ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION

A Handbook

Edited by
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BUDDHIST COMMUNITIES: HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS AND ETHNOGRAPHIC PARADIGMS

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Buddhism has been transplanted to diverse ecological, linguistic, and cultural contexts across Asia and, in recent centuries, globally. Inclusive and practical, and guided by a missionary ethos, renunciant and lay traditions have been effectively adapted to settings as diverse as settled farming villages, pastoral grasslands, and urban communities. Among missionary religions, Buddhist tradition (*śāsana*) is distinctive in its accommodation of myriad texts, doctrinal formulations, spiritual disciplines, and devotional practices, yet still (where vibrant) retaining a strong monastic center that asserts Buddhism's primacy over indigenous ancestral religions and other world faiths. Since exchange is the basis of social life (Murphy 1971; Harris 1989), anthropological studies of Buddhist communities can account for the tradition's maintenance, specifying how institutions and cultural performances have secured the survival of fundamental relationships.

The presence of a textual canon and devotional art is a universal feature of Buddhist contexts, although contents vary among Buddhist culture regions.[1] Lack of grounding in the textual tradition, especially the oft-neglected ritual and popular discourses, has been a weakness in anthropological studies of Buddhism: Future research should be informed by an understanding of the textual-historical precedents for modern practice (Buswell 1990: 1; Strong 1992). Given the vast textual corpus and the lack of any overarching panregional institutional authority that ever dictated (or enforced) doctrinal orthodoxy, command over the historical sources and precedents for modern practices is a complicated assignment. This chapter, in part, is addressed to this desideratum.[2]

Section I provides an introduction to the classical precepts that defined early

Indic traditions of practice. It presents the key principles that informed the missionary transplantation of the faith across northern, southern, and eastern Asia, including those that defined the normative existence of the monastic order (*saṃgha*) and monasteries (*vihāra*)[3] and the nature of proper householder support for monks and nuns who centered the tradition in these institutions. Buddhist civilization was sustained by the exchanges between householders and renunciants, as orchestrated through ritual. Many formulations of proper Buddhist practice, from simple to advanced (leading to *nirvāṇa* ["a state of blissful illumination, cessation of karma generation, ending rebirth"]), were made in the course of early Buddhist history to guide the faithful among alternatives. The traditional triad of meditation (*dhyāna*), moral practice (*śīla*), and meritorious donations (*dāna*) is an early, enduring formulation that defines central organizing points for practice and so the anthropological study of all Buddhist communities.

Section II discusses, in pan-Asian and comparative terms, patterns in Buddhism's local domestications. A key concept throughout this chapter, "domestication" is the dialectical process by which a religious tradition is adapted to a region's or ethnic group's socioeconomic and cultural life (Wright 1959; Strenski 1983; Kitagawa 1965; Ramble 1990). This refers to every dimension of Buddhist praxis, including text transmission, doctrinal interpretation, monastic customs, spiritual instruction, institution building, and so on. The anthropological study of Buddhist communities can demonstrate the underlying reasons for selectivity as the tradition has evolved according to the "logic of the locality." Section III notes transcultural issues that need to be addressed through research on both past and contemporary communities. Future desiderata for interdisciplinary inquiry in Buddhist studies are also cited.

SECTION I: ENVISIONING BUDDHISM AND SOCIETY

The Ideal of Buddhist Civilization

Buddhist monasticism arose to provide refuge and support for renunciants seeking enlightenment, but the tradition survived by building multifaceted relationships with lay patron communities that provided for the monks' subsistence. Solidifying the loyalty of a cross section of society's economic classes, Buddhism evolved to espouse the basic foundations of spiritually and morally centered civilization. Buddhism adapted to myriad local traditions, yet still, when vital, its community focused on the *triratna* ("Three Jewels" or "Three Refuges")—Buddha, *dharma* ("teachings"), and *saṃgha* ("monastic community")—while living amidst the vicissitudes of *saṃsāra* ("the world of rebirth, suffering, impermanence"). Over the first millennium, the *saṃgha*'s central role developed as monks taught a variety of audiences, provided ritual assistance, and participated in a yearly festival agenda.

The norm of Buddhist pluralism is a striking feature in the tradition's so-

ciohistorical profile (Holt 1991: 18), as its traditions encompassed a broad range of intellectual discourse and ritual performance. The monastic rule books (*vinayas*) all show an early sensitivity to the greatly varying ecological, social, and cultural contexts that monks entered. Recognizing this legitimate "malleability to contextual circumstances" helps explain the great differences in praxis seen even in the early sources. Gregory Schopen has begun to articulate this central historical variable in antiquity, noting how the *saṃgha* must have adapted variously amidst varying populations as diverse as tribal rain forest dwellers, highland nomadic herders, or highly Brahmanical urban settings.[4] The need for such adaptability is an emic Buddhist perception: The *Vinayas* make a distinction between situations in central places where the rules must be strictly observed (*madhyadeśa*, "middle country," i.e., the Buddhist homeland) and the far-off areas where less strict standards were to be tolerated (*pratyantajanapada*, "frontier principalities") (Lamotte 1988:8).[5]

The general ideals of Buddhist civilization are well outlined in the monastic literature. Monks and nuns served the world through their example of renunciation and meditation (Wijayaratna 1990), by performing rituals (Gombrich 1971: 201ff; Lewis 1994d), and by providing medical service (Zysk 1991). As preservers, transmitters, and exemplars of the *dharma*, the *saṃgha*'s duty was to attract the Buddhist lay community's merit-making donations by being spiritually worthy (Lamotte 1984); complementing this, *saṃgha* members were explicitly taught to seek out *prasāditas* ("dedicated sympathizers") and *dānapatis* ("generous donors") (Lamotte 1988: 78) so as to ensure the Buddhist *śāsana*'s existence.[6]

Buddhism shows an array of evolutionary trajectories sharing common traits: *stūpas* ("shrines"; see discussion below) as centers of community ritual (Lewis 1993a); *vihāras* as refuges for meditation, study, and material resources; and *saṃgha* members who assume leadership of the community's spiritual instruction and ritual life. Buddhism in practice so encompassed the elaboration of myriad distinctive lifestyles and cultures that even by the Chinese pilgrim's Fa-Hsien's time (400 C.E.) there was already seemingly indescribable diversity in India: "Practices of the *śramanas* ("monks") are so various and have increased so that they cannot be recorded" (Beal 1970: 1:xxx). The succeeding 1,500 years have only further multiplied the diversity of Buddhism's successful domestications across Asia.

Just as the culture hearth itself evolved effulgently, then declined precipitously after 1200 C.E., so, too, did the peripheries variously absorb, adopt, and adapt the *triratna*.[7] David Snellgrove has noted the seeming paradox of how a decentralized, pluralistic faith has still evolved to observe common traditions over large areas:

Buddhism was clearly incorporating all the time notions which the earliest *śrāvakas* [monks] might have considered unnecessary, if not altogether erroneous. Nevertheless

the general stream of Buddhist tradition ... was sufficiently strong to absorb and transform these new notions, enriching itself in the process. There is of course nothing strange in this process, for the same thing happened in Christianity, but whereas in this case a fairly effective control was maintained for at least 15 centuries, *the only check in the history of Buddhism was the living tradition itself.* It is perhaps surprising that its power has proved to be so strong in the event. (1959: 211–212; emphasis added)

The anthropological study of any Buddhist community can be defined simply as seeking comprehension of how the Buddha, the *dharma,* and the *samgha* have been domesticated into local institutions, vernacular and classical texts, sermons, as expressed in icons and architecture, temporally incorporated through daily, yearly, and life cycle rituals, and as reported by individual monks and laity. Manning Nash has noted the breadth of the anthropological research undertaking in Buddhist cultural zones: "Buddhism is not a separate compartment of belief and practice, but a system of symbols, psychological attitudes, and ritual behavior forming the warp against which the wool of daily life is woven" (1965: 104).

The Spiritual Foundations of Buddhist Practice

Early European interpreters sought in early Buddhism a purely rational, atheistic doctrine that rejected "popular" practices, and their scholarship has long suggested that its rituals represented a degradation of primitive Buddhism's purity, a concession to the masses. (This is a view many early anthropologists accepted.)[8] It is now clear that numerous other early textual discourses present rationales for "popular devotional activities" that make positive, meritorious contributions to the tradition. These authoritative sources express a broad vision of the Buddhist community and of proper Buddhist practice: The *Dīghanikāya* speaks of the devout layman's (*upāsaka*'s) duty to "[h]elp others in increasing faith, moral virtues, knowledge, charity" (N. Dutt 1945b: 169); the Pali *Sigolavada Sutta* specifically enjoins the layman to "maintain ... the traditions of family and lineage; make himself worthy of his heritage; and he should make offerings to the spirits of the departed" (de Bary 1972: 43). There are also certain short texts (called *mantra* and *paritta,* later *dhāraṇī*) given by Śākyamuni that could be effective, when repeated, in repelling negative influences in any environment; in the influential Pali *Milindapañha,* the laity is instructed to listen to the *dharma* and to make efforts to resist its decline (N. Dutt 1945b: 175). Still other voices (quoted below) speak about the merit of spiritual celebrations in the presence of the Buddha's relics. Thus, a sound working definition of a "good Buddhist" is simple: one who takes the three refuges and practices.

Puṇya and Dāna: The Fundamental Buddhist Exchange. The early formulation called "the graded teaching" (*anupūrvīkathā*) established *puṇya/dāna* ("merit"/"gift giving") as the foundation for Buddhist practice while also

legitimating a Buddhist community's diverse cultural activities. The *anupūrvīkathā* are:

1. *Dāna/puṇya*
2. *Śīla/svarga* (morality/heaven)
3. Evils of *pāpa/kāma* (immoral acts/pleasure seeking)
4. Value of renunciation
5. Four Noble Truths (Lamotte 1988: 77)

This hierarchy of legitimate, progressive practices defines a "syllabus" for advancing in spiritual attainment. As *puṇya* has provided the chief orientation point and goal in the Buddhist layman's worldview and ethos, *dāna* ("giving," "charity," "generosity") has always been the starting practice for accumulating *puṇya,* the lifelong measure of spiritual advancement.

Merit making remained the universal, integrating transaction in Buddhist settings (Dargyay 1986: 180), regardless of the respective intellectual elite's orientation toward competing Theravāda, Mahāyāna, or Vajrayāna doctrinal formulations or spiritual disciplines.[9] The wish for merit leading to rebirth in heaven was—and is, in practice—the most popular and pan-Buddhist aspiration; indeed, from the Pali Canon onward (100 C.E.), monks are instructed to "show the layfolk the way to heaven." *Puṇya* is needed to reach heaven, although Buddhist doctrine holds that this is a temporary state and that *nirvāṇ* realization entails the final, eternal cessation of both merit and bad karma. Thus, merit making has both soteriological as well as practical, worldly consequences (G. Obeyesekere 1968). *Puṇya* leads one closer to release, while having impact on worldly destiny in both this lifetime and across future lifetimes. Buddhists likewise seek *puṇya* to change their karma "account" to affect this life and their future rebirth destiny (Hanks 1962).

To maximize *puṇya* and so the course of spiritual advancement, early texts urge all disciples, monastic and lay, to cultivate the Five Cardinal Precepts (*śikṣādāni*):

1. *Śraddhā* (faith)
2. *Śīla* (moral observances)
3. *Tyāga* (generosity)
4. *Śruti* (listening)
5. *Prajñā* (insight) (Lamotte 1988: 70)

The Indic sources thus implicitly authorized many practices through which Buddhists could accomplish the Cardinal Precepts: venerating images (*śikṣādāni* 1), taking precepts and fasting (2), organizing compassionate actions and charitable institutions (2 and 3), arranging public recitations of the texts (4), and encour-

aging meditation (5) (Conze 1967: 47–55; Warder 1970: 191; Welch 1967: 377–382). How Buddhist communities domesticate the Five Cardinal Precepts can be a fruitful, emically informed avenue for anthropological inquiry.

