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Representations of Buddhism in Undergraduate Teaching: The Centrality of Ritual and Story Narratives

Todd T. Lewis

In teaching Buddhism, as in many other fields of cross-cultural inquiry, there has been a natural propensity for intellectuals to be drawn to the worldviews of other intellectuals. In the undergraduate classroom, I share the goal of showing how Buddhist philosophers meet high standards of logical-intellectual rigor and that Buddhist meditation masters explore compelling arenas of human spiritual experience. Most students who take Buddhism courses wish to acquire deeper understanding of Buddhist philosophies, philosophies, and forms of meditation and it is important to broaden and deepen their spiritual imaginations. But I also want students to emerge from my classes capable of contextualizing these noble ideals and connecting with typical Buddhists, past and present.

To focus solely on literate elites and their texts, however, makes the latter goal impossible as it leaves students uninformed about the fundamental socio-cultural realities in Buddhism's history. Elite-focused presentations in textbooks and Western classrooms that privilege philosophical texts frequently ignore the central role of institutions and the cultural evidence from archaeological and epigraphic sources.¹ Modern anthropological demonstrations of the scarcity of monk-scholars in the transmission of tradition have likewise made little impact on the predisposition to assume the norma-

tive centrality of *nirvāṇa*-seeking literati in portraying Buddhism. Thus, elite text-based representations of Buddhist tradition in history remain skewed toward the intellectuals and in the modern imagination Buddhism is reduced to philosophy. In the process, too, Buddhist history contracts to be the outcome of contending ideas and the humanity of Buddhist devotees is reduced to intellect. Both are naive, ivory tower misconceptions. The growing library of publications directed to interested or converted westerners has also been quite friendly to this idealizing and simplistic portrayal.

This reductive appropriation of Buddhism is a continuation of the early Western investigators and exponents of Buddhism who were hoping to find in the tradition an antidote to (in their view) the blind ritualism and irrational monotheisms of Europe, and they often imported Protestant assumptions and categories about true religion in the process.² It was also convenient for scholars to dismiss modern practices as distortions or degenerations of a "true Buddhism," a discovery that Europeans alone were equipped to make.³

The cost of elite bias among Buddhist scholar-teachers remains great, however, as the older paradigms endure and "academic fossilizations" reproduce the earlier biases in the classroom. As a result, there has been very slow progress in understanding how and why Buddhist institutions and cultures evolved across Asia. Textbooks still purvey a propensity to ill-founded discussions about who "true Buddhists" are (or were) on such issues as Buddhism's alleged "atheistic" or "anti-caste" ideology; they privilege belief over practice in defining Buddhist identity, fail to make intelligible the 95 percent of Buddhists who were householders, and ignore the idealistic and inclusive utopian vision that Buddhism held for entire societies. I suspect that even the Western construction of the small sector of Buddhist virtuosi as resolutely isolated from the popular traditions is, as well, a distortion.

Students still encounter Buddhism and Buddhists with naive, elitist biases. If one of the first principles of comparative religion methodology is "to compare like with like" and carefully match level to level, modern representations of Buddhism relying on elite texts still do not convey socio-culturally informed renderings of the tradition.

These distortions in representing the tradition also give no foundation on which to build an understanding of the vicissitudes faced by contemporary rank-and-file Buddhists and Buddhist institutions in modernizing Asia.

Towards a Sociological Imagination of Buddhism

A "sociological imagination of Buddhism" must recognize that economic resources and political alliances have been as crucial to the tradition's successful global domestications as ideas. The teaching of Buddhist history must also focus greater attention on institutions. Buddhism in any social context cannot be understood as based upon unified philosophical schools in isolation; nor was the *sangha* centered on a singular doctrinal orthodoxy but on conformity to discipline. Monasteries of course varied but their leaders were most commonly concerned with the practical perpetuation of the faith's material and spiritual culture in a manner that could dominate the socio-religious life of the surrounding community. The institutions that maintained Buddhism—monasteries, temples, *stūpa* shrines, charities, lay associations—did so via interlocking economic, ritual, educational, medical, artistic, political, and meditation activities. Service to the local society was essential to institutional survival, prior to any philosophical or scholarly pursuits.⁴

