



World Buddhist Scout Brotherhood
La Confrérie Mondial du Scoutisme Buddhiste
Братство Разведчика Мира Буддийское
Hermandad Mundial De Scouts Budistas
منظمة الكشافة البوذية العالمية الأخوية

Growing Scouting in the Buddhist Community

This information pack has been jointly produced by the World Buddhist Scout Brotherhood and the European Scout Region to assist NSOs in developing Scouting in the Buddhist Community in Europe.

It contains the following information:

- 1) What is Buddhism?
- 2) What is the World Buddhist Scout Brotherhood?
- 3) Buddhist Traditions
- 4) Buddhism in Europe
- 5) Developing Scouting in the Buddhist Community
- 6) Frequently Asked Questions

We hope that you find this information useful. For more support and guidance please visit the WBSB website – www.wbsb.info, or contact the WBSB Secretary General on secretarygeneral@wbsb.info.

1 What is Buddhism?

Buddhism comes from the word "Budhi" to awaken and is the Teaching and Practice founded by Siddhartha Gautama who more than 2,500 years ago in Northern India came to be known as the Buddha or "Awakened One". Today, it is a Religion to over 350,000,000 people around the world.

Buddhist beliefs

Rebirth

Buddhists believe that they are born again and again in a continuous cycle of lives called Samsara. They do not believe in an unchanging or eternal soul and believe that grasping and attachment to material things leads you to being reborn again.

Karma

Karma is the law of cause and effect. It refers to actions (of body, speech and mind) that spring from mental intent. If you act in a positive way, you will get a positive effect and if you act in a negative way, you will get a negative effect. Buddhist's believe that your actions in one life, will determine your rebirth in the next life.

Nirvana

Nirvana means "blowing out" and refers to blowing out the fires of greed, hatred and delusion. It is not an afterlife, but a state of being that an enlightened person experiences when they are alive. When a person who has attained Nirvana finally dies, it is called Parinirvana where rebirth finally ceases.

Gods

Unlike most other Religions, Buddhists do not believe in an omnipotent deity or creator God. From a Buddhist perspective, all things are bound to the cycle of Samsara, so if there were a deity, they too would grow old, die and be reborn according to their Karma.

The Four Noble Truths

1. Dukkha – The Truth of Suffering - all life is suffering (stress, pain, unhappiness, longing)
2. Samudaya – The origin of suffering - grasping at material things leads to rebirth
3. Nirodha – The cessation of suffering - Awakening, Enlightenment
4. Magga – The path to the cessation of suffering – Following the eight fold path

The Noble Eight-Fold Path

Buddhists use the Noble Eight-Fold Path to develop insight into the true nature of reality and to eradicate greed, hatred and delusion.

1. Right Understanding
2. Right Intention
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

The Precepts

The Buddhist Precepts form an integral part of the process of purification that leads to Enlightenment. The Buddhist lay people are supposed to train themselves to follow the five precepts:

1. To refrain from killing

2. To refrain from stealing
3. To refrain from false speech
4. To refrain from sexual misconduct
5. To refrain from alcohol and drugs that impair mindfulness

2 What is the World Buddhist Scout Brotherhood?

The World Buddhist Scout Brotherhood "WBSB" is an autonomous body of Buddhist Scouts belonging to National Member Organizations of WOSM.

The WBSB was founded at the 20th World Scout Jamboree in Thailand in 2003, and recognises and supports the three traditions of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism.

We have held Consultative Status with WOSM since 2009 and represent Buddhism on the World Scout Interreligious Forum (WSIRF)

The headquarters of the WBSB is in Bangkok, Thailand, and there is also a Regional Advisor structure in place for most of the Scout Regions.

Our role within the European Scout Region is to:

- Give advice to NSOs on Buddhism
- Support NSOs in making contact with and promoting Scouting in the Buddhist community
- Supporting Buddhist Scouts within the European Scout Region
- Foster links with external Buddhist organisations in Europe with parallel aims



