



INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTARY SERVICES, INC.

1555 connecticut ave., n.w. washington, d. c. 20036

Larry Woodson
Luang Prabang
March 25, 1965

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At that time, a Sage was born, who founded a new doctrine, Buddhism, and for 40 years he taught it to the enthusiastic populations.

In the middle of the 3rd century B.C., Asoka, the most pious of all the Buddhist kings of Magadha, propagated the doctrine to the far corners of his empire, and spread it to the Punjab in the West and to Ceylon in the South. During the 2nd century under other leaders it spread to China, Tibet and later Japan.

Later Buddhism was to find one of its surest havens on the banks of the Mekong and the Menam among the palm trees and the coconut groves. So today, Laos like Ceylon is definitely the land of monks. Every morning, rain or shine, the monks can be seen walking along the streets draped in orange robes, begging their rice and food. One by one, they file past before men who remain standing, their robes drawn across their shoulders and the kneeling women carrying bowls filled with offerings. To each of them they present their begging bowls, tipping them slightly. After having received the ball of rice and the piece of cake, which men and women slip in their bowl with the deepest respect, they cover it and hide it again under their robes and still remaining silent and with downcast eyes they proceed on their round. In Laotian, to do charity (to do good, to give alms), i.e., acquiring merits for the next existence and, if possible to reach final Nirvana. So these alms are given to the monks.

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