The historical re-imagination of Buddhist societies should be built upon the textually-defined norm of religious pluralism within Buddhist cultures, noting that all societies are composed of a broad spectrum of individuals pursuing different spiritual regimens. Monastics and laity, and even followers of other religious schools, were all seen as converging "on the path" heading through rebirth levels toward eventual *nirvāṇa*-realization. It is thus time to abandon a misbegotten legacy of early anthropological theory that was merged with the curatorial text/literati bias: the use of a two-level model for Buddhist communities that divides the "true ordained followers" from everyone else.⁵ This "reductive orthodoxy" model has been so singularly adopted in both academic and popular accounts that "popular" literature and ritual practices are routinely dismissed as being mere

"vulgarizations" of proper Buddhist thought, or as concessions to the masses.⁶

The two-tier imagination of Buddhism finds little support from epigraphic or anthropological accounts pertaining to monastic roles or institutions. It also defies the tradition's own early and textually-located notion of *anupūrvīkathā*, "the gradual path." The specific progress of a typical Buddhist is charted as:

Dāna/punya → *sīla/svarga* → evils of *pāp/kāma* → value of renunciation → Four Noble Truths⁷

George Bond draws out the importance of this understanding very explicitly:

The notion of the path links all diverse persons, stages, and goals. Although these manuals define some *suttas* as mundane and others as supramundane, and though they identify some *suttas* as applying to ordinary persons and others applying to adepts, the manuals do not regard these as distinct religious paths; they do not separate the karmic from the nibbanic path. Though the path has many levels and applications, the *Dhamma* is one and the path one. This...is the secret to understanding the logic and meaning of the Buddha's teachings.⁸

This gradual path doctrine envisions society as a multi-point hierarchy of beings who are different according to their *karman* and spiritual capacities. In the "gradual path," too, we find the central ideal of all Buddhists interdependent and linked through ritual and patronage, connecting advanced practitioners with others moving up along the "gradual path." It has been these relationships that have shaped and sustained Buddhist communities. Such inclusivity applies as well to Mahāyāna contexts, with the appreciation of teaching and ritual performance as *upāyas*, expressions of a bodhisattva's skillful assistance to the community.

Thus, the presentation of the elite as "the sole norm" is an ethnocentric notion, a distorted projection doubtless agreeable to Western converts, but ahistorical and not even based upon textual authority. This idealizing paradigm of Buddhism dominated by aloof,

meditating ascetics and controlled by intellectuals is unsuitable for portraying the typical Buddhist monk or nun, as Schopen has pointed out;⁹ and it certainly can no longer stand scrutiny as a model for the history of Buddhism's doctrinal or institutional evolution.¹⁰

Taking philosophy texts as most representative of Buddhist understanding has led many westerners—including our students—to view "typical Buddhists" who do not conform to the modern construction of the elite ideal with derision or condescension.¹¹ It makes it extremely problematic for students to encounter immigrant Buddhists as "true Buddhists."¹² To overcome the over-idealizing and disembodied philosophy-centered imagination of Buddhism, I suggest that our teaching extend to include ethnographic accounts¹³ as well as the most widespread texts and practices in every Buddhist society: story narratives and rituals.

Story Narratives as the Central Texts in Buddhist Societies

Evidence for the centrality of narratives in Buddhism comes from their early collection and the vast accumulation of story collections, indicating popular interest in these parables and the universal need for monk-scholars to redact them for use in sermons. It also comes in a quite straightforward way from the record of sculpture and painting at *stūpas* and monasteries. This wealth of cultural evidence implies that from the earliest days onward it was the story narratives that shaped the spiritual imaginations and fixed the moral landmarks in the minds of most Buddhists, including the great majority of monks and nuns.

To understand the sources of doctrinal definition, moral guidance, or popular rituals in the history of Buddhism in any locality, then, one must look to the popular narratives, not just the "classics" of the intellectual elite.¹⁴ (A tough-minded cultural historian's approach might even decide: better to assume that the latter literature was marginal in Buddhist societies unless proven otherwise.¹⁵) These narratives include the collections of *jātaka* and *avadāna*, as well as the stories integrated with ritual manuals. A large number of narratives come from the *vinaya* compilations themselves, indicating again that

it was typical monks and nuns who were concerned with orthopraxy, ritual performances, patronage, and storytelling.¹⁶ That these “popular” stories were taken seriously and read carefully by the literati is confirmed by their use in the legal systems of Southeast Asia.

