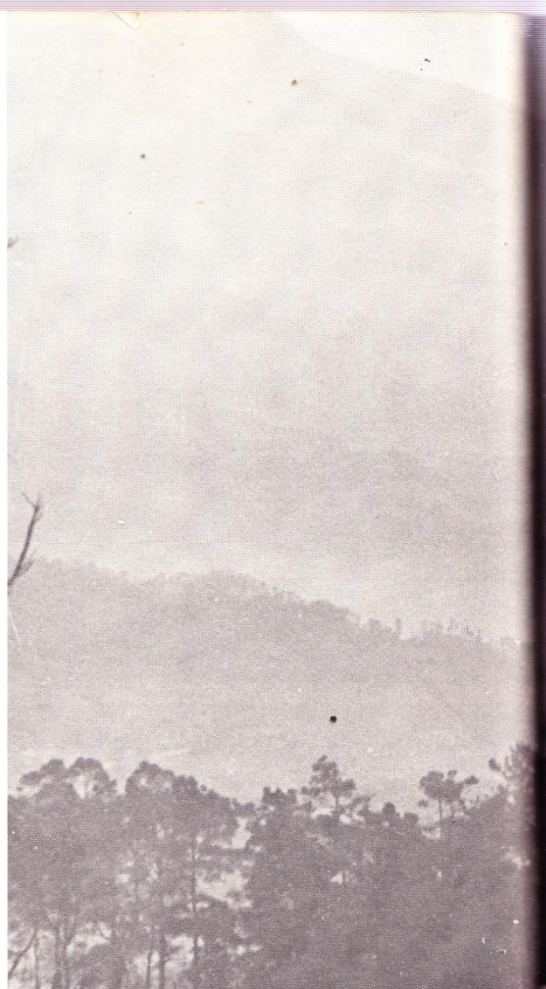




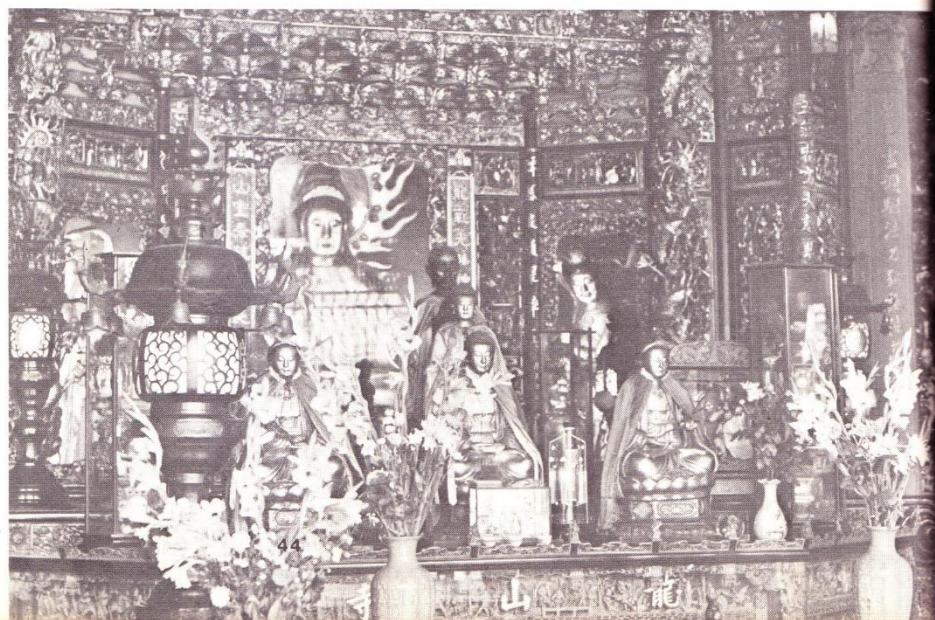
Above: Chorten (towers) of this kind are typical of Buddhist architecture in Tibet, Mongolia and northern China, where Buddhism in its Tibetan form flourishes. Some of the finest are, like this one, in or near Peking. Right: A temple in Peking showing strong Indian influence.



Above: The Buddhas of Triple Time (past, present and future) are found in the shrine-halls of most Chinese temples. Right: A temple shrine-hall in Taipei.

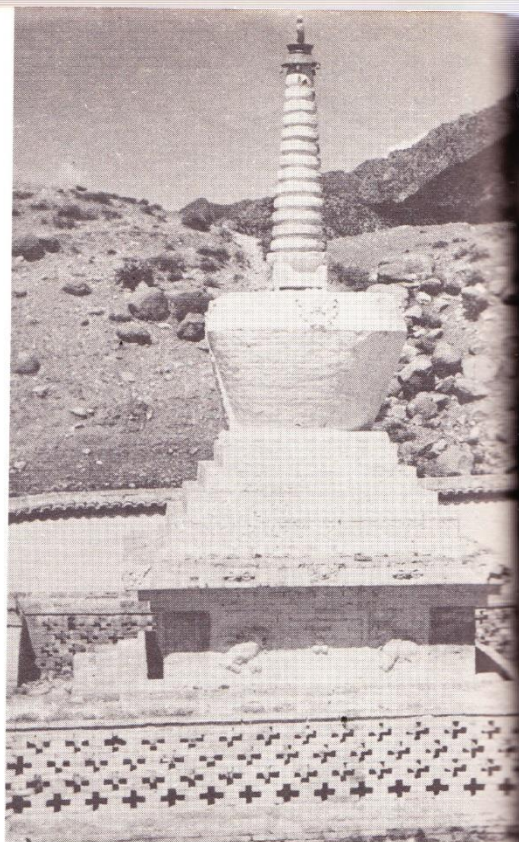
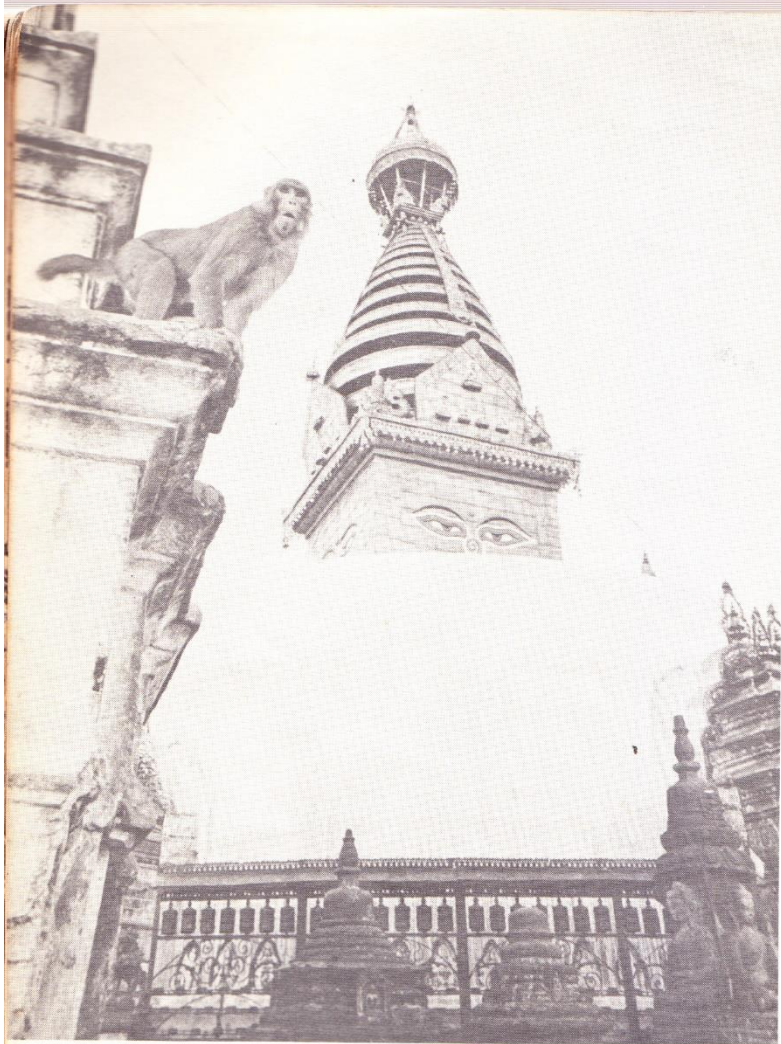


