

Buddhism and islam in southeast asia

[Economics](#), [Trade](#)



Name: Instructor: Course: Date: Buddhism and Islam in Southeast Asia The world is full of suffering and pain brought about by temptations and desires. It is only when the desires are eradicated that one can cease feeling pain. That state reached was what Prince Siddhartha Gutama Sakyamun, or Prophet Buddha called nirvana.

Spiritual perfection can only be attained through practicing generosity, humility, mercy, calmness and self-control. Buddhism was started around the 6th century B. C. It spread fast throughout Asia in the next couple of centuries.

However, those that were appointed by Buddha to go spread it to the world had different interpretations for it. This led to different forms of the religion. The three main ones are Theravada, Mahayana and Tibetan. Theravada Buddhism was mainly practiced in the Southern part of Asian.

It was known as Hinayana Buddhism. The different forms of Buddhism have experienced their own challenges. Most of these died in time. The most common widely practiced form is Theravada Buddhism (Hansen, Curtis and Curtis 216). Buddhism spread due to three principal factors. When Buddhist merchants and teachers got to a place, the people there got intrigued by this new religion. They would watch and want to learn their ways. They would be converted, but only for those who were willing to do so.

Buddhists were a peaceful people and did not believe in imposing religion on people. At other times, a country would invade another and take other governance. The citizens of the invaded country would flee. Some chose to remain behind. They would slowly adopt the ways of the newcomers.

Another way was through the influence of a powerful monarch. He would build temples and shrines throughout the kingdom. He would either force his people to adopt his religion, or slowly influence them to do so.

The art of the Mons in Buddhism was heavily influenced by the Indian art of the Gupta. Their ways spread widely in Southeast Asia owing to the expansion of the Mon kingdom around the 5th and 8th centuries. Each region Buddhists went saw the building of universities, temples and monasteries. The religion would attain a unique character in different Asian countries.

It is believed that Buddhism first came to Southeast Asia between the first and the five centuries A. D, though opinion and archaeological findings vary. It is not clear when Buddhism got to Thailand. Records show that Theravada Buddhism first got to Ceylon, now known as Sri Lanka. The teachings were written in Pali, an Indo-Aryan language.

They were inscribed on rocks. The teachings reached Thailand around the 6th century A. D. and became the state religion.

Mahayana school of Buddhism followed. It went from India to Sumatra, Java and Cambodia around the fifth century A. D. It is more prevalent in the southern regions of Thailand, and is considered to have been at its prime when the country was under the auspices of the Suryavarman dynasty that had its roots in Cambodia.

Although both Theravada and Mahayana both existed in Thailand, Mahayana never surpassed Theravada in popularity (Lockard 376). When Buddha died, images of him were worshipped. It first started in India and then to other

countries that practiced the religion. In about 1057 A. D, a king named Anurudda ruled Burma, present-day Myanmar, his capital being at Pagan, Central Burma. His kingdom extended to Thailand. The king was a Theravada Buddhist and supported the cause.

As it began to decline however, Theravada Buddhism changed its form and assumed the name Burma or Pagan Buddhism. Burmese Buddhism gained sovereignty over the country. The Burmese under Anuruddha ruled the upper part of Thailand, while the South was left for Cambodian vassals (Trainor 126). The Thai began to move southwards due to emerging wrangles with their neighbors. The migration lasted a couple of centuries.

They had separated into two by the time they reached their destination. One went to the South, what is presently known as Thailand. These are called Thai Noi. The other was not that big a group. Some settled in the plains of Salween River.

These came to be known as Thai Yai. By around 1257 A. D, the Thai's struggle bore fruit and they gained their independence state at Sukhodaya in the north of Thailand. Ceylon or Lankavamsa Buddhism was the last form to be introduced in the country. Today, Thailand is known as a Theravada Buddhist country. A few Mahayana monks and monasteries are still around. Though the different forms of Buddhism differ in their teachings, albeit slightly, Buddhists have been known to co-exist and have never competed in influencing people (Trainor 131).

When Islam was taken to Southeast Asia, it was in the hope of spreading the religion and culture to the Chinese. They needed their faith to grow. They also traveled there in search of spices and to conduct business with the locals. Southeast proved to be the best choice. The people living there were accommodating and the climate was friendly (Lockard 378). Islam is the second most practiced religion in Thailand.

Its history in the country dates as far as 1350 during the Ayutthaya Dynasty. Back then, the country was still known as Siam. It got into the country from various directions. These are Burma, Persia, India, China and Cambodia. There was minimal spread of the religion since Buddhism had already taking prevalence in the country. Songkhla, a province that is located in the upper southern part of Thailand was where Islam was most common.

It did not spread much beyond here. Muslim merchants settled in Aceh, Malakka and Melayu, including the southern part of Siam peninsula as early as 9th century. That saw Islam spreading to other parts of Southeast Asia.

These include Java, Sumatra and Borneo also known as Kalimantan. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the leaders of Malay Peninsula were converted. So where those of the Southern Philippines.

The influence brought by Hinduism and Buddhism targeted all races and groups of people. When Islam was introduced, however, it was confined to the Malay race. They inhabited the islands and the southeastern parts of Asia. Just when Islam was starting to spread into the mainland, colonialism took over. With it came new culture and practices (Duiker 482). This

heightened the tension between the Buddhists' Central Thailand and Islam-dominated Lower South. From then on, it was Two groups were now prominent The Malay-Muslims of the South and the Thai-Muslims of Central Thailand.

The Central Muslims engaged in long-distance trade and in local commerce. They also held offices in the Siamese court. They worked mainly as official interpreters. They were considered noble.