In the Newar case studies that I have studied for my forthcoming book on the most popular narratives that have been told and retold in public storytelling,¹⁷ Buddhism in practice was quite different from what the virtuosi-level texts might have led us to expect: much less individualistic, anti-woman, and anti-family; quite at home with the norms of Brahmanical society in respecting caste privilege, acquiescing to the logic of widow immolation, accepting the deities of the local pantheon (albeit demoting their superior status); and focused primarily on merit-making and pragmatic “this worldly” goals. Rituals aimed at fostering prosperity, health, and wealth are regarded as powerful and central to the “true Buddhist’s” religious identity and lifestyle.

As in modern Nepal, story narratives have from ancient times performed very important roles within Buddhist polities. These include envisioning the society’s moral imagination, tracing the realm of karmic retribution, and providing a venue for entertaining Buddhist utopian scenarios. Buddhist stories in Nepal illustrate these functions abundantly: husbands and wives are reunited in subsequent lives, demoneses are removed from the scene by a merchant-king, rulers find rituals and fierce protectors to pacify their realms, monks alleviate their fears and gain support in their practice, and Buddhas bestow *dhāraṇī* recitations linked to ritual practices that can redress all forms of suffering. The *dharma* includes the teachings that lead elites to realize *nirvāṇa*; it also includes the means of merit-making to progress in *samsāra*. But the narratives and ritual texts also convey a more widespread and pragmatic notion of the *dharma* in Buddhist communities: the distilled words designated by the Buddha that can repel evil and create good, protecting those who take refuge in it. As the *Mahāvastu* states, “For verily *dharma* protects the one who lives by *dharma*, as a large umbrella protects us in time of rain.”¹⁸

The Pre-eminent Buddhist Ideology: Merit-Making

The dominant religious orientation in Buddhist communities throughout history has been merit accumulation. The logic of Buddhist institutional history in every locality has been shaped by those householders and monastics seeking to make merit for current happiness and better rebirth either as a human being or as a god.¹⁹

Surprisingly, early canonical texts dealing with merit and the practical ethos of proper human striving have been downplayed or ignored in Western accounts of Buddhist doctrinal tradition. Yet there are many passages that cover this territory with subtlety and insight. One notable Pali text is worth careful consideration—and course inclusion—as it is mirrored in the themes and concerns found in the popular Mahāyāna culture of Nepal. This passage from the *Anguttara Nikāya* treats the issue of merit and the householder life directly, as Śākyamuni instructs the good Buddhist to seek “The Four Conditions”:

Housefather, there are these four conditions which are desirable, dear, delightful, hard to win in the world. Which four?...

[1] Wealth being gotten by lawful means...

[2] Good report gotten by me along with my kinsmen and teacher...

[3] Long life and attain a great age...

[4] When the body breaks up, on the other side of death may I attain happy birth, the heaven world!...²⁰

The text then proceeds to specify how the moral and wealthy Buddhist householder should attain these goals by doing the “The Four Good Deeds”:

Now, housefather, that same Aryan disciple, with the wealth acquired by energetic striving, amassed by strength of arm, won by sweat, lawful and lawfully gotten, is the doer of four deeds. What are the four?

[1] [He] makes himself happy and cheerful, he is a contriver of perfect happiness; he makes his mother and father, his children and wife, his servants and workmen, his friends and comrades cheerful and happy. This...is the first opportunity seized by him, turned to merit and fittingly made use of.

[2] Then again, the...disciple...with that wealth makes himself secure against all misfortunes whatsoever, such as may happen by way of fire, water, the king, a robber, an ill-disposed person.... He takes steps for his defense and makes himself secure....

[3] Then again...the disciple...is a maker of the five-fold offering (*bali*), namely: to relatives, to guests, to departed hungry ghosts, to the king, and to the gods (*devatā*)....

[4] Then again, the...disciple...offers a gift to all such recluses and brahmins as abstain from sloth and negligence, who are bent on kindness and forbearance, who tame the one self, calm the one self...to such he offers a gift which has the highest results, a gift heavenly, resulting in happiness and leading to heaven.²¹

This teaching passage ends with the praise of one whose wealth has been used fittingly, who has "seized the opportunity," and who has "turned wealth to merit."