Above: A rural temple at Lion Head Mountain, Taiwan. Such scenes have inspired many a Chinese painter.

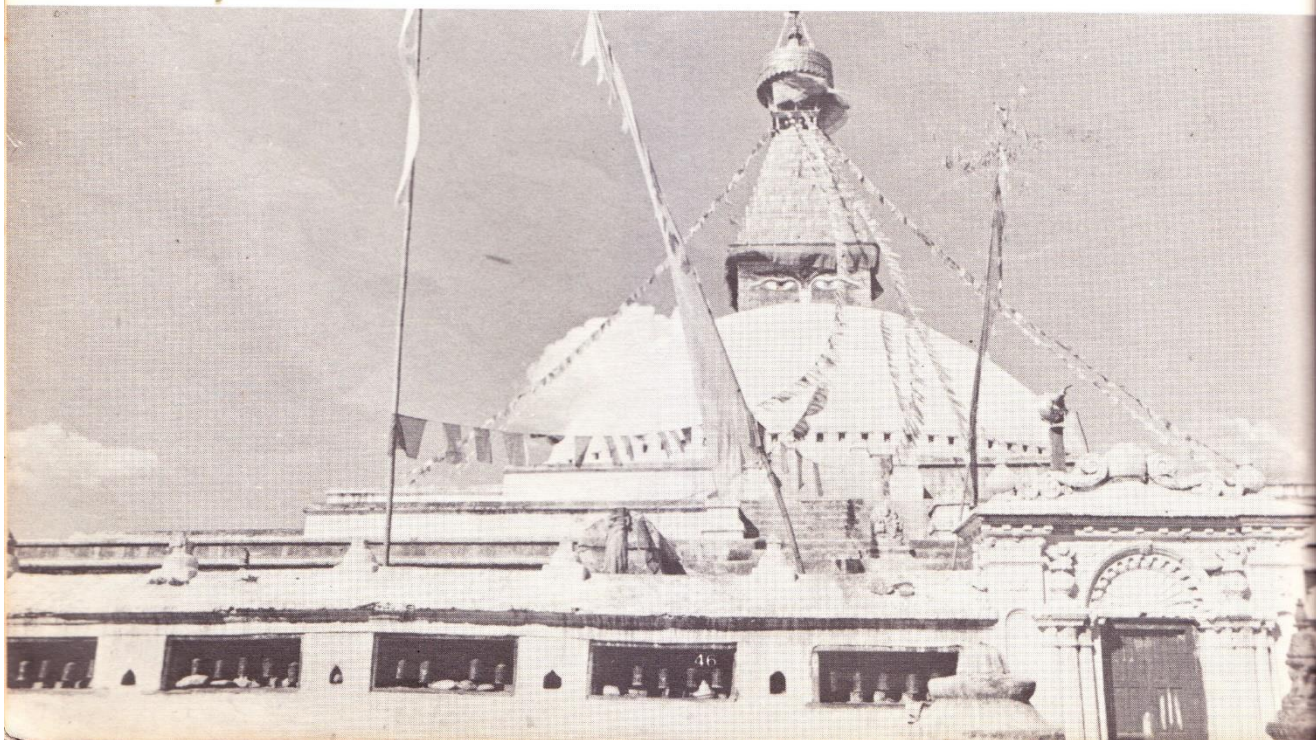




Above: A typical Chinese monastic cemetery for preserving the ashes of departed monks. Right: An ancient edifice known as the Tower of Many Jewels in the vicinity of a Korean temple.



Left: A temple in Nepal's Kathmandu valley. The painted eyes are a typically Nepalese feature. Below: A view of another of Nepal's great Buddhist temples containing both Nepalese and Tibetan features. Above: A chorten (Tibetan-style reliquary tower) in Inner Mongolia.





Left: A Chinese temple in Peking showing both Indian and Tibetan influence. Above: Sculptured butter offerings used to feature at a splendid festival in Lhasa. Those shown here, however, were made at Dalhousie, India, by refugee Tibetan monks. Below: Samye Monastery, Tibet, a temple of great antiquity.



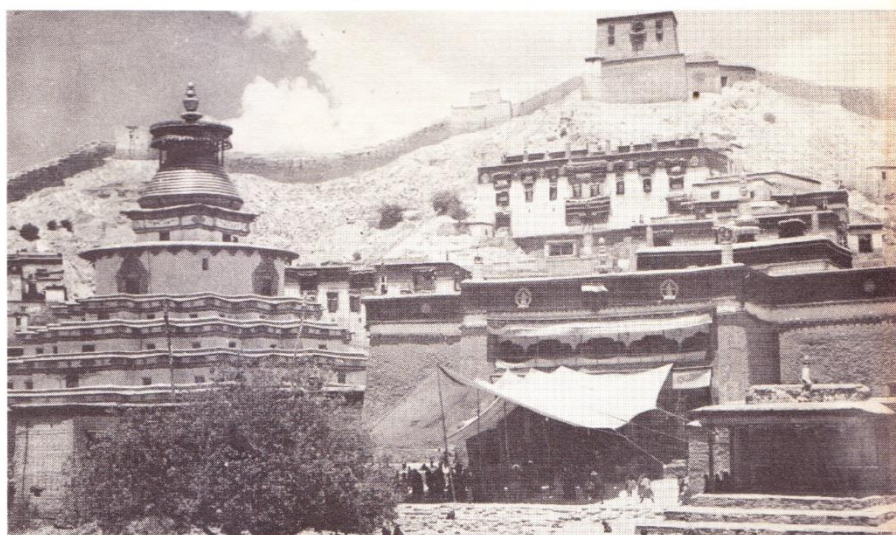


Above: The Potala, former residence of H.H. the Dalai Lama in the Tibetan city of Lhasa. Right: A closer view of the Potala.

