The Spread of Buddhism

Buddhism began to spread rapidly around 270 BCE during the reign of King Asoka, the ruler of the greater area of Northern India. After engaging his empire in a terrible, bloody war, he underwent a spiritual transformation that included embracing Buddhism. He sent missionaries throughout southern Asia. They met with great success, although they did not convert others through either excessive persuasion or violence.

Beginning in the first century CE, Buddhism spread slowly into China and Japan. The first Dalai Lama, the Grand Lama of Lhasa, was responsible for the extension of Buddhism into Mongolia during the 16th century CE.