The provisions and actions articulated here are congruent with the popular Nepalese texts that echo similar householder concerns for family, wealth, rituals, and protection. Thus, in the laity's spiritual imagination shaped by popular narratives and ritual, Buddhist merit-making "cheats death" by reuniting couples after death and reuniting the rich with their wealth. Merit-making is also not strictly individualistic, as actions by husbands and wives, patrons and shipmates, monks and kings may affect the destinies of others. Finally, heavenly rebirth was recognized in numerous passages as an exalted religious goal for good Buddhists to strive for as well. In short, householder practice across the Buddhist world is centered on merit-making (often collective in practice and effect), showing respect for local deities, and heaven seeking. To focus on elite texts designated to guide the rare meditation master or philosopher is to miss the center of Buddhism in society.

Householder texts like this and Buddhist rituals concerned with less than *nirvāṇa*-seeking have been consistently discounted as sources for understanding the "true Buddhist" in the Western historical imagination. So many false assumptions and ridiculous socio-cultural assertions about Buddhism, ancient and modern, could have been

avoided by comprehending the worldview and ethos of the Buddhist householder tradition. In the *Anguttara* summary above and in the Nepalese texts, we see that Buddhism fosters family ties, encourages an "energetic striving" after economic success, promotes the worship of hungry ghosts and local gods, justifies the rightful seeking after worldly happiness and security, applauds the religious virtues of faith and heaven-seeking, and underlines the virtue of being a donor and patron. This pragmatic conception of the *dharma*, however nuanced in every local community, shaped the domestication of Buddhism from Sri Lanka to the Himalayas, from Central Asia to Japan.

I suggest that by broadening focus beyond the elite to include householders, committing to memory (and analysis) "The Four Good Deeds" alongside "The Four Noble Truths" as distillations of normative Buddhism, we can convey how Buddhist tradition developed three interlocking tracks of legitimate spiritual striving:

PRAGMATIC WELL-BEING	MORAL CULTIVATION	NIRVĀṆA SEEKING
ritual/merit-making	merit-making	meditation

This coexistence is evident in the narrative realm, seen in the juxtaposed images of *mithuna* couples and pragmatic deities (e.g., Hārītī and *nāgas*) at early *stūpas*, and made clear from the content and development of Buddhist ritualism.

Buddhist Ritual: Dharma Applied with Compassion

Whatever else we might surmise about the faith's variegated history, Buddhism in every society ritualized spiritual ideals and incorporated pragmatic traditions into monastic iconography and ritualism, textual chanting, *stūpa* devotions, the festival year, and the life-cycle rites of specific communities.²²

The neglect of ritual in the understanding of Buddhism (and Buddhists) has also obscured the application of Buddhist doctrinal constructs to the events of "real life," especially childhood, marriage, old age, and after-death contingencies. Far from being a "vulgarization" or a "concession" to the masses, ritual in all Buddhist

societies has been the fundamental means of applying *dharma*-analysis to acculturate the young or, to use Buddhist terms, to shape consciously and beneficently (*kushala*) the *skandhas*—body, sensations, perceptions, habit energies, consciousness—of individuals, ultimately pointing them toward spiritual maturity and awakening.

To have studied a living Buddhist community is to know that children come to understand the teachings by questioning the meaning of rituals, through practical examples conveyed in stories, and by listening very intently to the doctrinal testimony that swirls around them when death rituals are being conducted in the family circle. In Nepal, Mahāyāna rituals are carefully constructed to work on multiple levels, too: many act and impart meanings differentially for those all along the “gradual path,” from beginners to advanced tantric practitioners, from little children to elder adepts. Recognizing this (in Nepal) means to discern the *upāya* of the collective Mahāyāna tradition.²³

Students need to understand ritual in its premodern setting as we are prone to forget two facts about the context of Buddhism at that time. First, literacy was rare. Only a very few individuals could read texts to learn the *dharma*; most had to learn through oral accounts and the experience of ritual. Buddhist ritual, thus, was developed and sustained by those wishing to shape human experience consciously.²⁴ Second were the simple realities of public health in the urban Eurasian world.²⁵ Epidemics that premodern medicines could not alleviate periodically moved across the trade routes; when at their worst, pandemics wiped out 10 to 50 percent of a settlement’s population, often within weeks. More constant was the fact of infant mortality. Only roughly 50 percent of children reached the age of five.²⁶ Such an existential baseline of life in the premodern world must inform the modern imagination of such basic Buddhist notions of suffering, the emphasis on the rarity of human life, and the attraction of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha as refuges for vulnerable humanity. To describe and analyze rituals in this light can help students see how Buddhist doctrines are applied to real life circumstances and how ritual traditions have been critical in explaining the faith’s historical success.