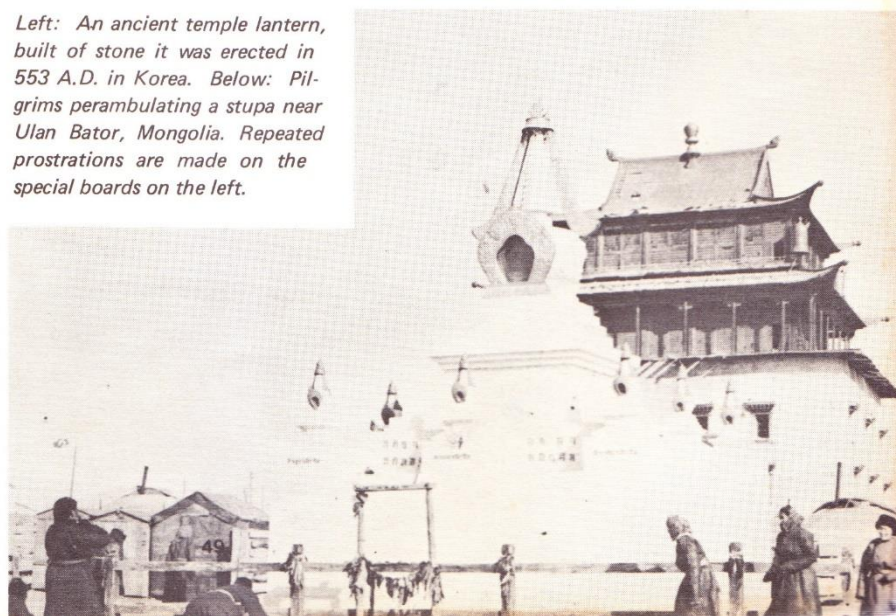




Above: Tibet's Sera Monastery. Until recently it housed many thousands of monks and functioned as a university. Below: The Pegon Monastery, Gyantse, Tibet, showing the main assembly hall.



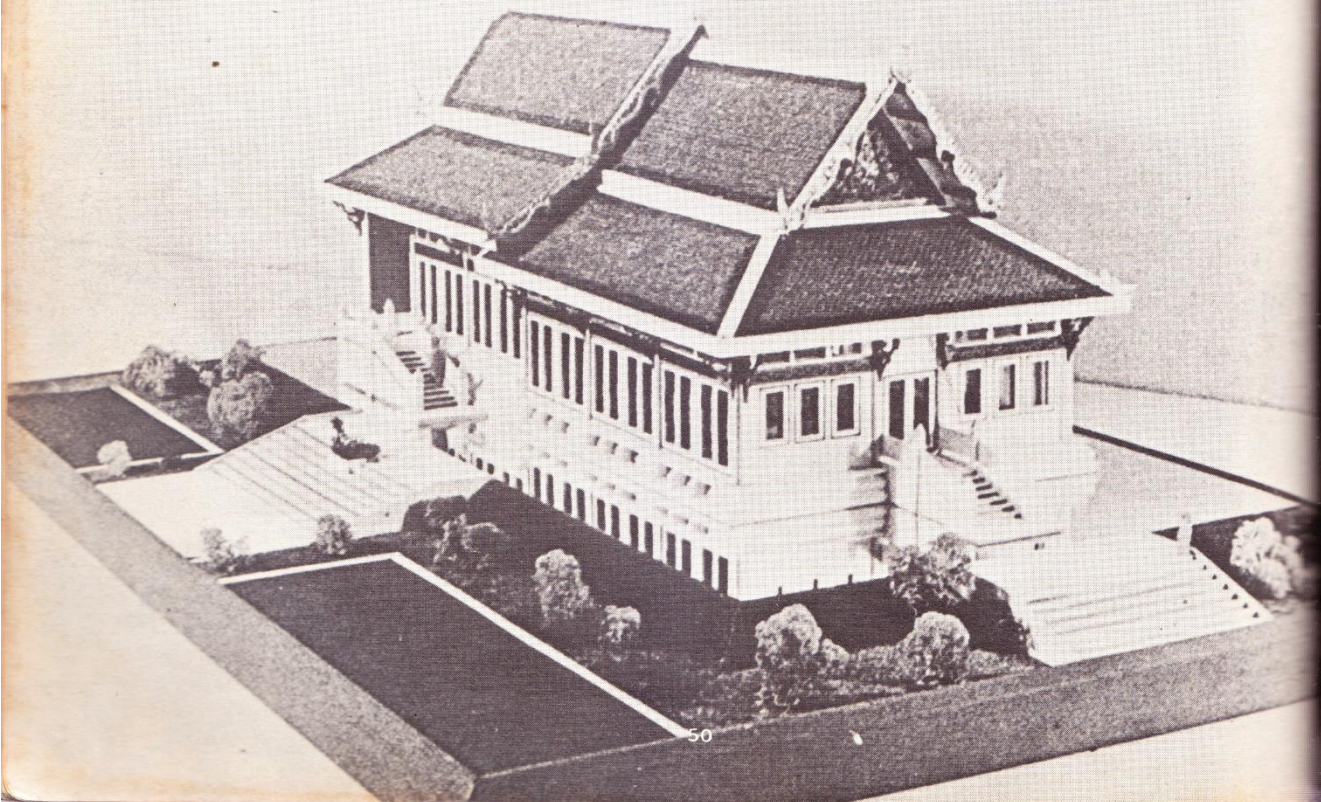
Left: An ancient temple lantern, built of stone it was erected in 553 A.D. in Korea. Below: Pilgrims perambulating a stupa near Ulan Bator, Mongolia. Repeated prostrations are made on the special boards on the left.