Buddhist Monks blessing the Buddha Statue in Gilwell Park, London

3 Buddhist Traditions

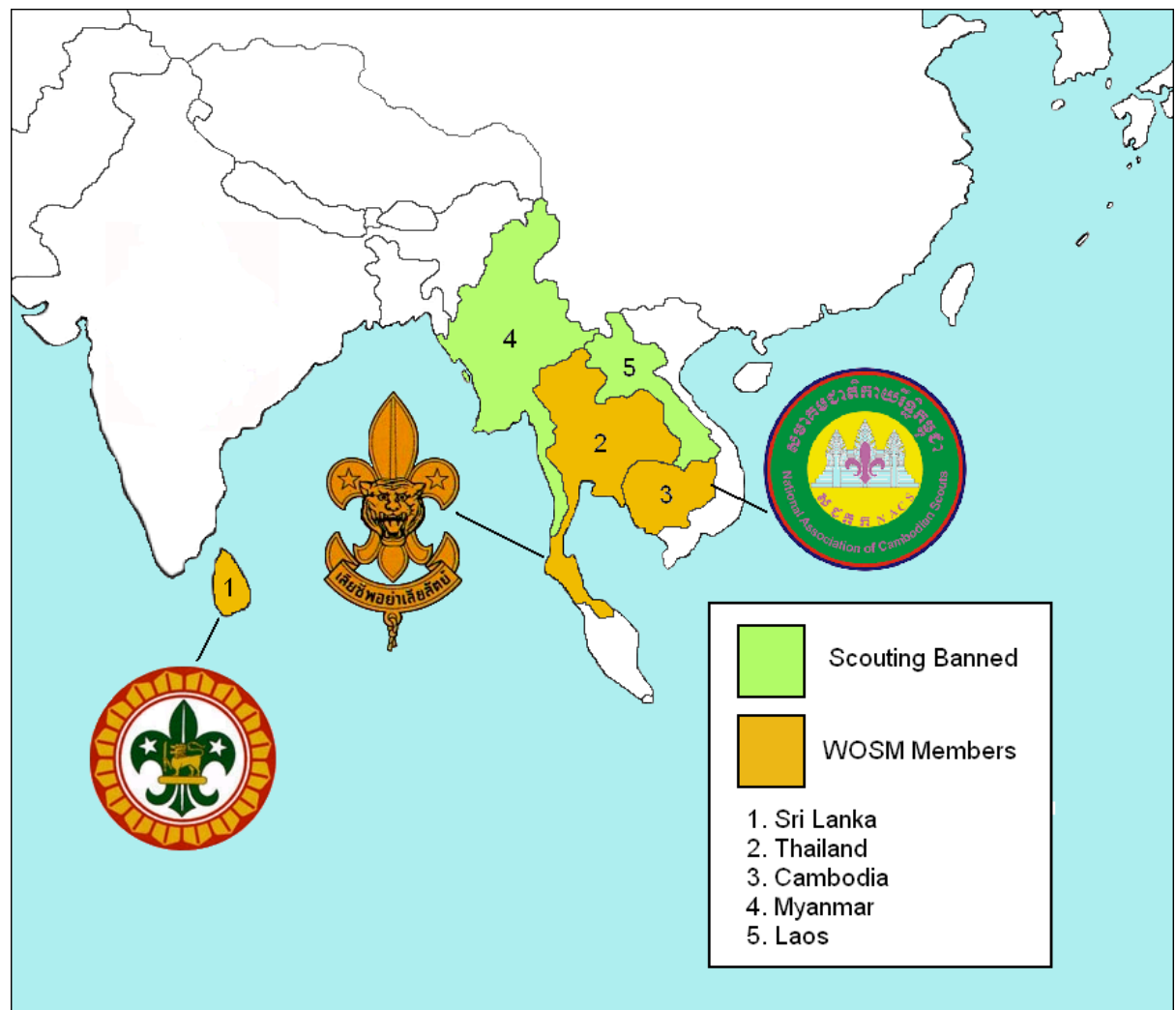
The Buddhist tradition a person follows is often dependent on what Country they are from. Here is an overview of the three Buddhist Traditions and where they are mainly practiced:

Theravada Buddhism

Theravada, "the way of the Elders" has its origins in the Council of Elders held three months after the Buddha's Parinirvana and is the oldest surviving Buddhist School.

It is followed in: Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. There are 100,000,000 Theravada Buddhists worldwide and it is sometimes called Southern Buddhism, as it spread predominately towards the South and South East from India.

The first Buddhist scriptures were written down by Theravada Monks in Sri Lanka in the first century BCE. They used the ancient Indian language of Pali, which was spoken by the Buddha. The scriptures were written on palm leaves and became known as the Pali Canon or Tipitaka.



