

Buddhist Responses to Globalisation, edited by Leah Kalmanson and James Mark Shields, Lexington Books, 2013. xiv+182pp. \$80.00. ISBN-13: 9780739180549.

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The words ‘Buddhism’ and ‘globalisation’ belong naturally together. As Peter Hershock remarks in the first essay of this volume, they have ‘a long and deeply shared history’ as both goods and spiritual practice were spread through the trade routes of South Asia (p. 3), creating the first ‘transcultural and transnational’ faith (p. vii). The case for an even stronger bond can easily be made: in a revolutionary manner, Buddhism challenged the inhabitants of ancient India to abandon the filial duties which bound them to the ancestral hearth, venturing beyond the home continent of Jambudvīpa, as their ancestors would never have done. The term ‘globalisation’ is primarily invested with an economic connotation, and even here — as with today’s migratory flows — an isomorph is present in early Buddhism. It has been argued that the *bhikkhus* were obliged to move on when they became too numerous for a village community to support, and naturally they would have followed the existing trade routes.¹ This view supports my conviction that early *Dhamma* transmission resulted from natural wayfaring, rather than some conscious evangelisation strategy.

It is worth dwelling momentarily on the title, *Buddhist Responses to Globalization*, since at first glance the volume is rather disorientating. Though containing some extremely thoughtful writing, we do not find Buddhists’ responses to globalisation, but rather descriptions and analysis of some encounters between Buddhism and broader cultures, and some cross-cultural philosophical parallels, observed by the authors, in relation to which there is scant evidence of actual encounter or direct knowledge. It recalls one of those musical works, entitled ‘Theme and Variations’, in which the texture is incredibly elaborate and the understated theme only emerges when refracted through subtle motivic prisms. Sometimes, even the links with Buddhism itself may seem tenuous and unproven. The underlying theme of the volume would seem to be the application of Buddhist thinking to both political activism and social justice. This involves certain presuppositions, namely that globalisation has resulted in greater equality, an assertion which — though lying beyond the scope of this review — is still in contention. Dealing with the aftermath of another manifestation of globalisation, namely colonialism, Leah Kalmanson (ch.5) reflects on establishing a bank of freely-given resources, which

1. Neelis, J. 2011. *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 4–12.

colonized nations can call upon without repayment as a form of reparation: something that would reflect the 'boundless depths of the bodhisattva's compassion' (p. 85). This draws conceptually on Xinxing's 'Inexhaustible Storehouse' from the late sixth century, where no interest was paid and repayment was optional. It is unseemly and churlish to oppose compassion and generosity, yet it is worth recalling that the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* of early Buddhism sought to address systemic issues through demanding fair wages and seed-corn investment for entrepreneurs (D I 135), standpoints also underlined in the *Siḡālaka Sutta* (D III 190–191).

Carolyn Jones Medine's essay (ch. 2) on Alice Walker presents the picture of a courageous woman, drawing on a rich diversity of influences to pursue the role of 'revolutionary artist' in her struggle for justice. Though clearly Buddhism is present, unsurprisingly given her ambivalence regarding the uneasy African-American relationship with Christianity (p. 24), it is difficult forensically to discern the influences on someone who identified neither as Christian, nor indeed Buddhist, but sees these traditions as tools to advance social change, as part of an 'endlessly developing spirituality' (p. 29). Though the narrative of Linji and Huang-bo (p. 27) features prominently, it is sometime difficult to understand whether Walker herself was conscious of this and other parallels, despite their being presented as significant. The same quasi-revisionist approach is evidenced, and consciously acknowledged, in Erin McCarthy's reflection (ch. 8) on Dōgen and contemporary feminism. Acknowledging that Dōgen's positive attitude towards female spiritual potential, the core insight emerges in the subsequent application of the concept of non-duality to question 'harmful binary systems' (p. 145). That said, it is perhaps paradoxical that writing from an avowedly feminist perspective, underpinned with Irigaray references, itself could be construed as a restatement of the gender dualism which the article, and arguably Dōgen himself, seeks to undermine. In this case, it is also arguable whether one is dealing with a genuine case of globalisation, since the parties (contemporary feminists and Dōgen) appear not to have experienced any encounter; rather, the discernment of parallels by the author herself emerges as the nexus in which contact occurred. Similarly, Melanie Harris (ch. 6) expounds the notion of 'fierce compassion' of Tantric Buddhism, seeking to provide a 'new theoretical base' for womanist thought, social justice activism (p. 103) and facing racist encounters (p.102), while respecting the goodness and dignity of all; again, tangible cross-cultural encounter, outside the confines of the intellectual efforts in writing, is absent. As such, resemblance between any two philosophical traits, however anachronistic, could constitute globalisation, arguably extending the definition of 'globalisation' beyond its received core meaning to define a liminal space which subsumes those cross-cultural thought facilitated by increasingly friction-less dissemination of learning.