The most universal expression of lay Buddhist faith and *puṇya* seeking has been through *dāna* (*śikṣādāni* 3). *Dāna's* "investment" is described and celebrated in the vast *jātaka* and *avadāna* literature and in the great Mahāyāna *sūtras* (Strong 1979). *Dāna* is the foundation for householder practice. Generosity to all beings is applauded, although the best "*puṇya* return" accrues to gifts made to the Buddhas, *bodhisattvas* ("Buddhas-to-be"), and the *saṃgha*. Passages in the Mahāyāna *sūtras* articulate the value of *dāna* to the individual as an expression of compassion (*kāruṇa*) and for its value as renunciatory practice (Dayal 1932: 165–193).

Buddhist Monasticism. Points of *saṃgha* discipline, not doctrine, were the first areas of sectarian discord and schism in Buddhist history (S. Dutt 1962). The books with rules and regulations for the different *saṃghas* have a remarkable consistency and enduring importance in Buddhist monastic history (Prebish 1975b; Wijayaratna 1990), with the Mahāyāna simply adding the *bodhisattva* vow to the earlier formulations (Robinson 1966). The specific rules of residence in each *vihāra* were copied and consulted regularly in China (Welch 1967: 105ff), indicating the centrality of rules in communal societies of each *saṃgha*.

One prominent division within the *saṃghas* was that between the village monk versus the forest monk: The latter's practice was ideally dedicated to meditation, the former's to service and study. These were the two ideal poles of the monastic orientation, but monks have always moved between them, both in geography and practice. Theravāda Buddhists in Sri Lanka even debated as to whether the most important monks' pursuit was that of meditation or learning. (Citing the danger of the faith's decline, it was decided that the latter was more important.) Later Buddhists have also venerated solitary meditating hermits and wandering saints (*siddhas*) in both Theravāda (Carrithers 1983; Tambiah 1984) and Mahāyāna contexts (Ray 1994; Snellgrove 1987; Welch 1967: 318ff).

An early six-fold division of monastic specialization gives a clear definition of the *saṃgha's* early engaged, multiple orientations to society:

Instructors (*dharmakathika*)

Meditators (*dhyayin*)

Folklorists (*tiraścakathika*)

Sūtra specialists (*sūtradhara*)

Vinaya specialists (*vinayadhara*)

Catecheticists (*Mātṛkādhara*) (Lamotte 1988: 149)

Another specific designation often mentioned in inscriptions is the reciter (*bhāṇaka*), which also suggests popular service. By 400 c.e., Indic monks had

"patron saints" among the classical disciples of Śākyamuni, depending on their focus. (See discussion on this topic below.)

It is particularly important to note the difference between *saṃgha* and *vihāra:* A *saṃgha* is the association of monks (*bhikṣus*) or (separately) nuns (*bhikṣunīs*)[10] living communally under *Vinaya* rules and participating together in the fortnightly *uposatha* ritual; the *vihāra*, by contrast, refers to dwellings and institutions designed for the *saṃgha's* upkeep under the *Vinaya*, the founding and maintenance of which is usually arranged for by the lay community.

A *vihāra* can be of humble construction or built to imperial, aristocratic standards. Each *vihāra* must have a place for the monks to sleep and a site, marked with boundary stones (*sīmā*), for them to gather for the *uposatha*; a *stūpa*, "*bodhi* tree" (*ficus religiouʻsa*, the fig tree under which Śākyamuni was enlightened), meditation hall, image hall, and memorial shrines for deceased monks are other fixtures of typical monastery compounds (e.g., Dutt 1962; Swearer 1976; Bunnag 1973; Spiro 1982; Evers 1972).

The subsistence of the monks from classical times was dependent upon the donations of food and shelter by the lay community. Food was gathered in morning begging rounds, and the day's solid food had to be eaten by noon. Over the centuries, however, the community developed more routinized methods: In some places the laity worked out systems of their coming to the monastery with food donations; in others, monks came to cook their own foods. (In the modern Buddhist world, the begging round is rarely practiced daily.) In most of east Asia, the *vihāras* were given landholdings, and in some schools, monks of certain schools worked in the fields (Welch 1967; Gernet 1995). It was in the Mahāyāna East, too, that monastery rules specified vegetarianism as a requirement, but in later centuries, others did not enforce the restriction against alcohol. Other issues pertinent to the institutional role of Buddhist monastics are treated in subsequent sections.

Meditation Practices. It was not sublime philosophical exegesis nor meditative rapture but ritual acts directed to making *puṇya* for heavenly rebirth that inspired the practice of most Buddhists throughout history. Nonetheless, as the last stretch of the final path to *nirvāṇa*, meditation practice by the few certifies Buddhism's continuing spiritual vitality, inspiring layfolk to respect and take refuge with the *saṃgha*. Until modern times, it was almost entirely monks and nuns who practiced meditation.

Buddhism inherited and extended the spiritual experiments of ancient India. The practice of trance (*samādhi*) was accepted, even encouraged, but the states achieved were not given priority, as they were regarded as a diversion from *nirvāṇa* realization. The key salvific practice was mindfulness meditation (*vipaśyāna*): a careful attending to the three characteristics of existential reality—suffering (*duḥkha*), impermanence (*anitya*), and no-soul (*anātman*). Attention to, and comprehension of, these facts in direct personal experience has critical twofold effect: It develops nonattachment (*virāga*) that stills desire (*tṛṣṇa*), and it cultivates spiritual insight (*prajñā*) that dispels ignorance (*avidyā*). The de-

velopment of both eliminates bad karma (*pāp*) and creates good (*puṇya*), but their perfection eventually leads to the fullness of *prajñā* in the breakthrough, transformative experience (Jap. *satori*) of an enlightened mind (*bodhi*) that eliminates all karma, making future rebirth impossible. Modern Theravāda meditation (P. *vipassana*) still follows this early formulation closely (Thera 1970).

Mahāyāna meditations elaborated upon these precedents. (Chi.) Ch'an (Jap. Zen) mindfulness practice is similar to the Theravāda practice, although the doctrine of all beings possessing the Buddha nature (*tathāgatagarba*) shifted the notions underlying practice (Williams 1989). In Japan, the ideal was extended: Since all reality, including persons, possessed the Buddha nature, then all activities practiced with mindfulness could become meditation: tea ceremony, martial arts, flower arranging, and so on.

The Pure Land schools, directing hope for *nirvāṇa* attainment to an otherworldly paradise (*Sukhāvatī*), encouraged devotees to visualize the Pure Land as revealed in textual descriptions. These practices were especially important as death neared, for if individuals could visualize this realm, they were promised painless passage into Pure Land rebirth.

Other Mahāyāna schools, especially those influenced by esoteric Vajrayāna innovations, developed *sādhana* ("communion with enlightened deity") meditations. The exact procedures and instructions were passed from teacher to student, with an initiation (*abhiṣeka*) necessary for entering the practice. Such *sādhana* practices utilize visualizations of enlightened beings (*bodhisattvas*) along with *mantra* recitations to awaken the mind's powers and foster disciplined spiritual development (Beyer 1973). By controlling the appearance of mental images, one sees the empty nature (*sūnyā*) of all existence, including one's own ego. Related to this is the esoteric or tantric Buddhist path: Its traditions of *sādhana* found the Buddha nature in the extreme domains of human experience, using sexual sensation (Kvaerne 1977: 61–64)—real or as merely visualized—and gender symbolisms to bring the mind past attachments and toward a clear, balanced seeing (*prajñā*) of reality (Snellgrove 1987). Only the tantric teacher (*ācārya*) could discern those whose karmic inheritance required such unusual practices.

Buddhist Ritualism. It was for regularizing needed *dāna* presentations and valued *puṇya* making that monks and laity doubtless developed standard ritual procedures (*pūjā*) and calendrical norms. There is some evidence that monastic rituals and *dāna* "events" sponsored by notable individuals likely set precedents for later traditions (Beal 1970: 1:xxxvii). Orthoprax rituals evolved that complemented meditation and study; employing medical terms, specific rituals were seen as compassionate action (Pye 1978: 58–59, 98; Stablein 1973, 1978) that could achieve specific results for suffering humanity. For the Mahāyāna devotee, *pūjā* was quintessentially an expression of *upāya*, a disciplined act that aids the spiritual destiny of all beings, self, and others.

Buddhist rituals link spoken words with simple deeds. The *paritta* texts of the Pali Canon are one early manifestation (Skilling 1992) as monks chant while

their senior pours water, symbolizing the blessing's dispersal. The earliest Mahāyāna ritual is an elaboration of the *bodhisattva*'s ritual service, emphasizing mastery of word chains known for their spiritual powers: *mantras* and (if longer) *dhāraṇīs* (Bharati 1965: 101–165; Dayal 1932: 267–269). These can be spoken to protect both the speaker, the *saṃgha*, and entire settlements. Resort to these formulas was one of the divisions in early Buddhist medicine (Zysk 1991: 66). This ritual chanting, which eventually included entire texts, was thought to further the foundations of spiritual practice and provide infusions of good karma and radiant auspiciousness for towns and domiciles and at moments of life cycle passage or crisis (Welch 1967: 179ff).

Ritual service came to dominate Mahāyāna Buddhism in its missionary program. This is clear in early east Asian Buddhist history, where cummulative *dhāraṇī* traditions were instrumental in the successful missionization of China (Strickmann 1990). Myriad other Buddhist householder rituals evolved to ensure the regular performance of such *mantra* recitations that both expressed and, through recitation, orchestrated the attempt to actualize the spiritual ideals.

Conforming to the desiderata of the Five Cardinal Precepts (above), the Mahāyāna *Bhadracarīpranidhāna* developed the 7–Fold Worship as a guideline for practice:

1. Honor the Buddha
2. Serve the Buddha
3. Confession of misdeeds
4. Delight in good actions of beings
5. Invitation of Buddhas to preach the *dharma*
6. Arouse the thought of enlightenment
7. Dedication of merit to all beings (Lamotte 1988: 433)

Mahāyāna ritual traditions were crafted to serve the devout's seeking both practical blessings and final salvation (cf. Dargyay 1986: 179–180). The Mahāyāna developed much more elaborated ritual traditions, and its practitioners felt free to freelance innovations.[11]

Buddhist Festival Traditions

We now turn to the specific observances that defined early Buddhism in practice. While the South Asian hearth provided many traditional precedents for modern observances, it should be noted that the Buddhist ethos of adapting the *triratna* to specific sociocultural environments did not compel missionary monks to adopt every tradition, either.

Like other great world religions, Buddhist cultures ordered and shaped time through regular monthly and yearly festivals. Some festivals orchestrated the reliving of classical Buddhist events *in illo tempore* (Eliade 1959: 70): Celebra-

tions of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and *parinirvāṇa* are universal, although differing as to season (Swearer 1987); other more regional sacred events likewise mark the year (Gombrich 1986), as different communities were free to assign their own definitions for these "auspicious days." These include Śākyamuni's ascent/descent from Tuṣita heaven to preach to his mother, or events marking a key point in a *bodhisattva*'s life, be it Vessantara (Cone and Gombrich 1977), the Mahāyāna figure Avalokiteśvara, or the death anniversary of a local saint (Tambiah 1984; Strong 1992). Across Asia, local communities have domesticated stories of visits by Buddhas or *bodhisattvas*, often explaining the ordering of the local pantheon and sacred geography through conquest and conversion.

The Indic *Uposatha* and the Monthly Calendar

Each fortnight on the new and full moon days, Indic *samgha* members had to recite the *Pratimokṣa*, a summary of the community's *Vinaya* regulations. This recitation came after any transgressions were confessed (*ālocanā*) in private to the monk's superior. *Uposatha* became the regular occasions to review, correct, and certify the proper standards of monastery discipline (Prebish 1975b; Wijayaratna 1990). (Based upon the Indic lunar calendar [Das 1928], *uposatha* includes the overnight of the full- and no-moon period; hence, each can span two solar days each month [Lamotte 1988: 70].)

Emphasizing the fundamental interdependence between *samgha* and lay community, householders were encouraged to visit their *vihāras* on the *uposatha* days to make offerings (*dāna*). On these days, devout layfolk (*upāsakas*) could take the opportunity to observe eight of the ten monastic rules while residing continuously on the *vihāra* grounds. (The frequent lay observance of fasting after midday (until the next morning) led to their being commonly referred to as "fasting days" [Beal 1970:1:1xxiv].) In many places across India, *upāsakas* donned white robes while living under their extended vows (Dutt 1945a: 176). Another common *uposatha* custom was for layfolk to remain in the *vihāra* to hear monks preach the *dharma*. Thus, the lunar fortnight rhythm clearly dominated the early Buddhist festival year: Each year's passing has had the absolutely regular succession of *uposathas*.