Mahayana Buddhism

Mahayana means the "Great Vehicle" and is also known as Eastern Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism spread north from India into China and then East Asia. It is not one School, but is a collection of Buddhist paths that are followed in: Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

The paths include: Zen, Pure Land, Tiantai and Nichiren Buddhism

The Bodhisattva

The Bodhisattva is the ideal of Mahayana Buddhism; it means "enlightenment being" in Sanskrit. A Bodhisattva is someone who out of compassion (Bodhichitta) vows to be reborn again and again, until they have helped all sentient beings attain enlightenment, and only then will they rest and complete their own enlightenment. Here is the Bodhisattva Vow:

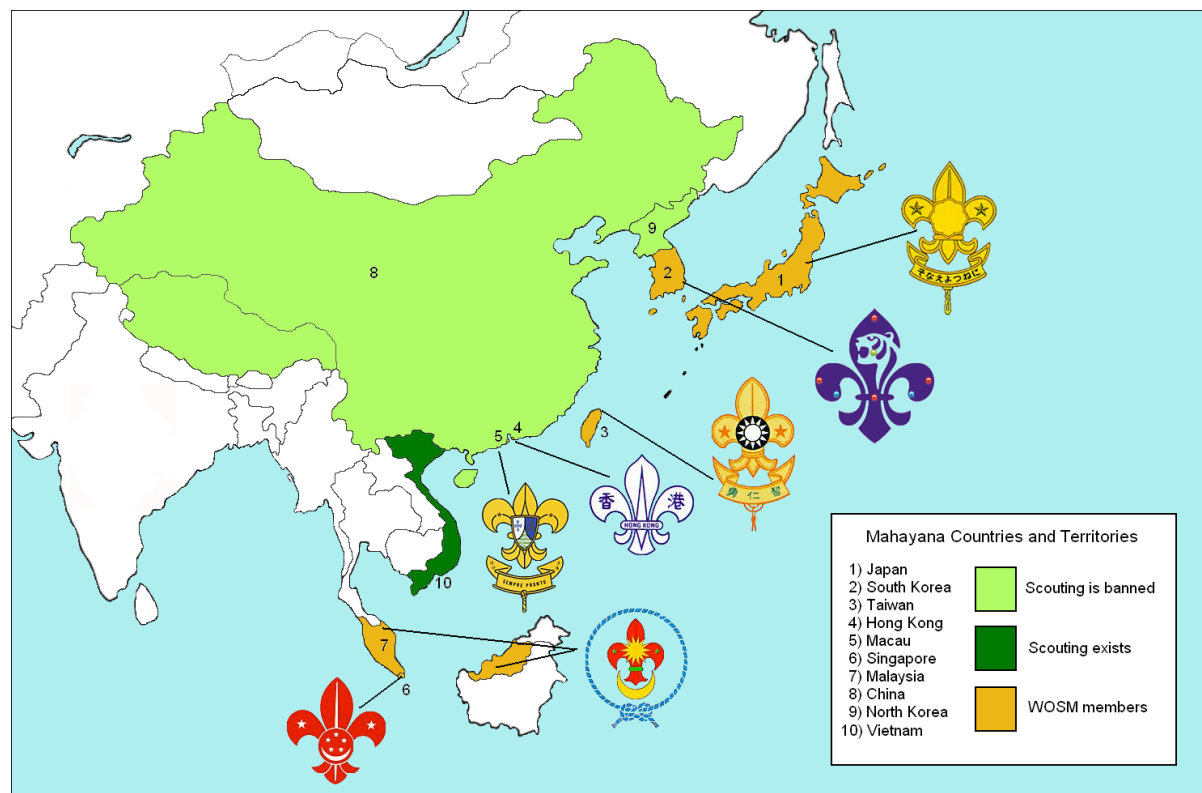
However innumerable sentient beings are, I vow to save them.
However inexhaustible the defilements are, I vow to extinguish them.
However immeasurable the dharmas are, I vow to master them.
However incomparable enlightenment is, I vow to attain it.

Mahayana Buddhists believe that everyone has the potential to become a Buddha and that all sentient beings have Buddha nature.

Mahayana Buddhist scriptures were written in Sanskrit not Pali. This is why you sometimes see a Buddhist term written in different ways. e.g.