Shields (ch. 4) concentrates on the Japanese Critical Buddhism movement, which functioned as a 'heuristic directed at curing a particular illness affecting modern Buddhism' (p. 53). In drawing parallels between the components of Critical Buddhism and Karl Mannheim's extension of Marxist analysis, in particular the notion of 'ideology' as necessarily both erroneous and conditioned, this article casts light on the Buddhist notions of *moha/avijjā*. The tumultuous history of Japanese Buddhism, with its instances of chiliastic utopianism, closely recalls Mannheim's analysis of pre-Reformation religious activism (p. 61), and the dan-

ger inherent in totalistic thinking of rendering the individual inconsequential (p. 68). Essentially, he proposes that Critical Buddhism would benefit from being inflected by understandings derived from both Marx and Mannheim, thus alluding to a latent beneficial globalisation synthesis as yet unrealised, which could promote the currently limited critique of structural inequality within East Asian Buddhism (p. 72). Also applying Buddhist teaching to contemporary understanding, Hershock usefully seeks to reflect on the notion of freedom, as the liberty to engage in an 'enlightening/enlightened way', not as an autonomous being, but conscious of the 'relational quality' of freedom, leading to personal and structural transformation (p. 8), since globalisation necessarily involves encountering otherness.

John Krummel (ch. 7) writing on Nishida Kitarō, founder of the Kyoto School of philosophy, introduces the foil of Jean-Luc Nancy, and his own concept of *nothingness* into the discussion; this considerably augments an already considerable complexity, which derives from Nishida's own sense that his work aspires to a synthesis of Buddhism and philosophy (p. 109). Fundamental to his thinking is the notion of place (*basho*), which signifies interrelationship, thoughts he applied to Japan's developing place in the world (p. 107). Indeed, this dialectical approach to transformative emergence, is evidenced in the notion that people shape the world, and are shaped by it, moving 'from the made to the making', epigrammatically expressed as '*tsukuraretamono kara mirumono e*' (p. 110). Ironically, given the then world situation, when speaking of Eastern and Western culture in his 1940 *Nihon bunka no mondai*, he argues that it is possible to 'bathe both in a new light by discovering an even deeper and broader ground' (p. 116). The space for such an encounter is the 'nonsubstantiality of the world as the manifestation of absolute nothing', radical emptiness surely based on long study of the *kōan on mu* (p. 109).

On a more local level, even 'glocal', Ugo Dessi's narrative (ch. 3) of Shin Buddhism in Hawai'i demonstrates how the movement of peoples, rather than ideas, has proved developmental for Buddhism. Though Shin tradition eschews meditation as undermining pure *tariki* (p. 34), Westerners seeking out Buddhist establishments expect some framework for meditation instruction and practice to be available. Amid the long-standing paraphernalia denoting accommodation with American culture, such as Sunday services, hymns and pews, meditation has found a limited place. This has been framed in various ways, either as a non-spiritual adjunct to regular temple practice, or alternatively as a manifestation of stepping back to understand the founder Shinran's practice on Mount Hiei (p. 37). Again, it could be viewed as an important lesson in the importance of 'other power'; realising the difficulty of meditation, one might abandon self-dependence.

This is certainly a stimulating and wide-ranging book, opening original interpretative vistas, and developing interesting juxtapositions. The title however seems less than appropriate, since on occasion globalisation concedes its central position to social activism and post-colonial issues. However, the main issue would seem to be the extent that the book genuinely presents Buddhist responses to globalisation. A brief internet search around existing literature describing the concerns of indigenous Buddhists reveals other issues, for instance, the way in which new international products stimulate *taṇhā* (craving), or create an illusion of progress, distracting people from the moment. The concern also exists

that communities seem to be losing confidence in local cultural values, because of the glamorous presentation of Western paradigms promoting a global monoculture.² Elsewhere, worries are evident that Asian religious systems are being appropriated outside the cultural context with nourished them to play a role in developing an ideal self through privatised spirituality.³ In addition, the effect of the Theravāda–Mahāyāna encounter, facilitated by travel, is now manifested in the restoration of the *bhikkhuni* order.⁴

One is left with the feeling that despite some laudable reflections on respecting diverse communities and the impact of the colonial era, together with some stimulating cultural parallels, the voice of indigenous Buddhism is almost absent, *pace* several prominent Japanese intellectuals. Given the natural fit between globalisation and Buddhism, and the rich seam of material which surely exists, time is surely ripe for a companion volume addressing these issues.

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2. Hutanuwatr, P. and Rasbash, J. 1998. *Globalisation from a Buddhist Perspective*. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.
 3. Schedneck, B. 2013. 'The Decontextualization of Asian Religious Practices In the Context of Globalization', *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, 12(3), pp. 36–54.
 4. Mohr, T. and Tsedroen, J. eds. 2010. *Dignity & Discipline: Reviving Full Ordination for Buddhist Nuns*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.