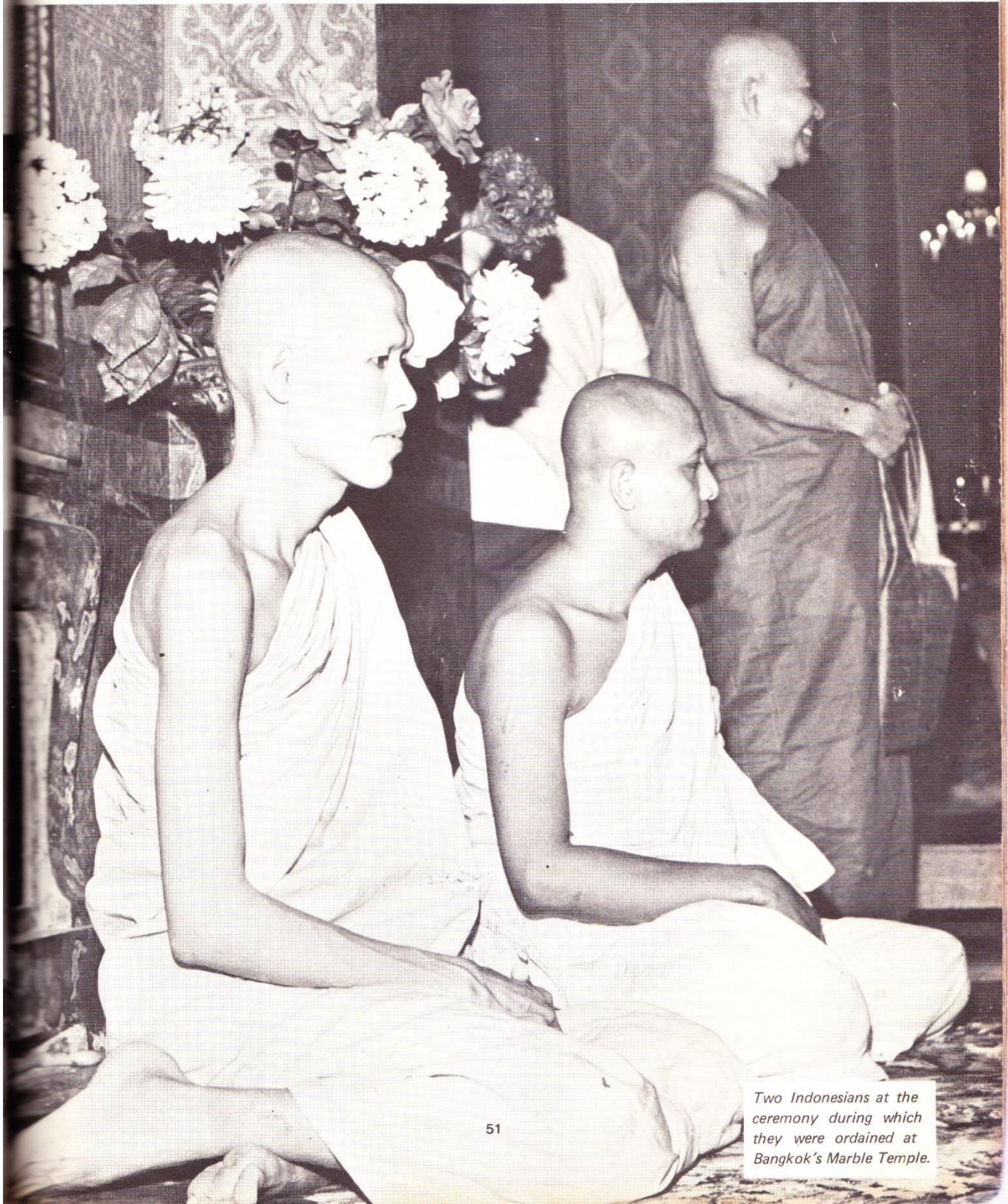


Above: Statue of the great Tibetan Buddhist teacher Tsongkhapa at Ulan Bator, Mongolia.

Below: A model of a Thai-style temple to be built at Los Angeles, U.S.A. Most Buddhist temples in the West are ordinary buildings internally adapted to their present purpose.