Pali – Siddhatha Gotama

Sanskrit – Siddhartha Gautama



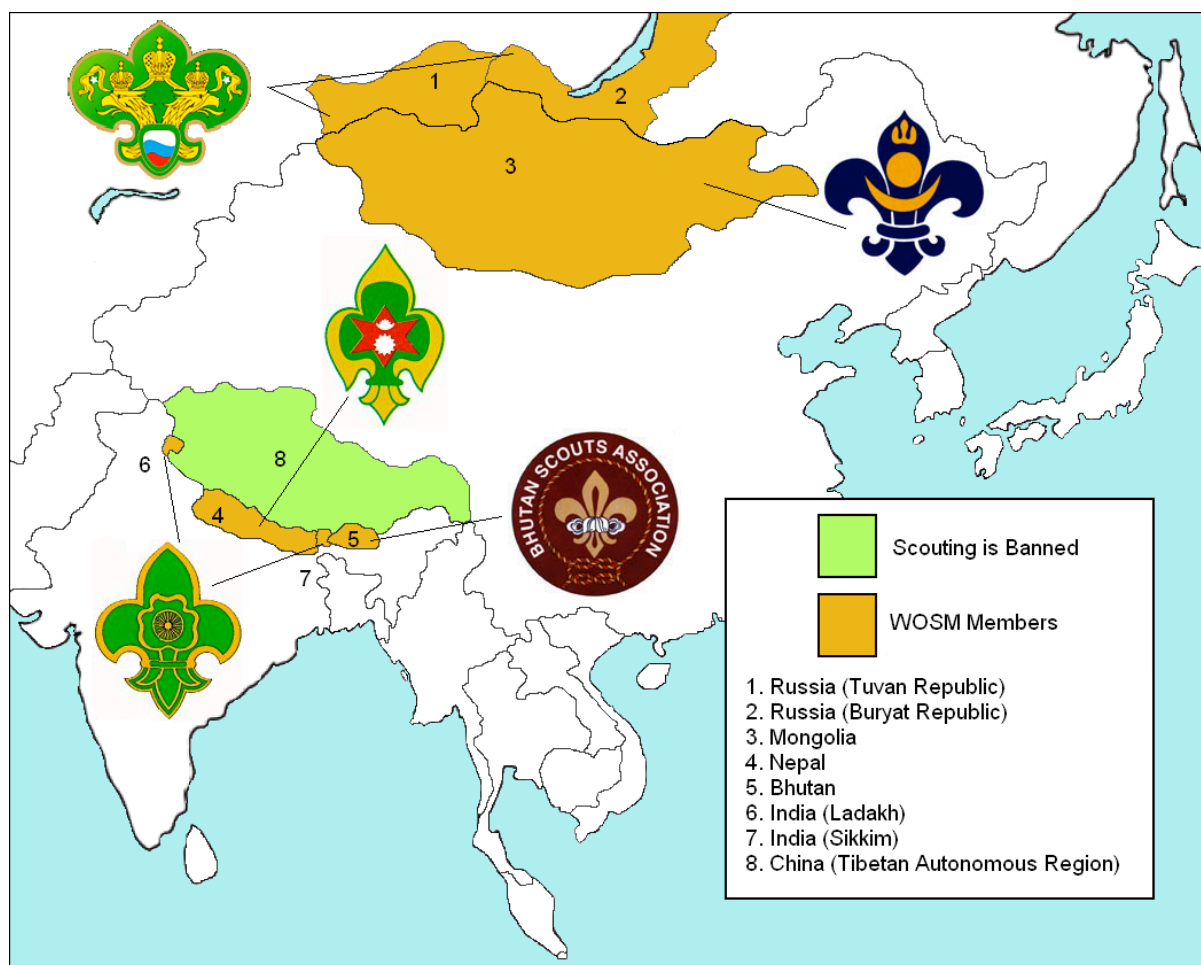
Vajrayana Buddhism

Vajrayana means the "Diamond Vehicle" and is also known as Northern Buddhism.

It is mainly followed in: Tibet, Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal, the Indian provinces of Sikkim and Ladakh and the Russian Autonomous Republics of Buryatia, Kalmykia and Tuva.

Vajrayana Buddhism is an extension of Mahayana Buddhism and is said to enable people to gain enlightenment in one lifetime. Theravada and Mahayana teachings are followed and used as an important foundation for Vajrayana.

Vajrayana uses the meditation Yoga practices of Dzogchen and Mahamudra along with certain Tantra initiations or "empowerments" to help the user gain enlightenment. It differs from Mahayana in that a Lama (Monk) teaches the Sutras and Tantras to lay persons.



4 Buddhism in Europe

In Europe there has been an interest in Buddhism since the late 19th century. There are currently over 3,000,000 Buddhists in the European Scout Region, with the majority of Buddhists living in Germany, France, Spain, Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Here is a list of the 10 European countries with the highest number of Buddhists.

Germany	824,001
France	764,618
Spain	300,000
Netherlands	165,706
United Kingdom	152,000

Italy	116,295
Turkey	71,159
Czech Republic	51,144
Poland	38,518
Belgium	31,177

The Buddhist community consists of immigrants from countries where Buddhism is practiced and Western converts. The majority of Asian Countries where Buddhism is practiced are members of WOSM, with the exception of China, Tibet, North Korea, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam.

Scouting in Thailand, for example, is mainly based in Schools, and Tuesday is Scout day where children wear their Scout Uniform. So any Thai people living in Europe will in most cases have a personal knowledge of Scouting.

