ECOLOGIES OF ENLIGHTENMENT: THE DIVERSIFICATION OF BUDDHIST TEACHINGS

If suffering differs depending on person/culture, so must the response to suffering \( \rightarrow \) history of Buddhism as history of responsive diversification \( \rightarrow \) three main “ecologies” of enlightenment all of which share rules of monastic discipline and core teachings:

**Theravada**: originates roughly 250BCE, flourishes Sri Lanka. Theravada = “way of the elders”
- *arhat* as ideal = liberation as “blowing out” or “cooling down” desires/self
  - release from bondage (karmic, relational) via *sila*, *karuna*, and *panna*
  - leave the cycle of birth and death
  - disparity of *nibbana* and *samsara*
  - practices of insight (*vipasannā*) and calming/purification (*samatha*)
  - Pali texts...Suttas, Vinaya, Abhidharma
  - focus on Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha
  - [Today: Southeast Asia] [broken ordination lineage of nuns]

**Mahayana**: originates around 200BCE and fully flowers by 200CE as so-called “Great Vehicle”; first flourishes in southern India, then north India; eventual critique of *sravaka* (hearers) as “Hinayana” or “small vehicle”.
- *bodhisattva* as ideal = commitment to liberating all sentient beings
  - release from contributory limits via *upaya* or responsive virtuosity
    - continue being born and dying for the purpose of doing buddha-work
    - non-dualism of *nirvana* and *samsara*; this world as Buddha-realm
    - practice of 6 *paramitas* or perfections
      - Sanskrit texts...Sutras and Sastras
      - focus on ahistorical buddhas and realms
      - [Today: East Asia] [continuous ordination lineage of nuns]

**Vajrayana**: originates around 600CE in north India as the “Adamantine Thunderbolt Vehicle”; flourishes in Pala Dynasty 7\(^{th}\)-11\(^{th}\) centuries; enters Tibet initially in 8\(^{th}\) century and then intensively from 10\(^{th}\) and 11\(^{th}\) centuries.
- *mahasiddha* as ideal = spiritual adept who attains buddhahood
  - release from limits of “natural laws” via *tantra*
    - esoteric continuity intended to accelerate history/evolution
    - realizing evolution of buddha-realm
    - non-dualism of all things (including sexuality, death etc.)
      - Sanskrit, Pali and Tibetan texts...extensive commentaries
      - focus on reincarnating lamas as buddhas
      - [Today: Central Asia/Tibet][continuous ordination lineage of nuns]