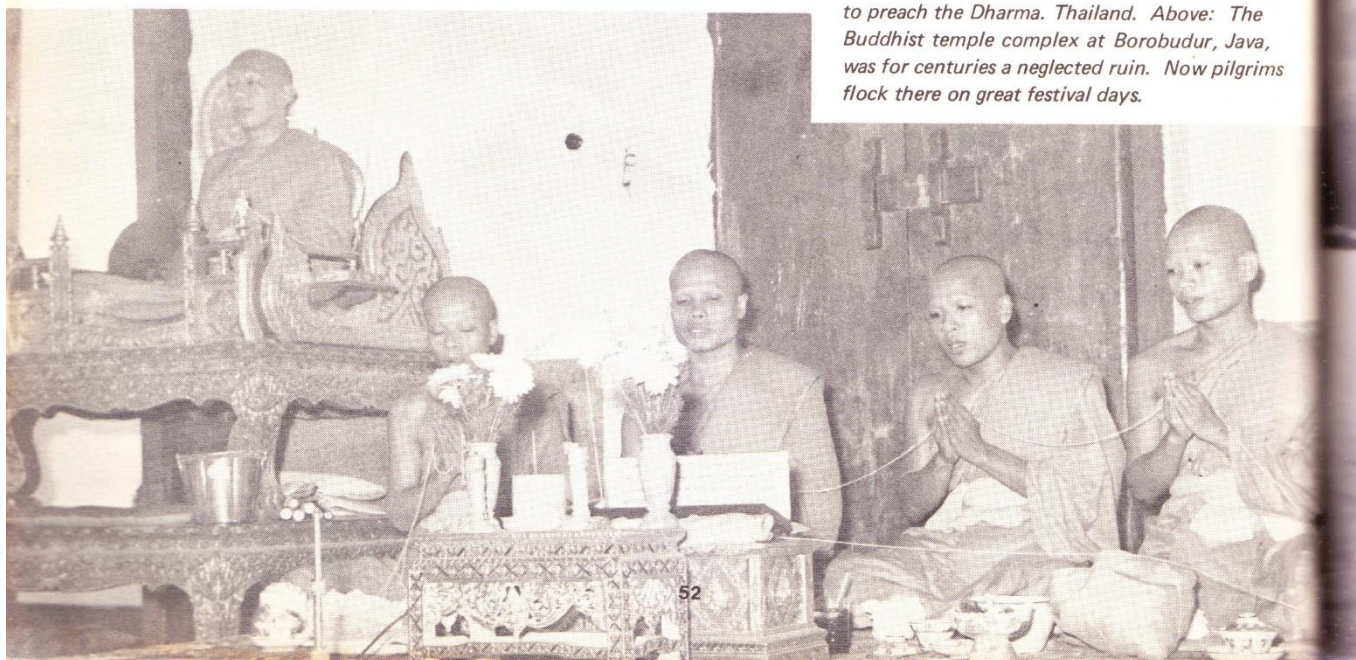
(iii) Monks and laity

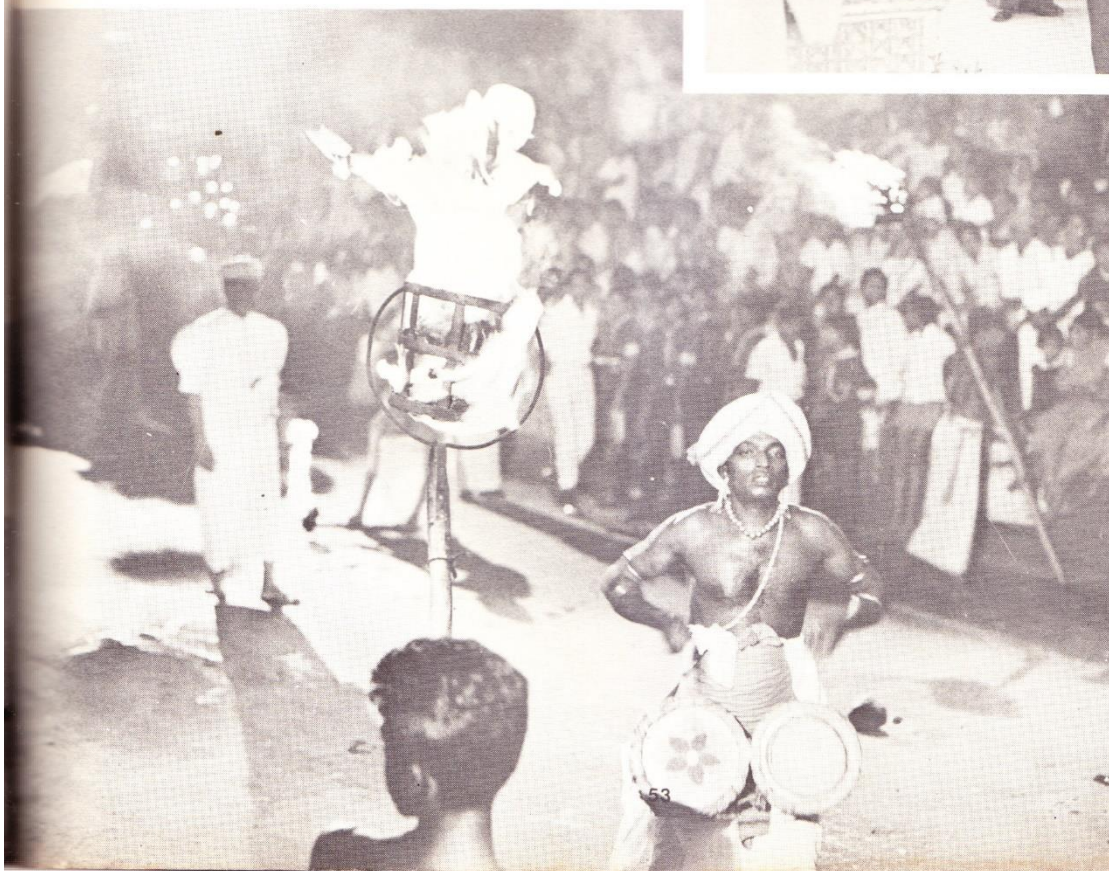
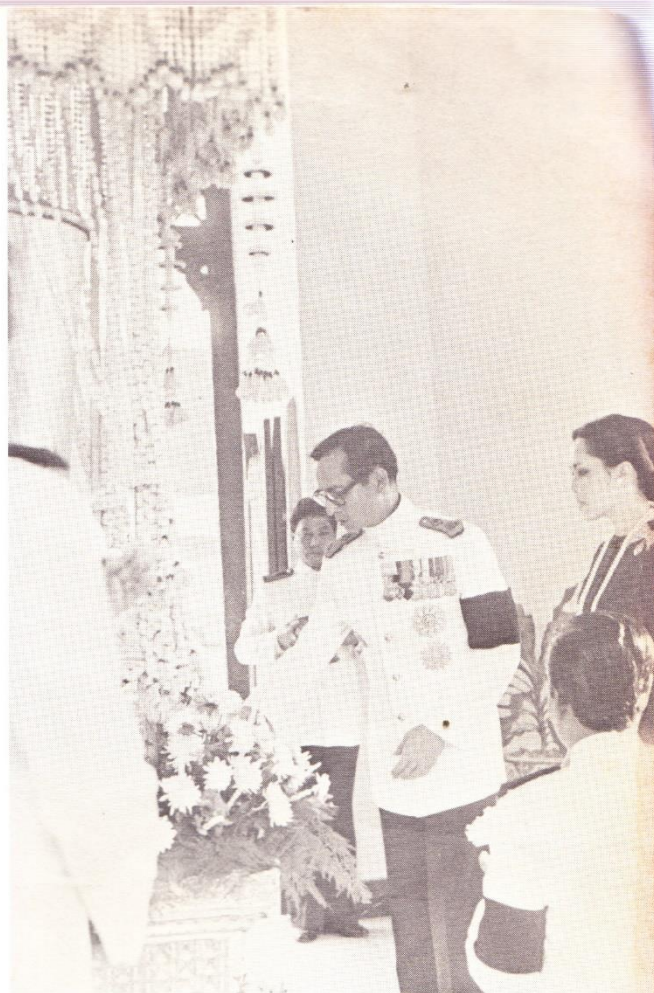
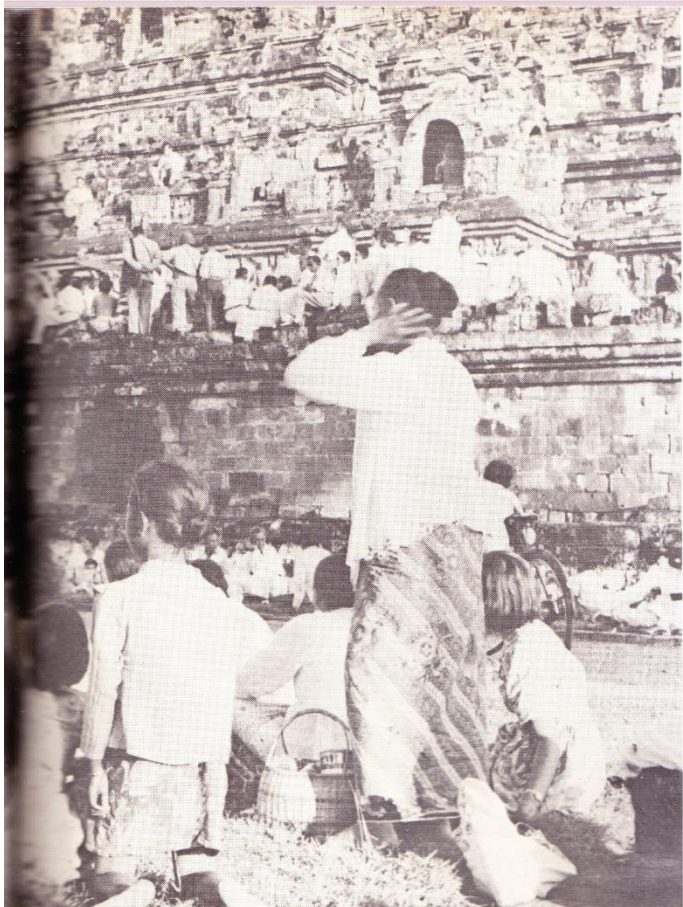


Two Indonesians at the ceremony during which they were ordained at Bangkok's Marble Temple.



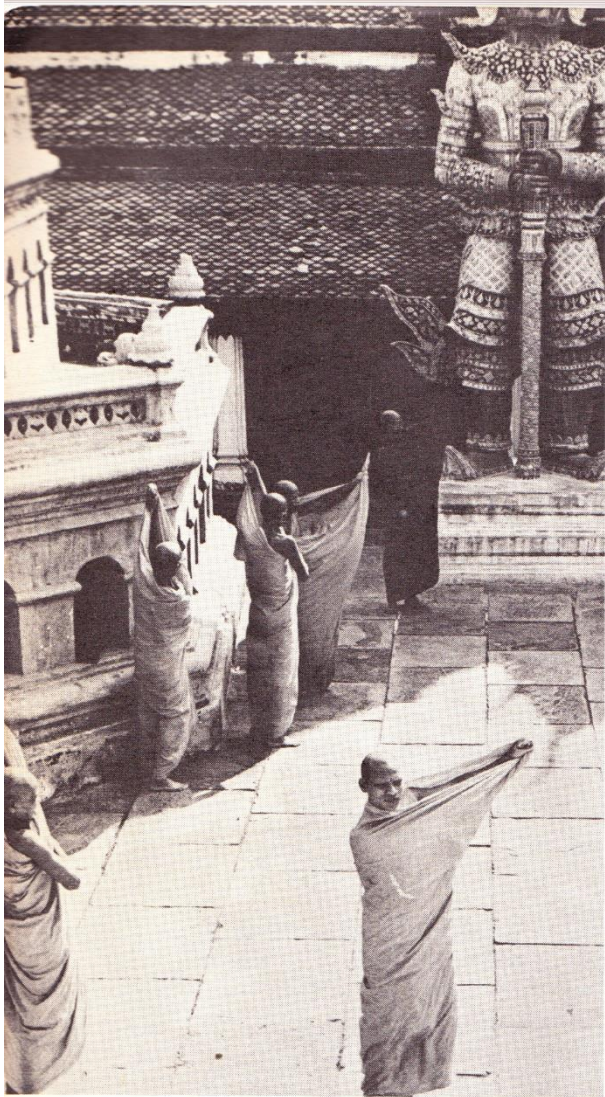
Left: Thai monks paying respect before a sacred Bohdi tree at the Thai temple at Buddha-gaya, India. This tree is one of those directly descended from that under which the Buddha gained Enlightenment at this place. Below: Monks holding the sacred white thread during a ceremony. The monk on the raised seat is about to preach the Dharma. Thailand. Above: The Buddhist temple complex at Borobudur, Java, was for centuries a neglected ruin. Now pilgrims flock there on great festival days.