The Indic Buddhist calendar also utilized the eighth lunar day (*aṣṭamī*) of each fortnight as another auspicious time for pious actions and vow taking. In the Pali Canon (*Mahāvagga* II: 1), as in I-Tsing's time, *aṣṭamī* was also called a "fasting day" and seems to have been the common day chosen for the early festivals outside the *vihāras*: *Aṣṭamī* of Jyeṣṭha is also mentioned by Fa-Hsien as the day when a great Buddhist chariot festival was celebrated in Pāṭaliputra (Legge 1965: 79; N. Dutt 1977: 39). Hsuan Tsang also records that there were three months each year—Phālguna, Āṣāḍha, Kārtika—when Buddhists observed "long fasts" (Beal 1970:1:180).

Monastic Rain Retreat: Varṣāvāsa

Meshed with the lunar month system, the most prominent yearly Indic Buddhist observance was the monsoon rain retreat called *varṣāvāsa* (Pali: *vassa* or *vassāvāsa* [S. Dutt 1962: 54]). Dating from pre-Buddhist *śramaṇas* and adopted by Śākyamuni, the rain retreat practice, as required by the *Vinaya*, curtailed monks' mobility outside the monastery and encouraged meditation and study for its three-month duration (Wijayaratna 1990). It was likewise a time for intensive lay devotional exertions, as it is until today in Burma, Sri Lanka, and Thailand (Tambiah 1970: 155).[12]

Varṣāvāsa ceremonies mark the beginning, formal ending (*pavāraṇā*), and new robe donations (*kaṭhina*) to monks who completed the retreat. The *pavāraṇā* ceremony is much like the biweekly *uposatha* for the *samgha*, but for the lay community the emphasis is on a grander scale of merit making, as the texts specify that *dāna* made on this day would be more fruitful than at other times (N. Dutt 1945b: 249). The post-*varṣā* presentation of new robes by the laity—some traditions also evolved to have the laity sew them in special ways—likewise garners special karmic rewards. *Pavāraṇā*, the day marking the completion of the rain retreat, became the year's merit-making landmark for the early community (Beal 1970:1: xxxix), a tradition that endures across South and Southeast Asia (Tambiah 1970: 154–160).

Special ceremonies were developed by the community around the monastic initiations for novices (P. *pabbajjā*) and full monks (*upasampadā*). The custom of adolescent, premarital short-term monasticism evolved in Theravādin Burma (Spiro 1986), Thailand (Tambiah 1970), and modern Mahāyāna Nepal (Gellner 1992).

It is striking to note here, as in the east Asian adaptations of Buddhism generally, that Mahāyāna monastic traditions did not follow Indic precedents literally or rigorously. As Holmes Welch notes:

In China, however, the summer retreat was generally ignored. Monks were aware that it was supposed to run from the 15th of the fourth month to the 15th of the seventh and some might choose to observe it as individuals, but in most institutions life continued as usual. . . . On the other hand, at many monasteries during the period it was customary to expound the *sūtras*. The abbot, or perhaps some eminent dharma master called in from outside, would lecture for a couple of hours a day. . . . It was still a time for study. . . . At most Chinese monasteries there were no *uposatha* days. . . . The only liturgical change on the 1st and 15th of the month was the addition of certain items to morning and evening devotions. (1967: 110)

Welch does note several Chinese monasteries that did follow the Indic norm exactingly. Descriptions of modern rain retreat practices and the history of transformations await future research.

Pious Constructions: Stūpas. For all Buddhist schools, the *stūpa* (or *caitya*)[13]

became a focal point and the singular landmark denoting the tradition's spiritual presence on the landscape (Dallapiccola 1980; Harvey 1984; Snodgrass 1985). Early texts and the archaeological record link *stūpa* worship with Śākyamuni Buddha's life and especially the key venues in his religious career. The tradition eventually recognized a standard "Eight Great *Caityas*" for pilgrimage and veneration (Tucci 1988). *Stūpa* or *caitya* worship thus became the chief focus of Buddhist ritual activity linking veneration of the Buddha's "sacred traces" (Falk 1977) to an individual's attention to managing karma destiny and mundane well-being. The Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing around 690 C.E. noted a variety of forms and traditions:

The priests and laymen in India make *caityas* or images with earth, or impress the Buddha's image on silk or paper, and worship it with offerings wherever they go. Sometimes they build *stūpas* of the Buddha by making a pile and surrounding it with bricks. ... This is the reason why the *sūtras* praise in parables the merit of making images or *caityas* as unspeakable ... as limitless as the seven seas, and good rewards will last as long as the coming four births. The detailed account of this matter is found in the separate *sūtras*. (Takakusu 1982: 150–151)

Throughout history, Buddhist writers have advanced many levels of understanding to explain *stūpa* veneration. First, a *stūpa* is a site marking supernatural celestial events associated with a Buddha and for remembering him through joyful devotional celebration. The classical account in the Pali *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* describes the origins of the first veneration directed to Śākyamuni's relics:

And when the body of the Exalted One had been burnt up, there came down streams of water from the sky and extinguished the funeral pyre ... and there burst forth streams of water from the storehouse of waters [beneath the earth], and extinguished the funeral pyre. ... The Mallas of Kushinara also brought water scented with all kinds of perfumes ... surrounded the bones of the Exalted One in their council hall with a lattice work of spears, and with a rampart of bows; and there for seven days they paid honor, and reverence, and respect, and homage to them with dance, and song, and music, and with garlands and perfumes. (T. Rhys-Davids 1969: 130–131)

Another prominent Pali text, the *Milindapañha* (IV,8,51), asserts that celestial wonders are visible at *caityas*:

Some woman or some man of believing heart, able, intelligent, wise, endowed with insight, may deliberately take perfumes, or a garland, or a cloth, and place it on a *caitya*, making the resolve: "May such and such a wonder take place!" Thus is it that wonders take place at the *caitya* of one entirely set free. (T. Rhys-Davids 1963: II, 175)

The subsequent elaborations on *stūpa* ritual in Buddhist history are extensive: a "power place" tapping the Buddha's (or saint's) relic presence (Schopen 1987: 196) and its healing potency; a site to earn merit through veneration (Lamotte 1988: 415); a monument marking the conversion and control of *nāgas* and *yakṣas* (Bloss 1973: 48–49). Only the Theravāda *Vinaya* omits instructions to monks on how to construct and make offerings at *stūpas* (Bareau 1962; cf. Schopen 1989), and the archaeological record shows that *stūpas* were frequently built in the center of *vihāra* courtyards (Seckel 1964: 132–134), often by monks themselves (Snellgrove 1973: 410), especially those with particular monastic specializations.[14] I-Tsing's account illustrates the monastic focus on *stūpa* in the *saṃgha*'s communal life.

In India priests perform the worship of a *caitya* and ordinary service late in the afternoon or at the evening twilight. All the assembled priests come out of the gate of their monastery, and walk three times around a *stūpa*, offering incense and flowers. They all kneel down, and one of them who sings well begins to chant hymns describing the virtues of the Great Teacher ... [and] in succession returns to the place in the monastery where they usually assemble. (Takakusu 1982: 152)

In the Mahāyāna schools, the *stūpa* came to symbolize other ideas: of Buddhahood's omnipresence (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977: 13); a center of *sūtra* revelation (Schopen 1975); a worship center guaranteeing rebirth in Amitabha Buddha's paradise, Sukhāvatī (Williams 1989); and a form showing the unity of the five elements with Buddha nature (Rimpoche 1990; Seckel 1964). A passage from the *Pañcarakṣākathā* states that those worshipping relic *caityas* and chanting *dhāraṇīs* will make themselves immune from diseases of all kinds (Lewis 1998). Later Buddhists identified *stūpas* as the physical representations of the eternal teachings (the *dharmakāya* in the Mahāyāna *trikāya* ["three bodies of the Buddha" doctrinal schema]) and expanded the possible *sacra* deposited to include his words in textual form (*sūtra, dhāraṇī, mantra*) (Seckel 1964: 103) and the remains of exemplary human *bodhisattvas* (Mumford 1989).

One final and recently noted dimension to *stūpa* veneration was a votive/ mortuary aspect (Schopen 1987): Certain Buddhists, and especially monks (Schopen 1989), apparently had their own ashes deposited in small votive *caityas*, often arranged close to a Buddha relic *stūpa* (Schopen 1991b, 1991c, 1992a). These structures established a means for perpetual *puṇya* generation for the deceased. The surviving *caitya*-making customs for laity in Nepal (Lewis 1994a) and in Tibet utilize cremation ash and bone.[15]

The passage of the *Mahāparinibbāana Sutta* (above) describes the first veneration of Śākyamuni's relics as a time for communal ritual; making joyful Buddhist devotional processions accompanied by musicians had a strong precedent. Despite the many understandings Buddhists of every level of sophistication advanced regarding *stūpas*, in practice all could nonetheless converge to mark events associated with the Tathāgata(s) ("Buddhas") or saints. *Stūpas* thus became the natural sites for Buddhist festivals of remembrance and veneration.

Great Regional Stūpas: *Centers of Tradition*. Great regional *stūpas* were piv-

otal in the history of Buddhism: These monuments became magnets attracting *vihāra* building and votive construction, for local *pūjā* and regional pilgrimage. The symbiotic economics of Buddhist devotionalism at these centers generated income for local *samghas*, artisans, and merchants (Liu 1988), an alliance basic to Buddhism throughout its history (Dehejia 1972; Lewis 1993a). At these geographical centers arrayed around the symbolic monument, diverse devotional exertions, textual/doctrinal studies, and devotees' mercantile pursuits could all prosper in synergistic style. The regional *Mahācaitya* ("Great Shrine") complexes, with their interlinked components—*vihāras* with land endowments, votive/pilgrimage centers, markets, state support, and soon—represent central fixtures in Asian Buddhist civilizations. For local communities, such *stūpas* were also focal points in the yearly festival round, drawing Buddhists toward the sacred precincts. Empowered votive artifacts dispensed by monasteries and/or bought by the pilgrims at key sites were used to establish *vihāras*, *caityas*, and Buddha images in the diaspora of the faith to distant settlements.

Pious Constructions: Vihāra *Building*. Some texts make quite specific recommendations to the laity on the best *punya* investments. The Sanskrit *Punyakriyāvastu*, for example, arranges the following hierarchy of donations, tying securely the wish for individual good karma accounting with donations that establish the *samgha*'s material existence:

1. Donating land to the *samgha*

2. Building a *vihāra* on it

3. Furnishing it

4. Allocating revenue for it

5. Assisting strangers

6. Tending the sick

7. In cold weather or famine, giving food to the *samgha* (Lamotte 1988: 72)

All Buddhist lineages applaud the great *punya* accruing to those who build *vihāras*. Modern studies also suggest that this has remained among the greatest acts of *dāna* (Spiro 1986: 458; Tambiah 1970: 147ff; Welch 1967: 210ff).

There are indications that ancient yearly festivals were established locally to celebrate each shrine's anniversary of dedication, and these became thereby its yearly "birthday" when donor families should refurbish, clean, and ritually renew it (Beal 1970:1:xxxix).

Buddha Image Veneration. The making of Buddha shrines and images (for *vihāras* or homes) entailed rituals of proper construction, consecration, and up-keep (Dehejia 1989; Lancaster 1974). The Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing describes the role of images in Buddhist practice:

There is no more reverent worship than that of the Three Jewels, and there is no higher road to perfect understanding than meditation on the Four Noble Truths. But the meaning of the Truths is so profound that it is a matter beyond the comprehension of vulgar minds, while the ablution of the Holy Image is practicable to all. Though the Great Teacher has entered Nirvana, yet his image exists, and we should worship it with zeal as though in his very presence. Those who constantly offer incense and flowers to it are enabled to purify their thoughts, and also those who perpetually bathe his image are enabled to overcome their sins ... receive rewards, and those who advise others to perform it are doing good to themselves as well as to others. (Takakusu 1982: 147)

Such were the sentiments that by 700 C.E. legitimated the elaboration of Indic Buddhist ritual and festival traditions, and this historical observation is matched by texts such as the Mahāyāna *Bodhicaryāvatāra* that laud precisely these activities. Image *pūjā* ("ritual") was practiced by entire *vihāras* in conjunction with the lay community and by individual monks with their private icons. The Chinese accounts mention detailed procedures, including image-bathing rites with annointed water, repainting, polishing; accompanied by music, the icon would then be reinstated in the temple, with offerings of incense and flowers. The water used for this ritual is likewise described as medicinal (Takakusu 1982: 147). The documentation of rites of consecration can yield valuable insight into wider questions of belief (e.g., Gombrich 1966).