In Cambodia, Indian influence had spread by the 4th Century. The leaders of the 5th and 6th centuries the rulers practiced Hinduism. They did however offer support to communities practicing Buddhist.

This was mainly Mahayana Buddhism. The monks were educated. Some would go as far as China to read and translate Buddhist texts from Indian to the languages spoken in China. By the 7th Century, Cambodian rulers suppressed Buddhism. This went on until the 9th Century. Towards the 13th Century, a king Jayavarman VII took over the throne. It was a relief for the Buddhist in the kingdom since he was Mahayana Buddhism.

Under him, the religion overtook the kingdom. The king ordered a city to be built and named it Angkor. At the central point of this city stood a temple He called it the Bayon. He then built a tower at the heart of the temple.

The tower symbolized him as the Buddha-king. The Burmese monks started teaching Theravada Buddhism among the people. The Thais invaded them in the 14th century. They also brought with them Theravada Buddhism.

These two sources contributed a lot to the spread of Theravada among the Cambodians. They still embraced the religion in the centuries that followed. The French attacked Cambodia in the mid-nineteen Century and saw a reduction in followers.

Things only changed when they gained their independence from France. Monks educated people on the religion and texts were published. The fate of Buddhism in the country at present is unknown due to political unrest. There are two main groups of Muslims who reside in Cambodia; Cham and Malay. Champa, a large maritime nation, was the home for the Chams. They lived there from the 2nd to the 7th century A.

D. It extended over the central and southern coastal regions of Vietnam. The Cham were influenced by Indian culture. It had spread to them through maritime trade routes via Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese and the Khmer, their neighbors, constantly attacked them. They found themselves being pushed southwards. In 1471, Vietnam invaded the Cham and seized their capital, Vijaya.

The defeat greatly reduced Champa to its southern territories. The Cham sort refuge in Cambodia. They began moving into Cambodia in 1471 owing to this defeat. The Cham followed both the Buddhism and Hinduism. However, during this time of conflict, a majority of them began to convert to Islam. Persians and Arabs traded in the region. This was what brought the conversion. Moreover, they were exposed to Sufi missionaries who came from both from Gujerat and Bengal; some came from as far as the Middle East.

The Cham were introduced into Islam and its teachings. However, the interaction only saw a few Cham people crossing over to Islam. The fall of Vijaya is what converted a majority of them.

As the Cham sought refuge in Cambodia, Malayan and Indonesian Muslims saw this as an opportunity to spread their religion. Their conversion was a symbol of breaking free and of a certain kind of resistance from the Vietnam. They wanted a distinct Cham identity (Vess 160). Islam faith appealed to many people since they could communicate with God by prayer anywhere they were. Other religions called for ceremonies and intercessors. As their resistance against Vietnamese grew, so did the conversion to Islam. In 1692, Cham attempted to regain their lost provinces.

They failed. Their royal family that consisted of around 5000 people moved Cambodia and requested land from the Khmer King. He gave them land surrounding the then-capital city of Oudong. Presently, they still inhabit these lands granted to them by Khmer. Chvea, a group of the Cham people, adopted Khmer customs.

They learned the Khmer language and started referring themselves as “Khmer Islam”. This was to avoid the stigma that came with being foreigners. Vietnam is a small country, dwarfed all the same with by the fact that it is close to India and China.

It is due to this fact that countries surrounding it influenced Vietnam. This is how Buddhism got there. Some sources say Indians were the first to introduce Buddhism to Vietnam.

The sea connected India with Vietnam. It is likely that the monks went to Vietnam before making their way to Southern China. Others conclude that it is the Chinese monks who took Buddhism to the Northern State. It had been under Chinese empire for several centuries.

Later, Central Asian and Indian monks arrived by sea and land. The leaders and Vietnamese people respected the monks because they were literate (Tan 132). The country inter mixed both Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism. Hinduism was more prevalent in the south.

By the 15th century, the Southern States had been gradually influenced by the more powerful Northern State. This move saw Buddhism moving southwards. Later on when Vietnam was unified, Chinese Buddhism was the prevailing religion in the country. The Vietnamese had several features in common with China. It was therefore easy for them to accept the Chinese culture and their beliefs.

India embraced Islam and Hinduism while few people practiced Buddhism. Monks stopped visiting the country. Indian missionaries had been the first and the most influential in taking Buddhism in Vietnam. Buddhism has faced numerous challenges in the recent past. The wave of wars that hit the country and the Communist rule are among the major setbacks.

Cham Muslims were in Vietnam ever since the 17th century. In around 1607, the king of that time converted to Islam. Cham Muslims were in Vietnam ever since the 17th century.

In around 1607, the king of that time, King Po Chen, converted to Islam. He lived with his settlers along the Mekong River in a group of thirteen villages. Children from the village would be sent to Malaysia, then known as Kelantan, to study Islam and the Qur'an. When they got back, they were given the responsibility of teaching the village. However, in the 17th Vietnam conquered the Champa province. Their king, Minh Mong, had the Champa persecuted.

King Chen gathered those on the mainland and together they migrated to Cambodia, while those at the Coast moved to Malaysia. Some chose to remain behind in Central Vietnam. Over time, their religion was affected and they converted either to Hinduism or to Buddhism.

Their descendants were also converted. In 1959, the descendants encountered Champa Muslims in one of the southern Vietnamese villages. This interaction converted the descendants to Islam. Mosques were built in some parts of Central Vietnam. After the communist regime, most Vietnamese Muslims remained in Vietnam while others fled to other countries.

Most of them settled in America, Malaysia, India, France, Canada and some in Australia. Works Cited: Duiker, J. William and Jackson J. Spielvogel. World History: To 1800.

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