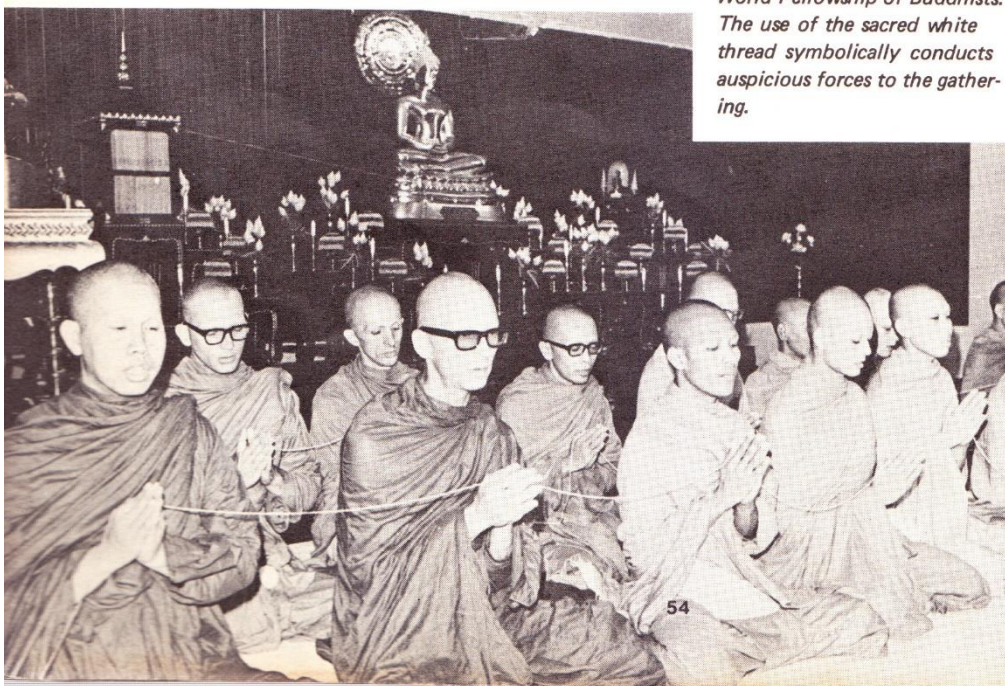


Above: Their Majesties the King and Queen of Thailand taking part in the obsequies at a Royal cremation in Bangkok.

Left: Drum dancing figures prominently at temple rites in Kandy, Sri Lanka.



Above: Thai laity listening to a sermon with their hands in a respectful position, as shown, for the whole sermon. Observe offerings to temple in the form of a tree with bank notes for leaves. Left: Thai monks rearranging their robes before a ceremony in the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Bangkok. Below: Theravadan monks, each a representative of a different country, chanting sacred parittas at the official opening ceremony for the present Bangkok headquarters of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. The use of the sacred white thread symbolically conducts auspicious forces to the gathering.

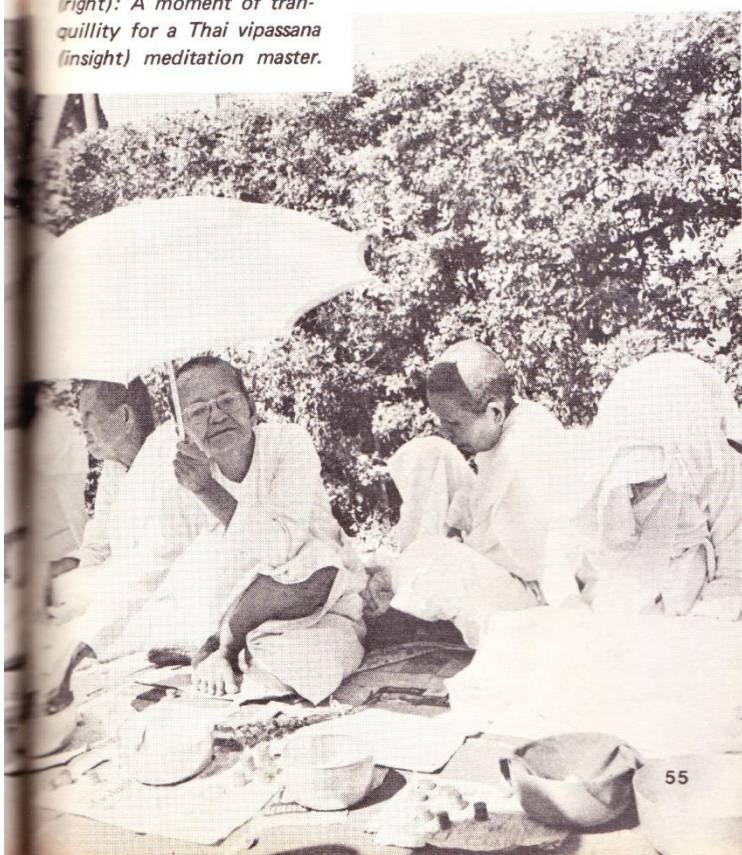


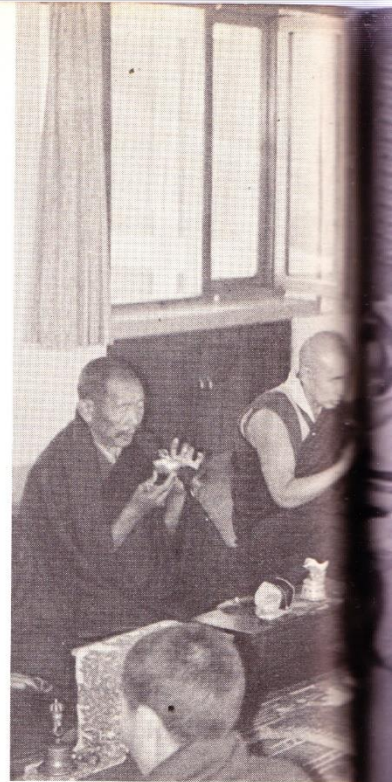


Below: Buddhist 'nuns' at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Bangkok, assembled to receive donations for the temple's upkeep. Below (right): A moment of tranquillity for a Thai vipassana (insight) meditation master.



Visitors and overseas pilgrims at the Hindu temple at Buddhagaya, India, at the time of the Buddha Jayanti, B.E. 2500 (1956 A.D.). The temple marks the place of the Enlightenment of the Buddha.