An Indic "Bathing the Buddha Image" *pūjā* commemorated Śākyamuni's birthday in the month *Vaiśākha*. As described in the Kashmiri *Nilamatapurāna* (800 C.E.): "In the bright fortnight, the image of the Buddha is to be bathed with water containing all herbs, jewels, and scents and by uttering the words of the Buddha. The place is to be carefully besmeared with honey; the temple and *stūpa* must have frescoes, and there should be dancing and amusements" (N. Dutt 1977: 14). This practice seems to have spread across all of Buddhist Asia (Lessing 1976).

I-Tsing underlines the immense *punya* earned by Buddha *pūjās*: "The washing of the holy image is a meritorious deed which leads to a meeting with the Buddha in every birth, and the offering of incense and flowers is a cause of riches and joy in every life to come. Do it yourself, and teach others to do the same, then you will gain immeasurable blessings" (Takakusu 1982: 151–152). A popular Khotanese Mahāyāna text concurs, stating that to make a Buddha image is to guarantee rebirth in future Buddha Maitreya's era (Emmerick 1968: 321); in another passage, worshipping an image is said to be equal in merit to worshipping the Buddha himself: "Whoever in my presence should perform *pūjā*, or whoever should produce faith equally before an image, equal will be his many, innumerable, great merits. There is really no difference between them" (201). Thus, many Mahāyāna *sūtras*, in agreement with the *Parinibbāna Sutta*, laud as especially meritorious offerings of incense and flowers to images, encouraging the presentation with musical accompaniment.

Indic Mahāyāna Vratas. Still surviving in the Himalayan region, *vratas* (Tib.

nyungne) are special Mahāyāna forms of *saṃgha*-led, lay-sponsored practice that focuses on basic doctrines amidst devotional attention to a particular Buddha or *bodhisattva* (Ortner 1978: 35ff; Locke 1987; Lewis 1989a). Doubtless originating in the lay wish to spend *uposatha* or *aṣṭamī* days in stricter devotionalism, *vratas* were the means by which groups of individuals could devote one or more days to fasting, making *dāna* offerings, meditating, hearing stories, and maintaining a high state of ritual purity. Tradition specifies a series of boons for each type of *vrata*, and all add appreciably to one's stock of *puṇya*. By so doing, Newar and Tibetan *vratas*, like Hindu *vratas* (Wadley 1983), are performed to improve the devotee's mundane and supramundane destiny.[16]

Text Festivals. Another Mahāyāna festival focused on the "cult of the book" (Schopen 1975). According to the early *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, veneration of the Buddha's *dharma* was vastly superior to worshipping his bodily relics. (This custom still endures in modern Nepal [Lewis 1993b].) A section of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* describes the superior ritual in which a Mahāyāna text is venerated (Kern 1884: 96) (and in the Chinese version is carried on the devotees' heads [Hurvitz 1976: 82]).

Ratha Yātrās. The most extraordinary Indic form of Buddha image veneration noted in numerous locations was the *ratha yātrā* ("chariot festival"). The Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hsien noted that in ancient Pataliputra there were images of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* placed on twenty-four-wheeled, five-story *rathas* made of wood and bamboo. Beginning on an *aṣṭamī* day and continuing for two nights, the local *vaiśyas* are said to have made vast donations from specially erected dwellings along the path; in Khotan, too, there was a fourteen-day event that was attended by the entire city, for which each monastery constructed a different four-wheeled *ratha* (Legge 1965: 18–19). Nepal's surviving *ratha yātras* dedicated to Avalokiteśvara in Nepal are now well documented (Locke 1980; Owens 1989).

Pilgrimage. Travel to venerate the *stūpas* and *caityas* marking important events in the Buddha's life also defined early Buddhist pilgrimage (Lamotte 1988: 665; Gokhale 1980). This meritorious veneration of the Buddha's "sacred traces" (Falk 1977) was organized into extended processional rituals. The development of pilgrimage traditions shaped the early composition of site-coordinated biographies of Śākyamuni (Lamotte 1988: 669; Foucher 1949) and likely did so for some of the *jātaka* and *avadāna* compilations. Such texts also promise the laity vast improvements in their karma destiny as well as mundane benefits as rewards for undertaking pilgrimage.[17] Khotanese sources assert that sites identified with *bodhisattvas* were also centers of Mahāyāna pilgrimage: "Whatever Bodhisattvas for the sake of *bodhi* have performed difficult tasks such as giving, this place I worship" (Emmerick 1968: 163).

It is noteworthy how each missionized region of Asia developed its own Buddhist overlay of pilgrimage involving mountains, sites for saint veneration, with monasteries built to "colonize" the sacred venue. Much recent work has focused upon these regional complexes in Tibet, China, Japan, and Burma.[18]

Because it is an avenue of cultural diffusion, local domestication, and lucrative income for both Buddhist monasteries and merchants involved, Buddhist pilgrimage should be studied further.

*Buddhist Polity: Lay Associations (*Goṣṭhī*).* Just as the *vihāra* was the institution that has ordered and sustained the *saṃgha*'s communal life, so, too, were there institutions organized by lay patrons to advance their religious interests. Some Indic inscriptions indicate the coordinated pious activities of craft guilds (*śreṇīs*); more common are the *goṣṭhī*—"assemblies, associations, fellowships" (Monier-Williams 1956: 367)—that coordinate large donations or regular rituals. These institutions are ancient, as the Pali *jātakas* cite subscription plans among *upāsakas* (C. Rhys-Davids 1901: 886). Such groups were often formed to complete *caityas* or *vihāra* caves or for renovation projects (Dehejia 1972; Kosambi 1965: 182). These patron societies were common in China (Chen 1964: 290ff; Zurcher 1972: 97) and integral to Buddhist community activities:

[T]hese religious societies enjoyed close relations with the monasteries. The latter furnished leadership in matters pertaining to the religious life of the members, and also provided economic support for many of their activities. For their part, the society members assisted the monasteries in every way possible. They helped in the fund-raising campaigns, the missionary endeavors, the festivals and celebrations conducted by the monastery during the course of the year. By working hard for the welfare of the monastery they shared in its glory. (Chen 1964: 292)

In Nepal, there are still *goṣṭhī* traditions that organize regular rituals, pilgrimage, restorations, even shrine cleanings (Toffin 1984; Lewis 1984: 179–182). In Nepalese practice, the *goṣṭhīs* also hold collective properties, including money; most include some provision for increasing the group treasury by lending these funds at interest serially through the membership. Thus, *goṣṭhīs* not only underwrote pious Buddhist practice: Such institutions became important sources of community investment capital, and such merchant shrine/monastery relations were universal across the urban Buddhist diaspora (Lewis 1993a, 1994b). Few studies have documented other modern lay groups (Welch 1965–1966).

Buddhist Polity: Monks, Royalty, Pañcavārsika. For most of its history, the Buddhist *saṃgha* has existed in polities ruled by kings or emperors (Gokhale 1966). As a result, the tradition developed an exchange rapproachement: The *saṃgha* adopted no rules to break state law; it also certified the monarch's moral standing by accepting his patronage and bestowed prestigious titles (*bodhisattva, dharmarāja* ["just king"], *mahādānapati* ["lord of great generosity"], *cakravartin* ["wheel-turning spiritual leader"]) to those who were most exemplary (Tambiah 1976; Wright 1959: 51). Monastic Buddhism served to promote social stability, accommodating itself to local traditions. In China,

[t]hose who revere the Buddhist teaching but remain in their homes are subjects who are obedient to the transforming power of the temporal rulers. Their inclination is not to

alter prevailing custom, and their conduct accords with secular norms. In them there are the affections of natural kinship and the proprieties of respect for authority.... The retribution of evil karma is regarded as punishment; it makes people fearful and this circumspect. The halls of heaven are regarded as a reward; this makes them think of the pleasures of heaven and act accordingly.... Therefore, they who rejoice in the way of Sākya [the Buddha] invariably first serve their parents and respect their lords. (From a fourth-century text, quoted in Wright 1959: 50)

The Chinese monks also performed long-life rituals for the rulers, a custom continued in modern Thailand and in Nepal (even for the Hindu king).

The just king is the first among laymen, with the legendary King Asoka (250 B.C.E.) the paradigm for later rulers (Strong 1983; Tambiah 1976; Reynolds 1972c). The early texts also mention an extraordinary quinquennial festival that Asoka performed and that expresses the fundamental exchanges within the Buddhist polity: "*pañcavārsika*."[19] It was a time for vast royal donations to the *saṃgha*, other deserving ascetics, Brahmanas, and the destitute; it was also a time for displaying extraordinary images or renowned relics during festivities organized by kings and merchants, while witnessed by a huge social gathering.

The Buddhist community also looks to the sovereign as responsible for the *saṃgha*'s living by its *Vinaya*, and there are many instances of Asian kings "purifying the *saṃgha*" by chastising certain monastic lineages or starting entirely new lines of ordination (Mendelson 1975; Coedes 1971: 197ff).

The special role of the king creates a three-part division in the socioreligious organization of Buddhist polities. The replication of the royal system into the macro- and micro- "galactic" order (Tambiah 1977; see discussion in Part II) of the polity—scaled to governor, district chief, village headman—underlines the importance of network analysis of Buddhist polities as monastic and political organization tend toward similar patterns of expansion.

SECTION II: ISSUES IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF BUDDHISM

> Hence, side by side with the Buddha's shrine stand the nat or spirit shrine, the good-luck symbol, the astrologer's stall and the sacred trees.
> Winston King (1964b: 72)

Interdisciplinary Methodologies

Anthropologists working in Buddhist societies must be aware of the limitations of designing research in terms of a two-tier, Great-little, elite-masses division that has been employed in some modern scholarship. The chief problem with this division—between the true followers and everyone else—is that it really does not find expression in institutional networks or cultural performances that crosscut any presumed "folk-urban continuum." There is also no emic

terminology that corresponds to them or divides the *sāsana* into "Great-little" compartments. The paradigm is also undermined decisively by the texts describing the *sāsana*, with progressive practices articulating no such emic categories; it is also refuted in the biographies of Theravāda Arhats, Mahāyāna dialecticians, and Vajrayāna adepts that all show that these philosopher-saints did not eschew their ancestral traditions, avoid all "folk religion," or withdraw from popular devotional practices.[20] The two-tier image of Buddhist tradition is simplistic for portraying the typical biography of a Buddhist monk or for comprehending the history of Buddhism's doctrinal or institutional evolution. As Tambiah (1984) has stated:

> Development in Buddhism over time ... was informed by both continuities and transformations, the latter being not merely the gross handiwork of the masses but wrought by all parties, elite monks and ordinary monks, kings and court circles, urban merchants and traders, and peasant farmers and artisans, all responsive to their existential conditions and aspirations.

The following sections offer possible avenues of anthropological study in Buddhist contexts that resonate with emerging historical processes. The overall dearth of studies on Mahāyāna-centered communities still obviates thoroughgoing comparative analyses (Gellner 1990).

Patterns of Buddhist "Conversion": Buddhism as Missionary Religion

The sense of history that usually arises from textual-philosophical representations of Buddhism is that on the basis of doctrine this tradition triumphed over contending ideas of other faiths (e.g., Gombrich 1988: 151). Yet a recognition of the many facets of tradition and the usual marginality of philosophers in shaping world events casts doubt upon texts and doctrine being of central importance. An ecological and ethnic awareness is essential for understanding Buddhism's ability to convert populations to its religious orientation.

