

PREFACE

Buddhism beyond Borders

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In the fall of 1994, with the generous support of the Numata Foundation, the Institute of Buddhist Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, hosted a twelve-week lecture series titled *Buddhism in America: An Expanding Frontier*. The series brought together some of the leading scholars in an emerging subfield of Buddhist studies dedicated to the study of Buddhism in Western contexts. One of the fruits of this conference was the volume *The Faces of Buddhism in America*, edited by Charles Prebish and Kenneth Tanaka (1998). Together with Prebish's later volume, *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America* (1999), the conversations begun at this lecture series and subsequent publications have been the foundation of this subfield for more than a decade. Scholars continue to wrestle with questions of ethnicity and identity, adaptation and authority, engagement and activism, and the scholar's role as academic, practitioner, or both.

Reflecting on this seminal lecture series, we noted how much the subfield has grown, deepened, and matured—and the new paths it has taken. Some of the original questions remain important. What roles do ethnicity and race play in the adaptation of Buddhism to US culture? How has the democratization of *sangha* leadership and practice altered Buddhist institutions? Has increased social, political, and environmental leadership affected Buddhist philosophy or ethics? Other research vistas were not even possible in the early 1990s. The Internet was barely visible on the horizon, and in the intervening years it has

fundamentally changed the way the world communicates. In what way has this change impacted US Buddhism? Since the turn of the century, Buddhist ideas and practices are increasingly appearing in non-Buddhist contexts, whether in advertising and popular culture or in psychotherapeutic contexts such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programs. Regardless of the total number of Buddhist practitioners in the United States, it is clear that Buddhism is having an impact on the broader culture. What are the consequences to US culture of this Buddhist influence, and what are the consequences to Buddhism?

It is something of a cliché to say that we live in a globally interconnected world. Yet Buddhist studies as a discipline has, until recently, seemingly resisted this idea, having been dominated by area studies and its focus on the bounded category of nation or a broadly defined cultural area. Recognizing that certain Buddhist ideas, persons, and whole communities now freely and easily cross geopolitical borders, scholars are increasingly focused on the imaginary or global culture. More recent scholarship, for example, has been concerned with the transient nature of culture, what Arjun Appadurai (1996)—building on the idea of Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities” (1983)—calls “imagined worlds,” cultural landscapes that transcend national boundaries. These imagined worlds, defined by the movement of ideas, persons, artifacts, technologies, and commodities, in many ways define how we interact with persons the world over. Scholars such as Manuel Vásquez and Marie Friedmann Marquardt (2003) and Thomas Tweed (1997b, 2006) have argued convincingly that we cannot understand the locality of US religious culture without looking beyond our borders for the influences and sources of cultural flows leading into and out of the United States proper. Transnational currents such as immigration, refugees and diaspora communities, international trade, and the Internet have a profound impact on how religious communities come into being, where they settle, and how they understand themselves in relation to their current locality. How then do these border crossings impact and affect local US Buddhist communities?

Arguably, US Buddhism is the direct result of such transnational forces. US Buddhism is defined by movement, be it late-nineteenth-century Chinese and Japanese immigrants, the importation of Buddhist artifacts and texts, post-1965 Asian immigration and refugee communities, or the more contemporary spread of Buddhist ideas and practices via the Internet. It is difficult to discuss Buddhism in

the United States without being attentive to these historical and contemporary global cultural flows. Given this connectivity, one might ask whether the category of “US Buddhism” is even still relevant. The short answer, of course, is yes. As Roland Robertson has argued, globalization is the universalization of the particular and the particularization of the universal (Robertson 1992, esp. chap. 6). While we cannot study US Buddhism without being attentive to transnational cultural flows, we must also be aware of how such transnational flows express themselves uniquely within the particular local context of the United States, *within* borders.

It was with these methodological questions in mind that we decided that a continuation of that original conversation, begun in Berkeley in 1994, was long overdue. The result was a four-day conference, titled *Buddhism without Borders*, held in March 2010 at the Institute of Buddhist Studies—a conference that brought together some of the original voices, scholars who had been there at the beginning and set the terms of the debate, as well as younger voices, newer scholars who represent the future of the field. We recognized that whereas our field began with the bounded category of “America” or “the United States,” increased global connectivity has changed the face of Buddhism in both Western and Asian contexts. How have global communication networks spread the Buddha’s teachings to unexpected areas? What are the effects of immigration, migration, diaspora? How are younger generations of American Buddhists transcending ethnic divisions that seemed so rigid a generation ago? How have Buddhist practices moved beyond the confines of Buddhist communities and influenced US culture, art, and even other religious traditions?