Left: A monk receiving offerings of food in the Marble Temple, Bangkok, Thailand. Below: Theravadin monks leading a procession holding flowers, incense and a lit candle during a ritual perambulation of a Thai temple. Children love these colourful processions held after sunset.

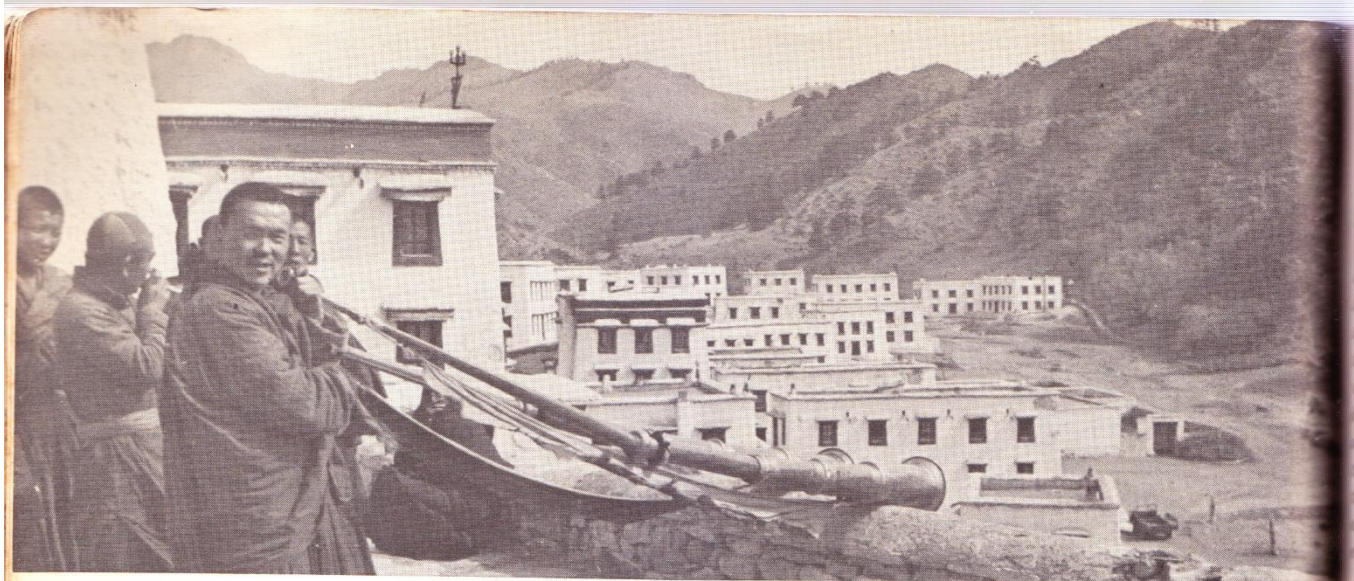




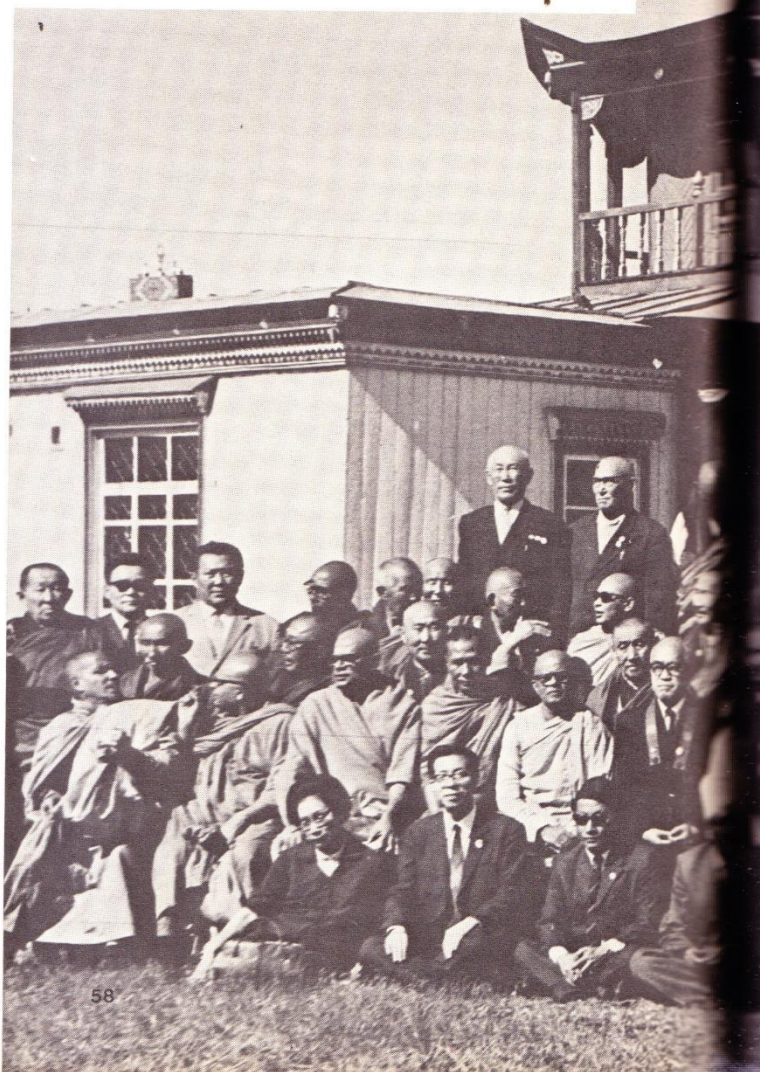
Above: His Holiness the Dalai Lama conducting a ritual for some of the Tibetan refugee monks in India. Right: A rare close-up of H.H. the Dalai Lama engaged in a sacred ritual (reproduced with His Holiness' permission).



Left: Tibetan novices carrying sacred books. The serious little boys' clothes may not look 'Tibetan' — for everything is impermanent, and they are refugees in India.



*Above: These long horns are used by lamas both in Tibet and Mongolia. Their deep notes produce a feeling of religious awe.
Left: A Chinese abbot teaching the importance of the monastic rules (Vinaya).*

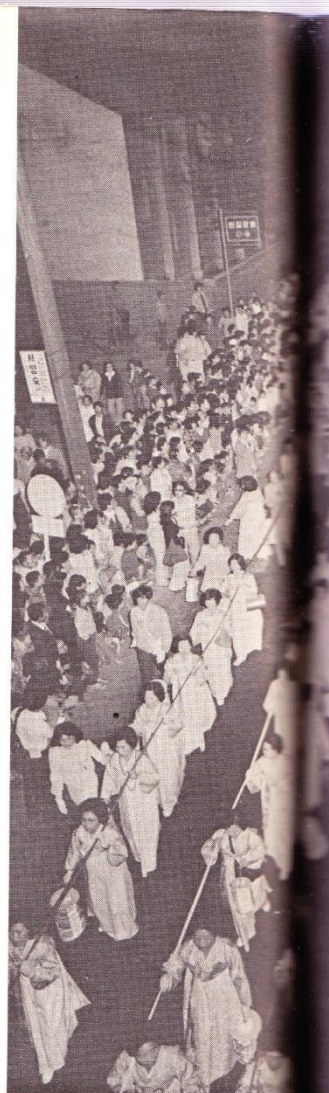


Right: The Khambo Lama (religious leader) of Mongolia performing rites with a vajra-headed bell, representing the adamant nature of the Dharma.