In South and Southeast Asia, the Buddhist *saṃgha* competed with Hinduism for the conversion of frontier regions, contending for patronage with Brahmanas at court and their kin-based ritualist (*purohita*) diaspora to the Indic hinterlands (Tambiah 1985). This expansion process followed with state formation and was based upon ecological transformations of the land that moved polities up river valleys, with the cutting of forests followed by the concentrated cultivation of grains, especially rice, and the utilization of bovine husbandry. Since the time before Śākyamuni Buddha up to today, the intensive rice-growing Indicized polities have inexorably pushed against their tribal frontiers, where tribal-state (or ethnic-state) relations remain ongoing processes, often violently contested, across the modern Buddhist states inheriting these long-standing confrontations.

Built on such ecological possibilities were galactic networks of economic,

political, and religious organization that linked village peoples to regional and core centers (Tambiah 1976, 1977). These interlocking networks also define Buddhist history's gridwork and the avenues of cultural diffusion through which peoples from, or allied with, core centers have impinged on and transformed the periphery.

Buddhist institution building by forest monks has often meshed with state formation and is fundamental to understanding the frontier dynamism of Buddhist polities of the Himalayas (B. Miller 1960) and Southeast Asia (Lewis 1994b). As Tambiah states:

Starting as little-endowed fraternities, and locating themselves on forest edges on the frontiers of advancing settlements, the forest monks could act as elite carriers of literate civilization and could serve as foci for the collective religious activities and moral sentiments of frontier settlements. It is an alliance of this sort, a paired relationship between founding kings . . . with expansionist ambitions and the ascetically vigorous forest monks at the moving edge of human habitation . . . that domesticated the local cults and incorporated them within a Buddhist hierarchy and cosmos. (1984: 69)

Vihāras in certain places served as caravan stops, and the lay stewards lent monastic funds at interest to individual traders, a feature symbiotic with the process of Indic expansion (R. Miller 1962; Schopen 1994, 1996).

The Buddhist conquest of eastern Asia is in certain respects quite different— though no less successful—from the śāsana's expansion into south and Southeast Asia. This is because monks entering the civilizations in the Sinic culture zone—China, Korea, Japan—had to contend with equally ancient and textual religions (Confucianism and Taoism) long integrated within expansive empires and local cultures.[21] All these show distinctive histories of assimilation but with common patterns of domestication: the initial conversion of aristocracy and this class's expansive promotion of the faith; entry first into urban centers; and the saṃgha securing its presence via land grants and monk-literati preachers promulgating ideas of superiority over indigenous deities, sacred sites (especially mountains [e.g., Collcutt 1988]), and religious systems. The Mahāyāna proved especially attractive as it "handled what seemed to be similar concepts while placing them in a new perspective, giving them another and deeper significance and surrounding them with the halo of supramundane revelation" (Zurcher 1972: 73).

In all venues, it was by forging alliances with royalty at centers of the polity, converting local saints and deities, integrating the teachings with ancestor ritualism, garnering patronage donations that made the vihāras landowners (Clark 1991: 141–145; Evers 1967b; Gunawardana 1979) that the saṃgha adapted to the expansion of many Asian polities, tied to the soil and attracting ethnic groups into its fold.

Buddhist Expansion and Ethnic Boundary Maintenance. Successful monasteries expanded. The pattern was to send out monks who would proceed to establish satellite institutions of that lineage. This network of "Mother-

daughter" monasteries (B. Miller 1960; R. Miller 1962) created all sorts of alliances, religious and otherwise, providing the pattern of institution building found from Ladakh to Bali, Bangkok to Los Angeles, Dharamsala to New York.

The logic of the Buddhist galactic system led to similiar patterns of historical adaptation across these frontier zones: close ties with aristocratic/dominant caste families who at times controlled the local vihāras or favored one monastic lineage (Evers 1967b). This pattern of ethnic group dominance is still visible in Buddhist Tibet, the Kathmandu Valley, and upland Sri Lanka.[22]

When Buddhist monasticism spread across Asia, it introduced independent, corporate institutions that had thoroughgoing transformative potential in local societies and regional polities. Buddhist vihāras have, at times, functioned to break down ethnic and class boundaries, blurring divisions between peoples (Zurcher 1972: 9). The anthropology of missionizing religions finds a common comparative theme here: Newly introduced religious institutions can fundamentally alter previous alignments of kinship, ethnicity, and political power.

But the large celibate monastery was not the Buddhist saṃgha's only institutional form. There was another noncelibate, small-scale model, in places justified by the "decadent age" Mahāyāna doctrine (Nattier 1991), that sustained "householder Mahāyāna saṃghas" in Tibet, Nepal (Gellner 1987, 1988, 1989), and Japan. The Newar Buddhist diaspora across the hills of Nepal (Lewis and Shakya 1988), like the Nyingmapa diffusion over Tibet (Snellgrove and Richardson 1980: 170–172), has been built on the logic of lineages whose acquaintance with the celibate saṃgha norm usually consists merely of short-term monastic initiation (Mumford 1989; Holmberg 1989; Ortner 1989; Locke 1975; Gellner 1992) followed by marriage and lifelong ritual service.[23]

In areas dominated by celibate-monastic lineages, the vihāra institutions accumulated wealth and resources that could easily exceed those of individual families, and monastic expansion could follow different evolutionary trajectories. Once established, separate Buddhist monasteries (or schools) might contend for dominance with local elites, or in some localities, single ethnic groups might come to control local saṃghas as part of their larger political dominance. Competing economic factions were at times patrons of different monastic lineages, creating a healthy diversity of lineages and practices.

At other times, inter-Buddhist competition existed between monastic lineages. As Robert Miller has pointed out:

The creation of daughter monasteries may be seen as an effort to stabilize and stretch out the local resources of support and to tap sources further afield. . . .

There will inevitably be a point at which competition between different monasteries becomes acute. The larger monasteries . . . could reach out beyond the immediate locality to attract rich patrons, and could draw laymen into trade on their behalf. But competition from large, expanding monasteries sometimes led to the collapse of a local saṃgha. (1962: 437)

In yet other historical instances of south and Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Java), factions have supported either the Buddhist *vihāra* or the Hindu temple in their competitions for power. Buddhism's strength through concentrating wealth and human resources was also its historical weakness: *Vihāras* were vulnerable to the vagaries of corruption, state patronage, and royal protection.[24]

Popular Dissemination of the Dharma. While the philosophers continued to compose new tracts and doctrinal formulations, the *jātakas* and *avadānas* endured throughout Buddhist history as the most popular paradigms for the faithful. The *avadāna* and *jātaka* collections, in a multitude of compilations, contain hundreds of exemplary tales. Drawing upon a story or incident from a previous lifetime of Śākyamuni, other Buddhas, or saints (*bodhisattvas* or *arhats*), the narrative is turned to show any number of positive Buddhist observances: moral behavior, renunciation, selfless service, the utility of a ritual, mundane wisdom, faith in the enlightened.

These story texts formed in close relationship with the early lay communities, a dialectical evolution providing a Buddhist example of what A. K. Ramanujan (1990: 12) so aptly describes as "the way texts do not simply go from one written form to another but get reworked through oral cycles that surround the written word." Recalling the "folklorists" of the ancient Indic *saṃgha* cited above, anthropologists need to track exactly where the narratives do reside in Buddhist communities and how the written words and ideas pass into the wider society.

Other attendant themes in this area concern the fact of literacy: Buddhism promoted this transformative change in all societies (Gough 1968; Tambiah 1968b).

Another research topic that has been touched on in China and in the Himalayan region is the practice of public storytelling as a means of doctrinal transmission from text to society (Hrdlickova 1958; Lewis 1984).

Texts in Domestication. While the doctrinal texts may supply a clear spiritual direction to followers who are close to the charismatic founders, including norms of orthodox adaptation and missionizing, religious traditions' long-term historical survival are related—often paradoxically—to their texts also being "multivocalic" so that later devotees have a large spectrum of doctrine, situational instructions, and examplary folktales to draw upon. The study of "religious text domestication" in Buddhist studies must demonstrate the underlying reasons for selectivity from the whole as the tradition evolves in specific places and times to the "logic of the locality."

Popular story narrative collections exist in every Buddhist locality, and the researcher should know their contents and discover their local origins and uses. The most popular, domesticated stories of a locality engender the community's familiarity such that "retelling the myths takes on the function of communion rather than communication. People listen to the stories not merely to learn something new (communication) but to relive, together, the stories that they already know, stories about themselves (communion)" (O'Flaherty 1989:). Our task in

studying literary domestication can thus be defined in anthropological terms: Among the hundreds of *avadānas* and *jātakas* available, why were only a small number—over all others—adopted for special import, with special traditions of shrine worship, pilgrimage, frequent public recitation? The few studies of this phenomenon provide useful bibliographies in this field (see Lewis 1993a, 1994a; Keyes 1975).

Votive Amulets. A neglected field in historical and anthropological studies has been Buddhist traditions of amulet resort. Tambiah's (1984) study of modern Thai practices has been of signal importance in pointing to the continuity of Buddhists using empowered symbols to obtain spiritual and worldly blessings. The most common has been the votive *stūpa*.

Molded miniature *stūpas* were also made as empowered souvenirs for pilgrims who visited great *stūpas*. Such votive traditions are evident in studies of central Asia (Taddei 1970), Tibet (Tucci 1988), Nepal (Lewis 1993b), India (Desai 1986), Burma, Thailand (Griswold 1965), and Śrīvijaya (O'Connor 1974, 1975). The modern Thai enthusiasm for amulets is a survival of this tradition, as are those in modern Japan (e.g., McFarland 1987). Further research is needed in both historical and modern periods.

Merchants and Buddhism. Wealthy merchants are both extolled and cultivated as exemplary donors in all early Buddhist literatures. One measure of the early *saṃgha* itself suggests that about 30 percent were *vaiśyas* (Gokhale 1965), and inscriptions at early monastic centers suggest that individual merchants and artisans, as well as their collective communities (*goṣṭhī*) or guilds (*śreṇī*), vied with kings to act as principal supporters. This relationship spanned the earliest sectarian divisions within the greater Buddhist community, with strong evidence from both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna literatures as well as in the epigraphic sources.

The tradition supported merchants in a multitude of areas. In India, there were natural doctrinal affinities: Buddhist teachings undermined the ideology of birth-determined sociospiritual privilege of Brahmanas and *kṣatriyas*, for whom the *vaiśyas* were inferiors. We have noted that in all Asian venues the duty of giving (*dāna*) to the *saṃgha* is presented as the best investment for maximum *puṇya*. Early texts instructed devout layfolk (*upāsakas*) to avoid trade in weapons, animals, meat, wine, and poison. A Pali *jātaka* also lists "the four honest trades: tillage, trade, lending, and gleaning." Such declarations by the Buddha surely encouraged followers to move into these occupations, a tendency (and similar preference) especially pronounced in the history of Jainism. In addition to encouraging nonviolent occupations, early Mahāyāna texts also emphasize mercantile honesty (standing by quoted prices and measuring accurately), sobriety, and disciplined investment. Little anthropological attention has been devoted to class-nuanced portraits of Buddhist communities.

Faith, Wealth, Buddhist Practice. Wealth, though not the *summum bonum*, is ubiquitously held up as the reward for moral uprightness and pious generosity (Strong 1990). Wealth acquired dishonestly is said to lead to later torments in

hells. Many texts clearly promise worldly blessings to the laity in return for adhering to the Buddhist norm (Falk 1990). This meshes with textual descriptions of an ideal Buddhist kingdom: Among traits listed in the *Mahāvastu* is "thriving in wealth." Note that "rightly acquired wealth," if donated as *dāna*, will beget even greater future wealth, encouraging the merchants to redistribute their riches back into society: Material wealth cannot be "taken with you"; but turned into *puṇya* through *dāna*, one can seek to reacquire the circumstances of wealth beyond this life.

Mahāyāna texts explicitly promise success in overseas trade as a reward for proper service to one's parents. Another area of the tradition designated certain Buddhas, *bodhisattvas*, and allied *devas* as protectors of merchants. Buddhist merchants across the maritime communities of medieval south and Southeast Asia worshipped former Buddha Dīpankara as "Calmer of Waters." There is also panregional evidence for special Buddhist "world protector deities" (*lokapāla*) that give assistance to devotees seeking wealth and trade: Pañcika and Pāṇḍuka seemed to have enjoyed popularity in ancient Gandhara (Northwest India) and Khotan, Jambhala in Tibet and Java, and Bhimsena in Nepal.

