Buddhism
Part II
Buddhism After Buddha

- The Buddha’s teachings consisted of his example, the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path
- Buddha believed that each person had to strive to gain Enlightenment; individual effort
- It would appear that his idea was for a monastic existence
- Inspired a group of monks who would preserve and pass down his teachings
- Buddha intended his message to be a clear break with the religious practices of Hinduism
- In the decades and centuries after his death, scriptures, stories, and philosophy grew up around his message
- Practitioners divided into elders and novices
- Missionary effort – Spread his ideas
Central Principles of Early Buddhism

1.) Reality consists of many realms; all of existences falls within these realms; 3 types – Immaterial, Material, and Sensuous

2.) Samsara – Believe in the cycle of death and rebirth; traumatic; escape to Nirvana

3.) Karma – Reject the Varna System; Intention

4.) Impermanence – Nothing is permanent; everything is in a state of flux

5.) No Self – Your identity, personality, soul is ever evolving; not fixed or permanent

6.) Conditioned Arising – A consequence of impermanence
Theravada

- In the initial centuries after the death of Buddha, his message spread rapidly throughout South and Southeast Asia
- Primarily through wandering teachers and the monastic model
- As Buddhism spread, it began to develop a complex theology, philosophy, and scripture
- Eventually this led to rival understandings and interpretation of the Buddha’s message
- At the core of these questions was a discussion of nature of the Buddha and how individuals were to receive and practice his message
- The split occurred in the period 200 B.C – 100 A.D.
- Will result in two broad traditions – Theravadic and Mahayana
- Theravada means Teachings of the Elders
- School is sometimes also called Hinayana
Theravada

- Buddha was only a man; example
- Buddha’s teachings were only a guide
- Salvation/Enlightenment (Moksha; Nirvana) must be achieved individually
- Free Will is significant; Gods do not matter
- Wisdom leads to Enlightenment
- Compassion for other’s suffering; compassion from wisdom
- Monks should enjoy a favored status in society
- The ideal should be the arhat; a master monk
- Focus upon the individual
- Little emphasis on metaphysics, supernatural, and rituals
- Emphasis upon meditation, study, and contemplation
- Ideal setting for practice is a monastic community
Mahayana

- Mahayana means “greater vehicle”
- Conceive of Buddha differently; a man who transcended reality
- Buddha’s teachings are important
- Buddha is one of many Buddhas; Buddhas are individuals who achieved Buddhahood
- Significance of the concept of a Bodhisattva
- Emphasis on compassion; compassion breeds wisdom
- Monks and monasteries are choices; not essential for Enlightenment
- Gods, supernatural do interact with the world; can affect individuals
- Elaborate rituals, prayers
- Emphasis on metaphysics and scripture
- Salvation for all
- Most popular form of Buddhism – East Asia, Central Asia
Pure Land Buddhism

- Pure Land Buddhism is most widespread form of Mahayana Buddhism
- Especially popular in China, Japan
- Pool of Positive Cosmic Karma
- Dharmakara; Buddha Amitabha (right)
- Created the Pure Land out of compassion
- Prayer and recitation
- People as empty vessels
- Enlightenment must be assisted
- Divine Impact and Influence
- Trusting your life to Amitabha
Chan/Zen Buddhism

- Called Chan in China; Zen in Japan
- About understanding the paradox of reality
- Only can be understood through individual effort
- Word and texts misleading
- Meditation, koans
- Masters exist to guide students
- Requires a disciplined, monastic lifestyle
- Goal is not to become a Bodhisattva
- Become a vessel of Enlightenment for the benefit of the world
Tibetan Buddhism

- One of the most famous schools of Buddhist thought
- Part of the Mahayana tradition
- Part of a subset called the Vajrayana
- Goal of Tibetan Buddhism is to harness the bodies energies and direct towards the spiritual goal of Enlightenment
- Highly ritualistic, involves its own scripture
- Monastic
- It is a Tantric sect
- Four major schools/sects
- Most famous = Gelugpa
- Lamas are Bodhisattvas; choose to reincarnate out of compassion
- Dalai Lama (right) is the Bodhisattva of compassion – 14th Incarnation