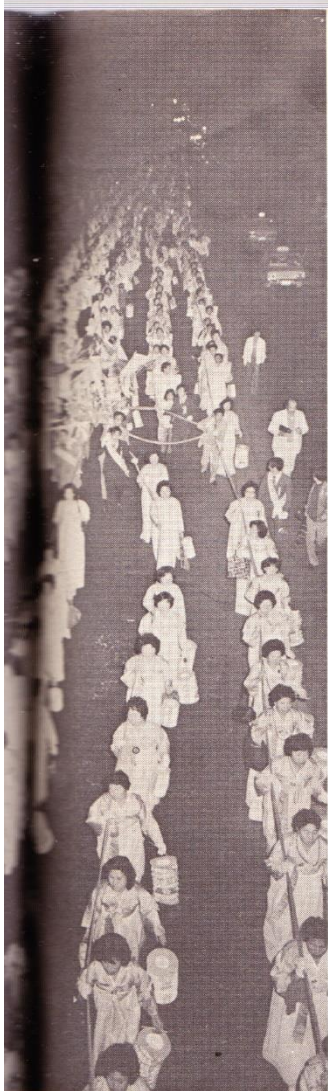
Participants in the First Asian Buddhists Conference on a visit to the Ivolginski Mahayana monastery in Siberia, U.S.S.R.





Left: An elderly Korean carrying a lantern offering on the Buddha's Birthday. Above: Tibetan monks carry on a religious debate in traditional manner, which does not fear the leavening of humour. Right: A lantern march across Seoul, Korea, to mark the Buddha's Birthday. Below: Newly ordained nuns in Taiwan. Their dark yellow or brown outer garment symbolizes the Buddha's yellow robe. The black robe worn underneath is an ancient Chinese garment used by monks and nuns in several Mahayanist countries for warmth.

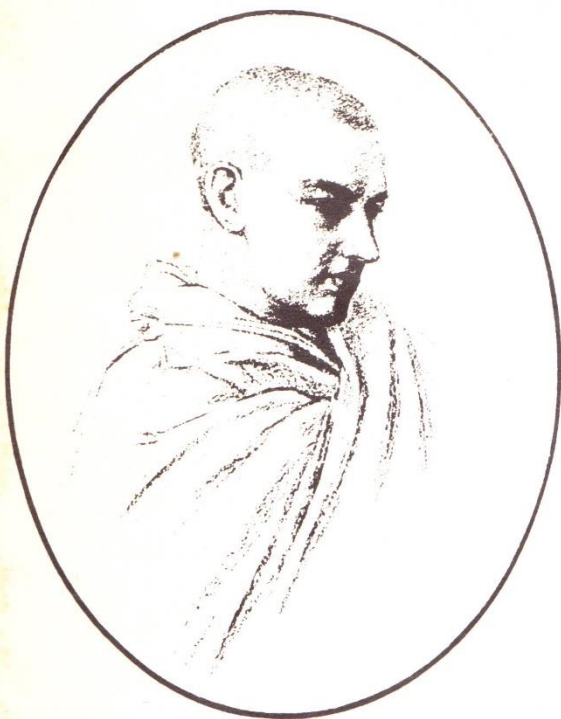
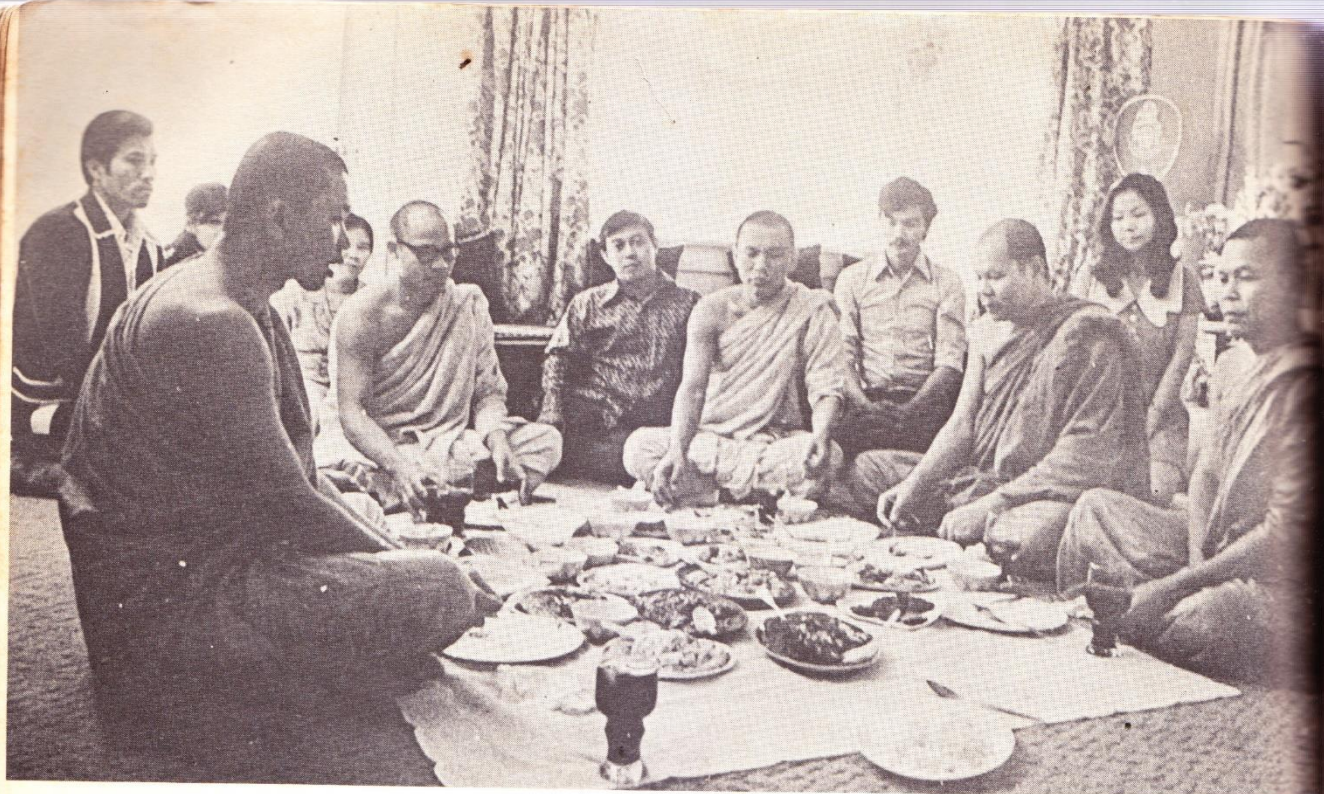




Above: A meeting of the High Sangha Council in Korea.

Below: A memorial service for two U.S. Army officers at Bong Won Sa Temple (built in 889 A.D.) Korea.





Top: Thai monks and students at the Thai temple in Los Angeles — one of five Thai temples in the U.S.

Above: Likeness of Ananda Metteya, the first Englishman to become a Buddhist monk. Right: Mr.

and Mrs. Christmas Humphreys, founders of the Buddhist Society, London, and, for many decades, notable patrons of Buddhism in England.



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