Economics of Buddhism: Tradition as Commodity. A recent historical study of Chinese and Kushan merchants has demonstrated that the spread of Buddhist tradition itself motivated transregional trade and that the material culture of later Buddhist decoration and devotion—silks, gems, metalwork, amulets—itself created a commodity market, as monks and merchants crossed the lands synergistically while cultivating, respectively, converts and new markets (Liu 1988). The alliances and wealth generated by devotional establishments affected the entire Indo-Sinic region. Across the trade routes leaving south Asia—northward on the international silk route, across the Himalayas, via Tibet and Yunnan, and eastward via maritime trade to Southeast Asia, coastal China, Japan—the network of marts, ports, and oases defined a web of Buddhist monasticism. Thus, the logic of Buddhism's diasporas, domestications, and historical survivals conformed, in part, to the exigencies of trade and the patronage of merchants.

The practice of teachers requiring payment for their bestowing initiations—a system that developed in the tantric lineages from Indic times and continues in Tibet and Nepal—is another area for "commodity" analysis.

Class, Caste, and Buddhism. The juxtaposition of wealth and advanced spiritual progress is one of the great paradoxes of Buddhist tradition, embodied in the life of Śākyamuni in his last and former lives. Early scholarly debates took opposing sides as to whether the Buddha was for or against the caste system (Thomas 1951: 84ff). Textual analysis has shown that the preponderance of famous early monks come from high-caste families (Gokhale 1965) and that in many story narratives the future Buddha is most frequently born in the top two Indic castes (Brahman or *kṣatrīya*). In fact, Buddhism existed throughout its history in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and even Tibet (Gombo 1982) in a caste-ordered society.

The Buddhist "ideology of merit" has always been used to explain life's

disparities and legitimate those with social, material, intellectual, or political standing (Tambiah 1968a).

Deities, Ghosts, Demons, and Their Control. Another venerable armchair characterization of Buddhism in the West has been its alleged "atheism," a debate that continues. This has been a curious phenomenon, since from the earliest texts onward, Buddhist doctrine has recognized the realm of rebirth as having six paths (*gatis*): human (the best and only realm of *nirvāṇa*), deities (*deva*), demons (*daitya* or *yakṣa*), hungry ghosts (*preta*, P. *peta*), animals, and hell-dwellers. Thus, Buddhists have always believed in the existence of these beings—although salvation could not be sought through their aid—and early texts instruct the laity to perform rituals to assist or propitiate each (Mendelson 1963; Lehman 1971).

In almost every Buddhist region, devotees set out offerings before or after meals to feed/appease the *pretas* and to share merit to help those in any of the hot or cold hells. Likewise, the indigenous deities of localities—beings acknowledged to be born divine through their good karma—can also be respected with offerings since they possess supermundane powers that can affect the local environment (fertility, climate) and individuals living within "their" territories. A "good Buddhist" layman can believe in and worship deities for mundane results: To do so is simply common sense.

Buddhist texts describe the ideal of "converting" local divinities to be protectors (*lokapāla*) of the *triratna*, and this conversion is often enacted in festivals or ad hoc curing rituals. The biographical narratives of Śākyamuni's conversion of the *nāgas*—"snake deities" who own the subterranean regions and control the rains—became archetypal throughout Asia for the conversion of autochthonous deities (Chi. *lung* ["dragon"], Jap. *kami*, Burmese *nat*, etc.) and the modified continuation of their cults. The domestication of indigenous pantheons has been an area of both historical and anthropological investigation.[25]

Across Asia, premodern etiologies identified demonic possession as one common cause of illness. Out of compassion to suffering humanity, the early texts describe rituals to exorcise these beings: Many of the Pali *parittas* and Sanskrit *rakṣā* formuli are dedicated to restoring the individual's health by infusing the environment with the Buddha's words (*dharma*) and making utterances that scare off all spirits. But in the effort to expel specific demons, Buddhist traditions across Asia have developed most varyingly in using the "religious resources" in interaction with indigenous pre- or non-Buddhist practices. In modern Theravādin zones, monks do not exorcise, although Buddhist doctrine and saints "back up the transaction" (e.g., Kapferer 1983; Ames 1968; Yalman 1964; G. Obeyesekere 1964, 1969). In modern Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna zones, monks perform these rites (e.g., Mumford 1989; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956; Stablein 1976; Samuel 1993).

This same pattern of extra- or intra-*saṃgha* differentiation can also be noted for astrology. Although rejected in some *Vinayas* as an art monks could not practice, some have still done so (e.g., Shukla 1975). Buddhists have tended to

see astrology providing a "reading" on karma, and many consult specialists and almanacs for useful guidance in acting (individually, as family, or communally) in accordance with karmic tendencies.

Karma and Causality. One can make the case from textual sources that karma doctrine is not fatalistic since one can always make new *puṇya* or *pāp* to change the ongoing calculus of karmic destiny. This is not to deny that Buddhist philosophy stresses certain strong karma effects as setting off mechanistic causal connections between past and future; but it is also so that karma, like all phenomena, changes every instant.

It is quite important for anthropologists to note that Buddhist causality doctrine holds that not all contingencies in life are karma dependent: a *Milinda-pañha* passage[26] explaining why the enlightened Buddha still was subject to suffering identifies eight casual contingencies in the world:

It is not all suffering that has its root in Karma. There are eight causes by which sufferings arise : .. superabundance of wind, bile, and phlegm, the union of these humours;[27] variations in temperature; the avoiding of dissimilarities; external agency; and karma. . . . So what arises as the fruit of karma is much less than that which arises from other causes. . . . No one without a Buddha's insight [*prajñā*] can fix the extent of the action of karma. (Rhys-Davids 1963: 190–191)

Since only enlightened Buddhas can ascertain whether karma or other contingencies are at work in ongoing life, individuals are faced with uncertainty as to its momentary status. What is clear is the *ex post facto* "reading" from birth station and biography and that good rebirth is never certain. But for the future, the logic of the doctrine motivates seeking guidance through astrology and clearly compels Buddhists to keep making *puṇya*.

The question still remains as to how individual Buddhists and Buddhist communities have emphasized the fate or free will factors in the equation. This issue has quite great significance for assessing Buddhist history, making historical comparisons with other religions, and for theories of religious modernization.

Death Ritualism

In all Buddhist countries, death ritual is the purview of the *saṃgha* and a key time when monks both expound core teachings and receive *dāna*. Although with many regional differences, mourners in Buddhist death rituals carefully dispose of the corpse due to the danger of the dead becoming a *preta* or *yakṣa*, and they seek to avert bad destiny for the deceased by making *puṇya* in her name.

Buddhist tradition plays to both sides of the ancient Indic question of whether one's destiny is based strictly upon the individual's own karma from past and present lifetimes or whether rituals can overrule this and manipulate rebirth destiny (Edgerton 1927). Since Buddhism is conceptually centered on the doctrine that the cosmos is governed by karmic law, ritual traditions naturally sur-

round death, as it is the critical time when such causal mechanisms operate. Both Theravāda monks and—more effulgently—Mahāyāna ritualists applied ritual expertise to this time.[28]

In almost all regions, including the Indic hearthland (Schopen 1984), Buddhism has entered societies that have various traditions of kin-organized ancestor veneration (Teiser 1988). Buddhist domestication with these practices has generally sought not to challenge the practices but to reinterpret the meaning, that is, ritual as a means of *puṇya* transfer. This may seem a striking transformation: If the philosophical texts deny the existence of the soul,[29] how to explain the existence of abbot ancestor graves in Japan or the Buddhist *śraddhā piṇḍa dāna* of Nepal (Toffin 1984; Lewis 1994d)?

Whatever the answer, the tradition's evolution is certain: Dependence on after-death ritual service for *saṃgha* donations is evident in all modern traditions, where such rituals are the predominant area where Buddhist tradition endures (Kitagawa 1966: 296; Holmberg 1989; Martinez 1990; Lewis 1994d).

The Question of Syncretism

In its expansion throughout Asia (and now, globally), Buddhism has been transposed into every kind of cultural environment, and where its community has flourished, it has been necessary to shape coexistence in many dimensions. Domestication has entailed the literal translation of texts and ideas into non-Indic languages to advance the *dharma* against competing ideological systems. From high philosophy to manners to medicine, Buddhist responses to competing systems evolved dialectically. From "within," the Buddha and *bodhisattvas* were superior to all beings, the *dharma* provided standards to measure all truth statements, the "Six Rebirth Stations" (above) reordered local pantheons, and the *saṃgha* lifestyle is the most respected and effective spiritual refuge. Thus, the Buddhist intellectual tradition provided ideal standards to assess and establish Buddhist hierarchy; it did so, in almost all known cases, without violence,[30] often refitting local culture into a larger Buddhist framework. The tradition's missionary success has certainly proven the power of this "loosely structured" ideological system, at least in premodern times.

The question of how each Buddhist community came to understand and domesticate the *triratna* amidst competing indigenous systems is one that is still poorly understood, and anthropologists will likely confront the issue of syncretism in their fieldwork. This is very difficult territory, and it is precisely here that clarity about the textual tradition (local venacular and classical) can help pose questions soundly. Studies of syncretism in Buddhist communities include those by Gombrich (1971),[31] Pye (1971), Berling (1980), and Bechert (1968, 1978). Research on the actual opinions of individual Buddhists is a rare but sorely needed area of study.

SECTION III: TOWARD A TRANSCULTURAL HISTORIOGRAPHY OF BUDDHISM

For cultivating mutual insight benefiting both disciplines, scholars interested in Buddhism need to foster new dialogues between textual and anthropological research. There are many rich yet still underexplored avenues for comparative and collaborative inquiry. Centering analysis on the full range of tradition, the anthropological approach can provide alternative conceptual frameworks to philologically defined representations of Buddhism as religious tradition. For generalizing about a particular aspect of tradition (textual or praxis) or a spiritual lineage amidst the vicissitudes of a given historical context, there is the need for modern ethnographies to shed light on pertinent historical issues, suggest paradigms for comparative inquiry, and illuminate enduring, fundamental features of practice to cipher the Buddhist past. The field's goal, in technical terminology, should now be to develop a transcultural historiography of Buddhist civilizations. Tambiah's summary of anthropology's contributions define this task decisively:

The virtue of a synchronic structural account of contemporary religion is ... the construction of a total field. And the structural relations of hierarchy, opposition, complementarity and linkage between Buddhism and the spirit cults arranged in one single field in contemporary life can therefore give insights into the historical processes by which Buddhism came to terms with indigenous religions in its march outward from India. (1970: 377)

From the textual side of the dialogue, scholars can highlight documents bearing on social aspects of tradition, develop a history of ritual practices and their sources, uncover the doctrinal underpinnings or debates that authorize important practices, and clarify the relationships between popular portions of the canon and more philosophical lineages (e.g., Snellgrove 1966). The following headings indicate subjects that can illuminate the understanding of Buddhist history, past and present.

Bodhisattvas, Arhats, Intellectuals

Using as sample the polemic textual sources on the *bodhisattva* and *arhat* in Buddhist societies predisposes text-based analysts to describe sharp contrasts between those societies devoted to the Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna traditions. Local practice across Asia, however, shows a great degree of both intellectual and ritual overlap. To what extent did philosophical beliefs ever really divide the Buddhist community?

Texts, Art, and Practice

Just as texts are present as part of the doctrinal culture within local Buddhist societies, artistic traditions must also be reckoned as important elements in an-

thropological study. Often it is the choice of images made and displayed in public, in monasteries, in homes, that provide decisive clues about the nature of local tradition. What relationships exist between the material culture (of icons, texts, etc.)[32] and practices in a locality? Is there a local amulet tradition? Perhaps the most fruitful area of collaborative research in Buddhist studies would be to synthesize these academically separated dominions, unifying the data of written word, iconic symbols, and ritual studies in successive epochs.

Buddhist Ethics

Little attention to ethical injunctions and their effects in individual or community activities has been visible in anthropological studies. Recent works in the field have been limited mostly to theoretical, textual-doctrinal exegesis (e.g., King 1964b; Sizemore and Swearer 1990) and to linking Buddhist views to statements of global utopianism, with Western devotees joining in the latter discourse (e.g., Fu and Wawrytko 1991; Sivaraksa 1992). The question of abortion in Japan has gotten recent treatment (Smith 1992; LaFleur 1993), as have the issues of prostitution (Kabilsingh 1991) and "ethical choice" in Thailand (Keyes 1990).