Several individuals at the Teaching Buddhism Conference asked me to specify an inventory of Buddhist rituals. This is no easy task to do comprehensively given the diversity of regional and sectarian traditions. It is emblematic of the philological-philosophical dominance of our discipline that there has never been a history written of Buddhist ritual, nor much interest by textual scholars in translating the multitude of ritual texts or vernacular guidebooks, despite their importance to the monastic communities that composed them. The paucity of information on ritual is especially true for the various Mahāyāna societies. Despite these shortcomings, the following list marks a first step for defining a survey of Buddhist rituals.²⁷

A List of Major Buddhist Ritual Practices

Householders and Monastics: Going for Refuge; Taking the Precepts; Merit Making and Transference; Establishing *stūpas* (permanent and ephemeral); Worshipping *stūpas*; Establishing Images; Worshipping Images; *Uposadha* Rituals (extra precepts, fasting, etc.); Śākya-muni’s Birthday/Enlightenment/*Parinirvāna* (e.g., “bathing the infant Buddha image”); Chariot Festivals; Pilgrimage; *Pañcavarsika* (Five-year Donation Festival); “Freeing living beings.”

Ordained Monastics: Monastic Ordination (novice and full); *Uposadha* (Pratimoksha Recitation; Preaching Rituals); Begging Round; Rituals at *stūpas* and Images; *Varsha* (“Rain-Retreat”) Rituals (beginning and end: *Pavarana*); *Kathina*: Robe Donations; *Paitta* Recitations; Healing Rituals using Blessed Water; Making and Empowering Amulets; Rituals of Meditation Hall; Adopting Optional Ascetic Practices; Death Rituals and Post-Cremation/Burial Rituals; Transferring Merit to the Dead.

Mahāyāna Developments: Bodhisattva Vow Taking; *Anuttara* (“7-part”) *Pūjā*;²⁸ *Guru Mandala Pūjā*;²⁹ Buddhist Homa; Rituals of Feeding Hungry Ghosts; Life Cycle Rites (Nepal);³⁰ Death Rites; Cult of the Book *Pūjā*;³¹ *Vratas* to Bodhisattvas (Nepal and Tibet);³² *Dhāraṇī* Recitations; Tantric *Abhiseka*.

For the multitudes who have performed rituals associated with specific narratives or have integrated pragmatic texts into their practice of Buddhism (like the *paritta* in the Theravāda world or the *rakshā* literature in the Mahāyāna), taking refuge in Buddha/Dharma/Sangha meant following a tradition that had demonstrated that the Buddha's words and the faith's saints could exert control over the powers of the universe and thus could resist disease and chaos while promoting worldly prosperity. As Jan Yun-hua has noted, there is a similar strong focus on spiritual power in the Chinese Buddhist storytelling traditions: "The claim of supernatural power of recitation may be disputable among scholars as well as sectarians, yet one point has clearly emerged... From an insider's viewpoint, the power of recitation is extremely powerful, and in certain cases, it is claimed to be even more powerful and preferable than either a philosophical understanding or the excellence in moral disciplines."³³

Thus, I would argue that it was ritual practice that created and defined Buddhist identity and it was faith in the pragmatic powers of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas accessed via ritual that held the center of Buddhist tradition. Lofty moral values and blissful fruits of meditation certainly must have impressed and converted some; but the *dharma's* control over the powers that insure health, wealth, progeny, peace—even overcoming bad *karman*—certainly would have had the widest appeal in securing the faith's success in contexts as different as nomadic pasturelands, urban enclaves, or subsistence farming villages.