The present volume, based on lectures given at the 2010 conference, is the result of such questions. Aware of the global interconnectivity of Buddhism as a modern world religion, as well as the seemingly endless varieties of its local iterations, we collected a handful of papers from the conference that best spoke to these concerns, with special attention to not only the local and translocative nature of Buddhism in the United States but to boundary maintenance and boundary crossings more generally.

In section 1, “Boundaries, Borders, and Categories,” authors grapple with theoretical issues of borders and categories. Thomas Tweed, in his “Theory and Method in the Study of Buddhism: Toward ‘Translocative’ Analysis,” applies his recently published theory of religion to

the specific case of Buddhism. With references to various essays in this volume, his chapter draws connections between the chapters and lays the groundwork for theorizing Buddhist developments in the contemporary United States, with special attention to the border-transgressing flows of people and ideas across national and cultural boundaries. Jeff Wilson, by contrast, argues for increased attention to the small-scale boundaries within the United States in “Regionalism within American Buddhism,” suggesting that different Buddhist cultures mirror their American geographical surroundings. Wilson argues that too often the translocative nature of Buddhism in the United States has been emphasized without attending to more specific regional adaptations. In the last chapter in this section, Wakoh Shannon Hickey attends to a different kind of boundary. “Two Buddhisms, Three Buddhisms, and Racism” addresses the issue of scholastic categories, as Hickey unpacks the racial dynamics implicit in the two and three Buddhisms typologies and argues against rigid and static typologies of US Buddhism that do not account for hybridity or change over time.

Section 2, “Crossing Borders: Transcultural and Translocative Flows,” focuses on several case studies that demonstrate cultural flows across both physical and social “place.” Michihiro Ama’s “‘First White Buddhist Priestess’: A Case Study of Sunya Gladys Pratt at the Tacoma Buddhist Temple” unpacks how individual Buddhists have transgressed both racial and gender boundaries in US Buddhism, looking specifically at the case of a female Caucasian convert to the Japanese American community of the Buddhist Churches of America before the Second World War. The mechanics of Buddhist cultural flows are at issue in Jeannine Chandler’s piece, “Invoking the Dharma Protector: Western Involvement in the Dorje Shugden Controversy.” This controversy has continued life in part because of the ability of devotees of Dorje Shugden to connect via the Internet. Moreover, because of this interconnectivity, new actors have become involved in what was once an exclusively Tibetan issue, thus crossing the divide between “Westerners” and ethnic Tibetans, modernists, and traditionalists. In the final contribution to the section, Helen J. Baroni considers the “distant membership” correspondence of American Zen teacher Robert Aitken. Based on her extensive study of the Robert Aitken archive in Hawaii, Baroni’s piece details the ways in which US Zen practitioners interacted with this pioneering Zen Buddhist teacher. She notes how Aitken developed relationships with students at a distance, demonstrating how

Zen Buddhism spread across the local boundaries of the United States and exploring why such a service was so popular.

Section 3, “Free-Floating Dharma Discourses,” considers how Buddhist ideas flow across Buddhist groups, and at times across the boundary of “Buddhism” itself. In chapter 7, “Dharma Images and Identity in American Buddhism,” Richard Hughes Seager explores what he calls a “free-floating Dharma discourse” in US Buddhist culture wherein Buddhist ideas flow into non-Buddhist contexts. Focusing his attention on contemporary art, he examines several artists who have been influenced by Buddhist teachings but may or may not self-identify as Buddhists, and as such the Buddhist ideas they use in their work have become decontextualized and freed from their Buddhist moorings. Kimberly Beek similarly explores how Buddhist ideas are flowing beyond the category of “Buddhism” into the world of American literature. In “Telling Tales Out of School: The Fiction of Buddhism,” she details the emergence of a new genre of literature, which she identifies as explicitly Buddhist fiction. Finally, Mira Niculescu considers the secularization of Buddhism in her “Mind Full of God: ‘Jewish Mindfulness’ as an Offspring of Western Buddhism in America,” arguing that as Buddhist ideas flow beyond the category of “Buddhism” into secularized contexts, those ideas can be more readily imported into new religious contexts. In an important contribution to this subfield, Niculescu looks specifically at the interplay of Buddhist Jewish mindfulness practices, noting the manner in which Buddhism has become reduced to secularized mindfulness. Because the specifically Buddhist context of mindfulness has been removed, the practice can be safely appropriated into Judaism without theological conflict.