Buddhist Community Belief Patterns

The Buddhism of Nondwin is the most general framework for the interpretation of the world, the explanatory device for understanding the flow of events, the symbolic system for the attribution of ultimate meaning to life and death, and the standard and guide for moral action.

Manning Nash (1965: 104)

As refuge of intellectual freedom, Buddhism nurtured and enriched the civilizations of Asia. Buddhist teachers articulated alternative traditions of remembrance and analysis regarding the Buddha's *dharma*. Surveying the belief patterns of a Buddhist community challenges an anthropologist both with the sheer diversity of doctrinal expression and with the complexities of extracting systematic thought from a tradition that held the ultimate to be beyond conception and recounted stories of the Buddha expressing dismay over those who would overintellectualize the *sāsana*. Systematic statement nonetheless had its place in Buddhist history: Right views are included in the eightfold path, doctrinal formulas abound, and royal court patronage debates required the mastery of doctrinal elucidation and argumentation. What remains uncertain is how the great majority of nonintellectual Buddhists adhered to the teachings. It is surprising that few studies of belief patterns have been done in communities in the manner that sociology has probed the Judeo-Christian believing community and

that life history cases of individual Buddhists have been so rarely reported (e.g., Snellgrove 1967; Richardson 1986; Lewis 1996).

Colonialism and Modernity

In a sense, all anthropological studies must take account of the modern transformations that have reshaped almost every aspect of global life. The legacy of the past 300 years has been the acceleration of change and the expansion of choices in every sphere of life. Few areas of Asian Buddhism have been removed from the effects of these events and trends, including scientific thought and technology derived from the European enlightenment that challenged traditional doctrines, cosmologies, and medical theories; the impact of European colonialism on Asian societies that forced (to varying degress) economic transformations that undermined traditional rulers and patronage; the (not-always-detached) ideologies of Christian missionary triumphalism and racism that forced dissonance with indigenous ethnocentrisms; and the (sometimes) competing ideologies toward democracy that challenged indigenous elites. Fundamental shifts in the political, socioeconomic, and intellectual spheres have inevitably changed individuals and caused Buddhist traditions to confront a changed world. To chart the cummulative, interactive impact of these variables almost defies analytical possibility.[33]

Modern state formation caused fixed boundary lines and national laws to be drawn over former ethnic regions and small-scale spheres of influence, as the legacy of colonialism and later independence movements have been strong forces shaping modern human geography (Bechert 1973; Keyes 1971; Tambiah 1973b; Reynolds 1977). In some areas, adherance to Buddhism was a powerful force of anticolonial struggle; this has in places led to reform movements within the *samgha* that introduced state supervision or weakened the older institutional lineages (e.g., Bechert 1974; Kemper 1984; Mendelson 1975; Tambiah 1978). Buddhist monks have been called upon to serve as leaders in development projects (e.g., Swearer 1981; Suksamran 1977; Reynolds 1977). In China and Outer Mongolia, Buddhism was identified by revolutionary regimes with the old feudal order and fiercely disestablished (Welch 1972), and in both the Tibetan and Inner Mongolian regions, the policy of the People's Republic of China (1949–), especially during the Cultural Revolution (1976–1986), was to destroy Buddhist architecture, monasticism, and public expressions of devotion.

In other regions, once nationalistic Buddhist movements won independence, they turned their efforts inward: By seeking to legislate "purer Buddhist states," they ushered in activist political monks and unprecedented ethnic conflicts with minorities long established in their polities (Tambiah 1986, 1992; Kapferer 1988; Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988). Buddhist universalism and the ideology of compassion have not resisted modern attempts at "ethnic cleansing" in Sri Lanka, Burma, and Bhutan. Studies of institutional change in given polities

are needed, including in local monastery and village contexts, to understand this pattern development more fully.

The impact of missionary Christianity has been rather minimal in terms of converts but quite significant in what Buddhists have learned of modern missionary practices (Malalgoda 1976). Buddhists have learned about the power of media, from the printing press to radio, cassette players, and television; they have recognized the need to reinterpret the *dharma* in light of modern science to keep the growing segment of their urban middle classes interested. The emergence of the laity as key actors in these movements is unprecedented (Swearer 1970; Malalgoda 1972), with lay meditation an important emphasis. Westerners in Asia and Asian teachers in the West have accelerated the global process of transformation (e.g., Malalgoda 1976; Houtman 1990).

The question of Buddhism's impact on economic modernization has been discussed from Max Weber's time onward (Spiro 1966; Sarkisyanz 1970; Tambiah 1973a) and we have described the unambiguous lay ethos of "good Buddhists" attaining worldly success. To summarize our discussions, Buddhism has tended to promote sober, compassionate, medically advanced, disciplined, mercantile, and literate polities. That these can have a positive effect on modernization in the state capitalism mode seems clear, as modern Thailand and Japan surely attest. Only by fashioning more finely articulated studies of the faith's exact domestication in specific contexts can anthropologists effectively insert Buddhism into the data on modernity studies.

Like other great world religions, Buddhism has shown that its definition of the human condition and its solutions to finite existence have enduring value to those undergoing modern change. It will remain the challenging task for anthropologists to discern how and why a tradition originating 2,500 years ago can remain so compelling in Asia and beyond.

NOTES

The author would like to thank his anthropologist mentors for their guidance and encouragement, particularly Morton Klass, Marvin Harris, the late Margaret Mead, and Stanley Tambiah. The technical vocabulary is Sanskrit (Skt.) unless indicated as from Pali (P.), Tibetan (Tib.), Chinese (Chi.), Japanese (Jap.), or Newari (New.).

1. Useful overviews on Buddhist canonical literature are found in Thomas (1951: 261–287), Mizuno (1982), Akira (1987), and Reynolds (1981). Lewis Lancaster's (1979) discussion of the concept of canon in Buddhist contexts is particularly important, as is Tambiah's (1968b) exploration of Buddhism's association with literacy. For a fine discussion of the problem of scriptural authority in Indic Buddhism, see Ron Davidson (1990). Reginald Ray's (1990) discussion of the relationship between text and practice is also germane for anthropological studies, as is Frank Hoffman's article (1992) concerning the orality of the Pali Canon.

The Pali Canon of Theravāda or southern Buddhism, roughly four times the size of the Bible, is universally accepted and entirely translated into English. Extant Mahāyāna

literature is more diverse and less translated, knows no universal canon, and remains variously extant in Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolian, and Japanese. In some respects, the evolution of Mahāyāna tradition lineages in east Asia occurred around different texts recognized by each as the Buddha's "highest teaching." The *Lotus Sūtra* (Skt. *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka*) was by far the most influential, universally respected text. Paul Williams (1989) provides a useful recent summation of these trends.

2. A particularly useful sociologically informed historical account of Buddhism is Peter Pardue's *Buddhism* (1971), although it has long been out of print. A recent survey of Buddhism that devotes considerable attention to devotional practices, festivals, and institutions in relation to doctrine is by Peter Harvey (1990). Alex Wayman's (1971) overview of the tradition provides useful information, as does Luis Gomez's (1987) more recent encyclopedia article. Pardue's statement on Buddhism's unique historical configuration bears repetition:

Buddhism has evidenced from the very beginning a deep commitment to the exploration of the mystery and meaning of the self amid the finite conditions of human life and the transience of worldly forms to which man has compulsively attributed ultimate worth. The paradoxa of illusion and reality, or anxious human striving in the world and the longing for withdrawal from it, of dogmatic ethical imperatives and their merely provisional conditions—all these have been richly elaborated within a prognostic framework. (1971: xxiv)

His book discusses the study of Buddhism and society comprehensively, although given the multivariance of texts and precedents, each world region really requires much more specific and detailed attention, including bibliographic annotation. This article indicates a sampling of important sources; he does not assume the historical priority of either Theravāda or Mahāyāna lineages, seeing both as authentic transmissions of Śākyamuni Buddha's (c. 560–480 B.C.E.) spiritual legacy.

3. The term *vihāra* is used here to refer to monasteries generally because it became the most universal by the classical Gupta period in India (400 C.E.). Early terms included *āvāsa* ("shelter"), *ārāma* ("grove"), and *leṇa* ("private dwelling house"). The key source for the history of Indic monasticism is Sukumar Dutt (1962).

4. Gregory Schopen's studies have challenged many of the old assumptions about early Buddhism; his publications address a host of issues that should inform fruitful anthropological inquiries. See the references.

5. This difference finds dramatic articulation in the fifth century C.E. Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hsien's journal where he describes the devout reasons for his Chinese monk companion's decision to forsake return to China. What could motivate a Chinese pilgrim to stay in India in C.E. 400? The spiritual integrity of Buddhist monasticism and the quality of the early Indic communities' devotion: Wishing to live in the strict discipline found in the Gangetic *vihāras*, he vows, "May I never be born again in a frontier country" (Beal 1970: 1: lxxi).

Anthropologists should consult the records of Chinese pilgrims to India to explore the possible ancient Indic precedents for modern practices. The sources for Fa-Hsien (c. 400 C.E.) and Hsuan Tsang (c. 630 C.E.) are Beal (1970); for I-Tsing (c. 680 C.E.), see Takakusu (1982). Later narratives from other regions and times, as well as monk biographies (Tib. *namthar*), constitute valuable but hardly utilized sources.

6. The specific benefits of being a generous Buddhist donor are extolled in a Pali text: appreciation by everyone, loved by worthy individuals, renowned everywhere, fearless in any company, and rebirth in a heavenly realm (Lamotte 1988: 415). The literatures of all schools in all periods extoll the great worth and rewards for *dāna*.

7. Scholarly discourse in Buddhist studies should adopt the "culture area" concept

and cease using "Indian" as a scientific label for premodern phenomena. "Indic" (and "Indicized") is preferred. Projecting the modern state boundaries backwards falsifies historical representation since Buddhism endures continuously in South Asia outside the culture hearth zone up to the present: in the north in the Kathmandu Valley and Himalayas; in the far south, in Sri Lanka; and to the east in Burma, Thailand, and points along the Indian Ocean. Although it was eclipsed by the Muslim invasions and rule across the Gangetic plain by 1200, the tradition was also preserved far past the twelfth century in small communities lying in inner frontiers: Orissa (Das Gupta 1969) and in port town communities (Tucci 1931). The more heuristic geographical representation is that Buddhism did survive on the Indic frontiers of the original core zone. To say that "Indian Buddhism was extinguished" is poor methodology and, in literal point of geographical fact, false.

8. The classical rejections of this paradigm came in Stanley Tambiah's *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults of Northeast Thailand* (1970) and Richard Gombrich's *Precept and Practice* (1971). See Schopen (1991d) and Gombrich (1988: 172–197) for a good discussion of how Protestantism informed the modern revival of Buddhism and the Western construction of its "normative" core tradition.

9. The persistence of the *puṇya* orientation is likewise mirrored in Vajrayāna texts. In the *Sarvarahasyatantra*, full Buddhist praxis—which leads one to become "best among gods and humans"—is defined by amassing the "Two Collections": the *puṇya* collection and the *jñāna* ("spiritual knowledge" developed via *prajñā* cultivation) collection (Wayman 1984: 525).

10. Discussion on the history of the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* and of women in Buddhism is found in recent works by Falk (1980), Paul (1985), Willis (1985), Kabilsingh (1991), and Sponberg (1992).

11. One Mahāyāna rationale for later Buddhism's luxuriant ritualism is succinctly expressed in the *guru maṇḍala pūjā*, which orchestrates the repetition of the Three Refuges, Six *Pāramitās* ["*bodhisattva* perfections"], the *bodhisattva* vow (to help all beings reach *nirvāṇa* before enjoying it for oneself), and the Eightfold Path (Gellner 1991). This trend toward ritual service continued in great elaboration with the Vajrayāna (Skilling 1992; Lewis 1994d).