Conclusion: A Parable

One hundred years ago, William James wrote of being in the mountains of North Carolina and seeing what at first appeared to be pure squalor: settlers had killed all the trees, planted their crops around the stumps, and erected rough cabins and crude fences, thus marring the landscape. "The forest," James observed, "had been destroyed; what had 'improved' it out of existence was hideous, a sort of ulcer, without a single element of artificial grace to make up for the loss of Nature's beauty..." But greater acquaintance with the people of the area taught him his error. "When *they* looked on the hideous stumps, what they

thought of was personal victory. The chips, the girdled trees and the vile split rails spoke of honest sweat, persistent toils and final reward. The cabin was a warrant of safety for self and wife and babes. In short, the clearing, which to me was a mere ugly picture on the retina, was to them a symbol redolent with moral memories and sang a very paean of duty, struggle, and success.... We of the higher classes (so called)...are trained to seek the choice, the rare, the exquisite, exclusively, and to overlook the common. We are stuffed with abstract conceptions, and glib with verbalities and verosities; and in the culture of these higher functions...we grow stone-blind and insensible to life's more elementary and general goods and joys."³⁴

Privileging the elite's texts as the central sources for imagining typical Buddhists or constructing Buddhist history fixates students on high philosophy and ascetic esoterica, exaggerates (even if unintentionally) the importance of the intellectual traditions, and skews the historical understanding of the religious tradition's institutions. It has also impoverished the treatment of the *dharma* itself as it has been understood in Buddhist communities.

Attention to the content of locally-domesticated vernacular texts and pragmatic ritualism is needed to hasten the development of the post-Orientalist teaching of Buddhism free of idealization, "protestantization" (especially an assumption of ritual practices as superstition), and the overestimation of the role philosophical elites played in shaping Buddhist history. To survive and to achieve the Buddha's missionary call to spread the faith with insight and compassion, Buddhists created institutions and crafted a wealth of pragmatic practices alongside its soteriological traditions.

By performing rituals, Buddhists have taken refuge with powers identified by the Buddha as eminently suitable for securing both temporal and spiritual benefits. This was a development that small circles of Buddhist philosophers throughout history might have found disconcerting. But my guess is that most Buddhist scholars have carried amulets into their study rooms and placed them down alongside their learned *sūtra* commentaries. By reconfiguring our imaginations to include pragmatic rituals and the ideology of merit-making ex-

pressed in the narrative traditions, we can awaken students to Buddhism's contributions to "life's more elementary joys" and convey the full religious meaning of the faith's triple refuge.

Notes

- ¹ Schopen 1991.
- ² See, for example, Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988, 202-40.
- ³ Arguing for a more socio-cultural approach to Buddhism, Donald Lopez writes of the field's "curatorship" as follows: "But the Buddhism that largely concerned European scholars was an historical projection derived exclusively from manuscripts and blockprints, texts devoted largely to a 'philosophy,' which had been produced and had circulated among a small circle of monastic elites. With rare exception, there was little interest in the ways in which such texts were put to use in the service of various ritual functions. Buddhist studies has thus been to a great degree the history of master texts, dominated by scholastic categories it seeks to elucidate, what Said has called a 'paradigmatic fossilization' based upon the finality and closure of antiquarian or curatorial knowledge" (Lopez 1995, 7).
- ⁴ The practical foundation to missionization is indicated in a Chinese text giving instructions on how to establish the faith in a locality: 1. Build monastic halls and temples; 2. Plant fruit trees, shade trees and then excavate bathing pools; 3. Freely supply medicines to heal the sick; 4. Construction of sturdy boats; 5. Safe placement of bridges suitable for the weak or ill; 6. Dig wells near roads for the thirsty and weary; 7. Enclose sanitary toilets (According to the Chinese *Tripitaka* [Taisho 16, #683]).
- ⁵ See Cabezon 1995, 262; Dargyay 1988.
- ⁶ Hallisey and Hansen 1996, 309.
- ⁷ Note how a class beginning with the "Four Noble Truths" defies the tradition's own understanding of how to present the faith and puts our students, in their first exposure, right up in the position of the most advanced adherent.
- ⁸ Bond 1988, 42.
- ⁹ "The actual monk, unlike the textual monk, appears to have been deeply involved in religious giving and cult practice of every kind from the beginning. He is preoccupied not with *nirvāṇa* but above all else with what appears to have been a strongly felt obligation to his parents, whether living or dead. He is concerned as well, for example, with the health of his companions and teachers" (Schopen 1988-89, 167).
- ¹⁰ Tambiah 1973.
- ¹¹ I have found it useful to counter this elitist view among my Catholic students by suggesting a disconfirming analogy to expose their misconception: would they accept that only

celibate priests and nuns were "true Christians"? Are they as Catholic householders "slacker Christians"?