5 Developing Scouting in the Buddhist Community

In Europe, Buddhists may practice the Dharma in Temples, at Buddhist meditation classes or at family shrines in their own homes.

Here are some things to consider if you want to grow Scouting in the Buddhist community:

Is your Scout Promise relevant?

Buddhists do not believe in a creator God like the Abrahamic Faiths, and so if a young person, or a potential Buddhist volunteer was told they had to believe in God to be a member of your Association, they would probably decline.

The WOSM constitution states:

ARTICLE II

Principles 1. The Scout Movement is based on the following principles:

Duty to God Adherence to spiritual principles, loyalty to the religion that expresses them and acceptance of the duties resulting there from.

So you can see, that even though it mentions "Duty to God" Buddhism is still covered under "spiritual principles" and "loyalty to the religion that expresses them".

In the UK, Buddhists who want to join The Scout Association have the option to say "my Dharma" instead of "God" when making the Scout Promise.

This way, the young person/volunteer can feel comfortable making the promise that reflects their beliefs.

Making links with the Buddhist Community

As we have seen previously there are different Buddhist traditions and schools represented in Europe today, and making links to the Buddhist Community can sometimes be confusing.

For example, you may have a Theravadan Buddhist from Sri Lanka, a Vajrayana Buddhist from Tibet and a Zen Buddhist from Japan – all of them follow the Dharma, but it can be daunting making links due to differences in culture and language.

If there is a Buddhist Temple or a Buddhist centre nearby they may be willing to use the Scout Method for their youth programme. The values in the Scout Law and Promise and the Buddhist "Eight fold path" and "Precepts" are quite similar and the majority of Asian

Countries have Scouts, so selling the benefits of the "Scout Method" should not be too difficult.

It is important to set realistic expectations on how a potential Buddhist Scout group will fit into the local Scouting structure. i.e. Belonging to a Scout District/Region, which is a member of an NSO/NSA. This gives people an understanding of how WOSM operates and helps to avoid problems if people should decide that they would like to create their own Buddhist Scouts Association.

This is a link to a European Buddhist Directory which gives more information on Buddhist Temples and centres in Europe:

http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/region.php?region_id=5

The WBSB is also more than happy to give advice and help NSOs/NSAs make initial links with the Buddhist Community.

6 Frequently Asked Questions

Do Buddhists pray to the Buddha?

The Buddha was just a man who Buddhists believe understood the true nature of reality. Buddhists do not believe he was a God or pray to him. Buddhists do have meditation practices, which could be compared to praying. These practices include radiating loving kindness and dedicating merit to all sentient beings.

Why do Buddhists bow to Buddha statues?

Buddhists bow and prostrate themselves to Buddha statues and shrines to express deep veneration to the Buddha in acknowledgement of his teachings that enable us to achieve enlightenment.

Do Buddhists have a weekly holy day?

There is no particular day of the week that is classed as a holy day to Buddhists. Many Buddhists follow lunar calendars that have specific auspicious days to meditate and perform meritorious actions. In the Tibetan lunar calendar it is 2139 and in the Thai lunar calendar it is 2555. While in the Christian world it is 2012.

Are all Buddhists Vegetarian?

Many Buddhists are vegetarian but it is not a pre-requisite.

Why do some Buddha images have more than two arms?

In Vajrayana and Mahayana Buddhism some images have more than two arms or have several faces. This is just an artistic depiction of the qualities that the Buddha or Bodhisattva is believed to possess, just as in a similar way in Christian art a halo depicts a saint or holy person.

Why do some Buddha statues have a swastika on their chest?

The swastika is a Sanskrit symbol which means "all is well" and is used by Buddhists, Hindus and Jains. In Buddhism the swastika symbolizes the feet or footprints of the Buddha and is often used to mark the beginning of texts and adorns temples and statues. In China, Japan and Korea it is used to show abundance, prosperity and long life.

Unfortunately in Europe the original meaning of the symbol has now been forgotten due to its use by the "far right" since the 1920s, which continues to this day.

The Buddhist swastika rotates counter clockwise unlike the “far right” swastika. Baden-Powell used the counter-clockwise swastika as the first Scout “Thanks Badge”.



There seem to be a variety of styles of Buddha statue. Why is this?

The style of Buddha statue depends on the Country and the Buddhist path followed. In Theravada Buddhism the statue is always of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama.

In Mahayana Buddhism the statue can be of the historical Buddha or a Bodhisattva. The popular “laughing Buddha” is called “Budai” and is how Chinese Buddhists see Maitreya the “Buddha of the future” and is not meant to show the historical Buddha.



Theravada



Mahayana



Vajrayana