Section 4, “Modernity and Modernities,” returns to more theoretical issues involved in the globalization of Buddhism. The division of Buddhism into “modern” and “traditional” varieties is complicated by Erik Braun’s chapter, “The United States of *Jhāna*: Varieties of Modern Buddhism in America,” wherein he discusses how *jhāna* meditation practices are deployed within different types of Buddhist discourses, blurring the boundaries between what is traditional and what is modern. In “Buddhism and Multiple Modernities,” David L. McMahan argues for a more nuanced understanding of modernity, one that takes into account different regional varieties. Comparing Chinese examples of Buddhist modernity to American ones, McMahan argues for the idea of multiple Buddhist modernities that differ based

on local contexts. In the section's last chapter, the editors' "Buddhist Modernism as Narrative: A Comparative Study of Jodo Shinshu and Zen," Natalie Quli and Scott Mitchell argue against a monolithic, acultural model of modernity and instead focus on how modernities are constructed in different cultural environments. Specifically, we explore how the Zen and Shin Buddhist traditions are understood as variously modern or traditional in the United States, while those same traditions are defined in an opposite manner in Japan. This draws our attention to the manner in which "modernity" is not a real, definable force but rather a set of contested narratives about the contemporary world and Buddhism's place in it.

The Buddhism without Borders conference from which these essays were drawn would not have been possible without the generous support of the Institute of Buddhist Studies and the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, which hosted the event. We would like to thank IBS faculty, staff, and students who assisted with the event, from helping set up conference rooms to refilling coffee. Kumi Hadler, Reverend David Matsumoto, Daijaku Judith Kinst, Lisa Grumbrach, Yufuko Kurioka, Diana Thompson, Sayaka Inaishii, and Takashi Miyaji made this conference possible. We thank the respondents, who read and replied to the papers while also moderating their respective panels. Our gratitude to Todd Lewis, Martin Verhoeven, and Lisa Grumbach for their work in this regard.

The editors are also grateful to those whose insightful and interesting papers, due to limited space, time constraints, or publication in other venues, were not included as essays in this volume. Daniel Veidlinger raised tantalizing questions on the role and influence of the Internet on contemporary understandings of Buddhism. Ruth Fitzpatrick explored women's experiences of a female Tibetan deity among contemporary Australians. Charles Prebish, truly a pioneer and founder of the subdiscipline, contributed to our understanding of Buddhism as it is practiced in the local context of Mormon-dominated Utah. Duncan Ryuken Williams relayed the story of Japanese Americans who served in the military during World War II. Chapla Verma looked at the practice of Zen in two different national contexts, the United States and Japan. Transnationalism and networks between Thai Buddhists in Thailand and the United States was the focus of Todd Perreira's presentation. Christine Walters proposed a new way of categorizing American Buddhists based on Buddhist denominations.

Mindy McAdams contributed new research on the role of blogs in the American Buddhist world. Jitka Cirklová focused on the development and role of Buddhism among Czechs. Eve Mullen discussed two Buddhist institutions in the United States that care for the dying and their families. Zach Zimmerman focused on children's programs offered by several Buddhist groups. Richard Payne discussed the construction of sacred biographies through a study of the little-known twentieth-century Chinese Buddhist master Yogi Chen. Franz Aubrey Metcalf drew our attention to issues of authenticity and ethics in his discussion of Hakuyu Taizan Maezumi Roshi's legacy in the White Plum Asanga. Galen Amstutz presented on the marginalization of Shin Buddhism in the West. While their papers are not part of this volume, these scholars raised fascinating and important issues that helped shape the lively discussions at the conference.

Finally, the editors would like to thank IBS dean Richard Payne for his continued support and guidance. We were both fortunate enough to be under his attentive tutelage as graduate students, and his faith in our abilities, coupled with his tendency to push us—sometimes gently, sometimes with significant force—to be better scholars is characteristic of both his generous spirit and his dedication to high-quality scholarship. With deep bows and much thanks.