

## Review

*Buddhism and Law: An Introduction*, edited by Rebecca Redwood French and Mark A. Nathan. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xxii + 385 pp., \$69.95 (hb), \$34.99 (pb). ISBN 978-0-521-51579-5 (hb), 978-0-521-73419-6 (pb).

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*Buddhism and Law* is an edited volume on the subject of law in Buddhist traditions and societies that arose out of a workshop held in 2004 and two conferences held in 2006. It brings together the work of many of the scholars who participated in those conferences, covering an impressive range of geography, time, and methodological approaches. In spite of the frequent short-comings of edited volumes, readers of this book will indeed find it, as the subtitle promises, to be a useful introduction to the subject of Buddhism and law.

The volume begins with an introduction written by the editors, Rebecca Redwood French and Mark A. Nathan, that more than simply introducing the chapters in the book, seeks to provide a comprehensive introduction to the topic of Buddhism and law. While quite useful generally, it seems that the audience for whom this introduction was written is not those in Buddhist Studies, but rather scholars of law who may have no background in Buddhism and may even be sceptical of the idea that Buddhism is a legitimate or interesting domain within which to study law. They thus begin with a survey of fairly basic legal concepts in Buddhism, including *dharma* and Vinaya. This is then followed by a lengthy apologia for the applicability of the concept 'law' to Buddhism, and only then by the introduction to the chapters of the book proper.

Thereafter, the book is divided into four parts. The first, 'The Roots of Buddhism and Law in India', features chapters by Kumkum Roy, Petra Kieffer-Pülz, Rupert Gethin, Jacob N. Kinnard, and Gregory Schopen. It gives the necessary historical background to the topic of Buddhism and law by addressing the legacy of Buddhism in India from the time of the Buddha through the first millennium CE. In doing so, it of course addresses the Vinaya(s) (Kieffer-Pülz and Schopen), but also the general social context of early Buddhism (Roy), law in the Sūtra Piṭaka (Gethin), and materiality (Kinnard).

Parts II through IV then address in turn the three major religio-cultural regions of Buddhist Asia: the Theravāda world of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia; the Mahāyāna world of East Asia; and the Vajrayāna world of Tibet, Mongolia, and the Himalayas. Part II is perhaps the least geographically comprehensive of the volume, including three chapters (Sunil Goonasekera, Jonathan S. Walters, Benjamin Schonthal) on Sri Lanka, one on Burma (Christian Lammerts), and one on Southeast Asia generally (Andrew Huxley). Part III on East Asia includes three chapters on China (T. H. Barrett, Timothy Brook, and Anthony Dicks), one on Korea (Mark A. Nathan), and two on Japan (Brian Ruppert and Bernard Faure). Finally, Part IV on Vajrayāna Buddhist countries includes two on Tibet (Rebecca Redwood French and Karma Lekshe Tsomo), one on Mongolia (Vesna A. Wallace), and one on Bhutan (Richard W. Whitecross).

Edited volumes are often a mixed bag. On the one hand, an edited volume allows for a more comprehensive treatment of a wide subject than a single scholar could possibly have the competency to treat on their own. On the other hand, the fact that each chapter is written by a separate hand, often each with a wildly different purpose, and that the overall editing is light, means that the book as a whole can lack cohesion. For this reason, I am usually disappointed when I find out that a book that advertises itself as an 'Introduction'—especially when it is the only 'Introduction' available for a particular topic—is actually an edited volume. In this case, however, I was quite pleasantly surprised. French and Nathan truly manage to harness the advantages of an edited volume without falling victim to its drawbacks. In part, this is because they include an impressive number of authors—20 in total—keeping each to no more than 20 pages, and with a minimum of footnotes in most cases. In addition, many of the contributions are true surveys of Buddhism and law in a particular geographical context—including Sri Lanka (Goonasekera), Southeast Asia (Huxley), China (Barrett), Korea (Nathan), Japan (Ruppert), Tibet (French), Mongolia (Wallace), and Bhutan (Whitecross)—or, in the case of Kieffer-Pülz's contribution, a survey of the Vinaya literature. Other contributions, such as that of Schopen on Indian Buddhist nuns, Lammerts on seventeenth-century Burma, and Tsomo on monastic law and gender justice, are more focused studies that serve to flesh out the skeleton formed by the more general surveys, instead of floating awkwardly together as would be the case in many edited volumes. French and Nathan should be commended on their achievement, for students and scholars alike will truly find in this volume a useful introduction to the topic of Buddhism and law.