It also was the competing Brahman priesthood and the distinctive caste-ordered societies of south (and Southeast) Asia that shaped Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna ritualism. The later Indic Buddhist adaptation of pollution-purity norms, formal life cycle rites (*saṃskāras*), royal ritualism, procedures for image veneration, and calendarical organization all represent, within the early faith, the domestication of Buddhist lay praxis amidst Hindu polities and cultural norms (Mus 1964; Tambiah 1985).

12. Hsuan Tsang notes that the time for retreat in India could be either Āṣāḍha, 15 → Āśvina, 15 or Śrāvana, 15 → Kārtika, 15 (Beal 1970: 1: 72–73), a variation allowed in the Pali *Vinaya* (Warren 1922: 412). His account also suggests that monks could alter the time for retreat to suit local conditions: In Bāluka (central Asia) monks retreated during the winter-spring rainy season (Beal 1970: 1: 38).

13. From antiquity, *stūpa* and *caitya* were used in Buddhist inscriptions and literature as synonyms. Poussin (1937: 284) has noted that a Dharmagupta *Vinaya* commentary suggested the existence of a technical distinction between shrines with relics (*stūpa*) and shrines without (*caitya*). I-Tsing indicates another Buddhist definition: "Again, when the people make images and *caityas* which consist of gold, silver, copper, iron, earth, laquer, bricks, and stone, or when they heap up the snowy sand, they put into the images or *caityas* two kinds of *sarīras*: 1. The relics of the Great Teacher; 2. The *Gāthā* [verse]

of the chain of causation." The *Gāthā* is: *"Ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetuṃ teṣāṃ tath-āgato hy avadat Teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha evaṃ vādī mahāśramaṇaḥ"* (The Buddha, the great truthful ascetic, revealed the cause of things having their beginning from a cause, and their cessation).

14. Hsuan Tsang, the Chinese monk-pilgrim in seventh-century South Asia, noted that monks and nuns performed rituals at individual *stūpas* depending upon which early saints had associations with the individual's "school" or specialization. The specific list (Beal 1970: 1: 180–181) for this is:

Specialization	*Pūjā to*
Abhidharma	Śāriputra
Meditation	Mudgalaputra
Sūtras	Purnamaitrāyaṇiputra
Vinaya	Upali
Bhikṣunis	Ānanda
Śrāmaneras	Rāhula
Mahāyāna	*Bodhisattvas*

15. Eva Dargyay's study of popular Buddhist practices in Zanskar (western Tibet) includes the construction of a small *stūpa* using cremation ashes and bones; this and other typical lay rituals after death (image making and text copying) have a threefold purpose: "to let the previously deceased attain to the path of liberation; to purge the defilements of the living ones; and to ensure the future prosperity and power of one's dynasty" (Dargyay 1986: 87). Other Tibetan areas also preserve this cultic use of monks' and layfolks' cremation remains (Schopen 1992b).

16. In the Newar Buddhist *vratas*, there is a standard structural order: Led by a *va-jrācārya* priest (who is often assisted by several *vajrācārya* assistants), laymen worship a *guru-maṇḍala* that includes all major deities of the Mahāyāna Buddhist cosmos (Gellner 1991). They then participate in a *kalaśa pūjā* to the special *vrata* deity, take refuge in the *triratna-maṇḍalas* (Buddha, *dharma*, *saṃgha*), and finally make offerings to the *vrata* deity, again on a *maṇḍala*. Most texts specify that the *vajrācārya* should explain the *maṇḍala* symbolism(s) and tell the story (*kathā*) (or stories) associated with the particular *vrata*. As the latter is done, all participants hold a special thread (New. *bartakā*; Skt. *vratasūtra*) unwound from the *kalaśa*. This symbolic act links the deity to each individual and binds the circle of devotees in worship. Broken up and tied around the neck, this thread is a special *prasād* laymen take away from all *vrata* ceremonies. Specific boons, good fortune, heaven, or even supernormal powers and the possibility of enlightenment itself are mentioned in the stories read (*vratakathā*).

17. The traditional designation of Buddhist sites specified first four, then eight centers marked by monuments (Bagchi 1941; Chandra 1988). By the time of the *Aśokāvadāna's* composition, thirty-two pilgrimage centers existed in the Gangetic basin visited by devotees (Strong 1983: 119ff). There was also a circuit in northwest India (Lamotte 1988: 335). Such religious travel had important economic effects, and vibrant microeconomies developed around the great *caityas*. By C.E. 400, the world of Mahāyāna Buddhist pilgrimage had long transcended the Gangetic culture hearth to include *stūpa* sites in Khotan, Sri Lanka, Śrīvijāya, ancient Funan, and China. Monks, pilgrims, and traders traveled the same routes (Takakusu 1982; Birnbaum 1989–1990: 115–120).

18. See Susan Naquin and Chun-fang Yu's *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China* (1992)

for a recent collection of studies, past and present, that is also invaluable for its extensive bibliography.

19. For literary references, see Strong (1979: 91–97; 1990). Although there is no clear consensus as to its origins (e.g., Lamotte 1988: 66; Edgerton 1953), *pañcavārsika* was clearly a time for royal-*saṃgha* exchange. The Chinese accounts and the *avadāna* citations point to the custom of a king giving all material goods he owned to the *saṃgha*, followed by his ministers buying it all back with gold from the treasury. (There are a number of these celebrations mentioned in accounts of ancient central Asia and south Asia, several during the autumnal equinox. *Pañcavārsika* seems to have been celebrated by Emperor Wu [502–541 C.E.] of northern China [Wright 1959: 51], and it may survive in Nepal, too [Lewis 1992, 1994e].)

20. The attempt to utilize Robert Redfield's paradigm led to many ill-fated efforts to force Buddhist communities into the "Great-little" framework, example, G. Obeyesekere (1964) and Spiro (1982). Important criticisms are found in Bechert (1968), Tambiah (1970), Jayawardena (1970), Reynolds (1972a), and Lehman (1971).

21. The indispensable sources for the domestication of Buddhism in China, both written with sociocultural analyses, are Chen (1973), Zurcher (1972), and Gernet (1995).

22. Entrance into the Newar *saṃgha* is now based upon birth into only a few high-caste lineages (Allen 1971; Gellner 1992); in Sri Lanka, the dominant Siyama Nikaya is open only to Goyigama caste members (Gombrich 1971; Evers 1967a). The Buddhist *śākyas* and *vajrācāryas* of Nepal, like the Nyingmapa of Tibet, conform to the "Buddhist Brahmana" pattern, where adherence to Buddhist tradition is an important and durable principle of ethnic/caste boundary maintenance and group replication (Gellner 1992). See Clarke (1983, 1990) and Holmberg (1984, 1989) for other Tibeto-Burman case studies in the midmontane Himalayan region.

23. This works exactly like the lineage "Brahmana-frontier" model articulated by John Hitchcock (1974). Perhaps the householder *saṃghas* of Nepal, Tibet, and Japan indicate a Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna Buddhist pattern of frontier adaptation: expansion of the religious elite confined within ethnic group and lineage boundaries, justified by the *bodhisattva*-doctrine (e.g., Shukla 1975).

24. An example of this can be cited from twelfth-century sources in Fuzhou province of southeastern coastal China: "Formerly the usurping kings [of Min] one by one actually seized the rich lands of the common people and gave them to the Buddhists. Since the establishment of our dynasty nothing has changed. Consequently, the Buddhists do absolutely no labor, yet they do not lack for food and they even have excess clothing" (Clark 1991: 144).

25. Examples of recent studies are Ames (1964), G. Obeyesekere (1984), Locke (1980), Owens (1989), and Hardacre (1988). John Holt (1991) has shown how the Mahāyāna divinity Avalokiteśvara has been transformed in Sri Lanka over the centuries to "demotion" as a Hindu world protector.

26. Every anthropologist working in Theravāda regions should read this entire passage to "textualize" the Buddhist attitude toward "the religious field."

27. This refers to the *tridoṣa* system of Indic medical analysis (Zysk 1991).

28. The general attitude of all Buddhist schools is to face death calmly, recollecting the *triratna*. The Mahāyāna schools added their distinctive emphases: The Pure Land devotee is to direct consciousness to Pure Land visualization; the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Freemantle and Trungpa 1987) includes instruction in experiencing the interme-

diate state consciousness and coaching in how to will release—or at least better rebirth—through this afterlife journey.

29. But the philosophers debate the issue throughout history: How can a karma law operate without a *vehicle* for transmigration? Given the host of diverse, complex, and conflicting answers given over the centuries by the Buddhist intelligentsia, it is understandable that the *samgha* did not veto terms in popular use such as the Thai "butterfly soul" to explain rebirth. In China, Buddhist doctrine was defended for its *teaching* of the soul's immortality (Zurcher 1972: 11).

30. An account of the Tibetan state's first contact with the Lepchas of northern Sikkim provides a dramatic exception:

Later the sons of *zo khe bu* and their families [central Tibetan nobility] came down to Sikkim with their followers, invaded and conquered the country.... At that time Lamaism had nearly reached its peak in Tibet, and the second son ... introduced it into Sikkim. They collected all the Lepcha manuscripts and books containing the historical records, mythology, legends, laws, literature, etc. of the Lepchas and burned them. They took the ashes to the high hills and blew them into the air and built Lamaist monasteries on the hills from which they had scattered the ashes ... and forced the Lepcha scribes to translate the Lamaist scriptures ... and venerate them. (Siiger 1967: 28)

31. Richard Gombrich (1971) has suggested that the distinction "cognitive" versus "affective" belief be used to explain the attitudes underlying Buddhist image veneration. This has led to a spirited debate (Gellner 1990).

32. For a sample of the material culture of a Japanese tradition, an overview of Pure Land practice (Matsunami 1976: 168–176) lists the following as "Buddhist Objects of Worship": Gautama Buddha image, Amida Buddha image, Honen image, family Buddhist altar, family memorial tablet, rosary, candle, metal gong, incense, flowers, wooden gong, robe, relic shrines (body and textual), *sūtras*, monasteries, temples, wheel of the law, *swastika* symbol, and Buddhist flag. "Buddhist Forms of Worship" are enumerated as well: Offerings (incense, flowers, rice, sweets, candles, water, money), greeting, meditation (cited twice), *sūtra* chanting, uttering *nembutsu*, singing, and dancing. (Terms used as given in the English text.)

33. An extensive, if uneven, literature exists on Buddhism and modernity in specific contexts. Valuable recent anthologies (and their bibliographies) include those edited by Prebish (1975a), Bechert and Gombrich (1984), Dumoulin (1976), and Queen and King (1996). The conversion to Buddhism by low castes in Maharastra state in India deserves special mention (Zelliot 1966, 1992). Donald Swearer has made numerous contributions (1990, 1995), as has Charles F. Keyes (1989). The "New Religions" of Japan also represent a unique modern development in their reworking of Buddhism traditions with other religious systems (e.g., McFarland 1967; Hardacre 1988; Reader 1991).

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14

THE PILGRIMAGE TO MAGDALENA

Mary I. O'Connor

Until quite recently, anthropologists have not regarded pilgrimages as objects of research despite clear indications of their importance, historically and in the present, in both simple and complex societies (Bowman, in Jha 1985: 1–3; Morinis 1984: 3–4). This lack of interest stemmed at least in part from the post-Boasian emphasis on economic and political elements as the independent variables controlling belief systems in general and religion in particular (O'Connor 1989a: 34; Bowman, in Jha 1985: 2–3).

The study of pilgrimages has also suffered from the constraints of ordinary academic life, which tend to influence dramatically the scope of scholarly research (Bourdieu 1981). By their very nature as transitory, if regularly occurring, cultural phenomena, pilgrimages are difficult to study extensively in the one- or two-year period that characterizes the bulk of anthropological field research. Because pilgrimages tend to be short in duration, it is not possible to study them intensively over a long stretch of time. The necessity to observe a pilgrimage several times over a period of years makes it almost impossible to study within the ordinary academic frame of reference.

The result of these forces at work has been that anthropologists study aspects of pilgrimages but never a pilgrimage in its entirety. The number and variety of pilgrimage traditions, each with its own religious, social, political, and economic contexts, make anything approaching cross-cultural analysis hazardous at best. The process of sorting out the global whole is just beginning (Morinis 1992). The pilgrimage to Magdalena provides a basis for analyzing existing theoretical and methodological constructs. This analysis also contributes to the growing store of case studies.

CONTENTS

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