¹² Further, this misconstruction has been one reason that Western converts and immigrant Buddhists have remained isolated from one another in North America and Europe (Nattier 1995).

¹³ The scarcity of anthropological texts in print is a serious obstacle for teachers who wish to include case studies of Buddhism in context. Undoubtedly the best village study, S. J. Tambiah's *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults of Northeast Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), has been out of print for over a decade, as has his *Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Richard Gombrich's *Precept and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971) has also gone into retirement, as has Manning Nash's *The Golden Road to Modernity* (New York: Wiley, 1965). Yes, Melford Spiro's *Buddhism and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970) still remains in print and contains a wealth of ethnographic information, but in my experience it inevitably imparts to students the idea of great separation between different Buddhisms and faulty views about Buddhism and the spirit cults; both problems reinforce attitudes of condescension toward typical lay Buddhists. My students without Asian studies backgrounds have felt it too difficult to follow the welter of detail in Donald Swearer's *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). Frank Reynolds at McGill's Teaching Buddhism Conference recommended the recent work by Nicola Tannenbaum, *Who Can Compete Against the World? Power-Protection of Buddhism in the Shan Worldview* (Ann Arbor: Association of Asian Studies, 1995). Martin Southwold's *Buddhism in Life: The Anthropological Study of Religion and the Sinhalese Practice of Buddhism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), like B. J. Terwiel's *Monks and Magic: An Analysis of Religious Ceremonies in Central Thailand* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994) is not readily available in North America. On Tibetan Buddhism, the late Stan Mumford's *Himalayan Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989) is a brilliant account of Tibetan Buddhism in interaction with Tibeto-Burman shamanism, yet the subject matter is difficult for introductory undergraduate courses. Part of the problem of anthropological Buddhist studies remaining in print has been the lack of their use in introductory classrooms. I hope to assemble a sourcebook of anthropological accounts from Buddhist societies. Suggested readings are welcome!

¹⁴ Two fine course books are a selection of the Pali *jātakas* (Rhys-Davids 1988) and Aryasura's *Jātakamālā* (Khoroché 1990).

¹⁵ Could it be that the philosophical discourse among the virtuosi in Buddhist monasteries was as peripheral to the history of the faith as are the debates in modern philosophy departments to the history of academic institutions?

¹⁶ The potential results from focusing on texts that we know were connected with householders should prove salutary: "Attention to the worklike aspects of the texts may help us to educate our imaginations, such that we do feel that we have a reasonable idea about

what subsequent Buddhists might have learned from a story" (Hallisey and Hansen 1996, 311).

¹⁷ Todd T. Lewis, *Popular Buddhist Texts from Nepal: Narratives and Rituals of Newar Buddhism*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, forthcoming in 2000).

¹⁸ Jones 1952, II: 77.

¹⁹ See Schopen 1985, 1991, 1993; Lopez 1995a, 15. This last point, made in a key article by Gananath Obeyesekere for Theravāda contexts (1968), has been noted for other culture areas where Buddhism was domesticated (e.g., for Tibet [Gombo 1985; Samuel 1993]; Nepal [1992]; China [Gernet 1995]).

²⁰ *Anguttara Nikāya* IV, VII, 61 (Woodward 1992, 74, with numbering added).

²¹ *Anguttara Nikāya* IV, VII, 61 (Woodward 1992, 75-76, with numbering added).

²² As David Ruegg has noted, "Buddhism is indeed not only philosophy and/or religion but also a way of living and being, a cultural and value system permitting Buddhists in vast areas of the world to construct so much of their mundane as well as spiritual lives" (1995, 104).

²³ Lewis 1994.

²⁴ As Southworth has noted, "Buddhists themselves are very aware of this effect, and they stress that just as it is true that having a right or good state of mind leads to right or good conduct, so too does good conduct tend to produce good states of mind" (1983, 199).

²⁵ Diamond 1997.

²⁶ Reynolds and Tanner 1995, 110.

²⁷ For references on some these practices, see the section on rituals in Lewis 1997.

²⁸ See Crosby and Skilton 1996, chapter 3, 9-22.

²⁹ See Gellner 1992.

³⁰ See Lewis 1994.

³¹ See Schopen 1975.

³² See Locke 1987; Lewis 1989.

³³ Yun-hua 1977, 299.

³⁴ Quoted in Levine 1996, 145.

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