Duncan Ryūken WILLIAMS and Christopher S. QUEEN, *American Buddhism: Methods and Findings in Recent Scholarship.* 329 pp. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999. Cloth £40.00. ISBN 0-7007-1081-7

THIS PAST YEAR has seen the coming-of-age of American Buddhism as a subfield within Buddhist studies. It may be young and insecure, but it has at last been institutionally legitimated. Consider these publications, all of them scholarly: *Soka Gakkai in America,* by Phillip Hammond and David Machacek; *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America,* by Charles Prebish; *Faces of Buddhism in America,* edited by Prebish and Kenneth Tanaka; *Engaged Buddhism in the West,* by Christopher Queen; *Buddhism in America,* by Richard Seager; and the new journal that was launched: *Journal of Global Buddhism,* which is peer-reviewed and focused on Buddhism outside Asia. All these publications, coming out within almost a year of each other, give the context for Williams's and Queen's book.

Having stretched out the Indra's net in which this book is suspended, I hardly need to add that the book reflects the whole. Each one of the authors mentioned in the last paragraph contributes to the present volume, making this work represent the whole state of the field. So, how does the book (and the field) look? In a word, vibrant. Some areas are actually becoming well-studied, some areas are barely being noticed, but the quality of inquiry and the variety of methodological approaches in the field are remarkable. True to its subtitle, the book's thirteen chapters guide the reader through these new methods and findings. The chapters may not be uniformly excellent, but with the notable exception of psychological study, they vividly capture the field's breadth.

Queen's lengthy, careful, and creative introduction warrants some commentary. I miss Williams's voice here, but one presumes Queen speaks for both editors not only in summarizing the chapters, but in forthrightly marking

positions on several crucial issues. Tellingly, he writes "The choice of 'American Buddhism' for the title of this volume, over the non-committal 'Buddhism in America,' reflects a major finding of our contributors, namely that *recognizable patterns of American Buddhism are emerging in every quarter*" (p. xvi; emphasis in original). The whole volume supports this title and demands we look beneath the chapters' subjects for the American Buddhism that is the book's own subject.

The introduction makes its other points while laying out the book's structure. First, it divides the book's first part, "Asian American Buddhist Identities," from its second, "Profiling the New Buddhists" (the latter refers to convert or "elite" Buddhists). This division affirms the controversial but unignorable division between these American Buddhists. Aware of this divide, Williams and Queen nuance it by including two other parts in the book: "Modes of Dharma Transmission," and "The Scholar's Place in American Buddhist Studies." Thus Part Three focuses on ways in which American Buddhism is developing apart from both sides of the just-mentioned division. And Part Four shines a reflexive light on Buddhist scholarship as it illuminates American Buddhism. Queen concludes thoughtfully, suggesting the democratization, pragmatism, and engagement contextualized throughout this book point to new manifestations of the Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, respectively. While I cannot pursue this conclusion further here, I invite the book's audience to pursue this in their own readings. It bears much further thought.

Due to the range of this volume, I am now going to lead a roller-coaster ride through it. Still, I hope these blurred images whirring by are better than none at all. Part One consists of four chapters, detailing four ethnic Buddhist traditions. First comes Tanaka's thorough job of reviewing the history of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA). As Tanaka points out, after 100 years the BCA calls into question Jan Nattier's "baggage" model of cultural Buddhism. The next chapter, by Senryō Asai and Williams, convincingly demonstrates that "Japanese American Zen temples revolve around death rites and cultural activities" (28). This should not surprise readers of this journal; what is exceptional here is the way in which Asai and Williams make their case using economic data from the temples themselves. Such evidence bolsters their argument in exemplary fashion. Chapter 3, by Stuart Chandler, describes the interactions between the Fokuangshan and the United States Democratic National Committee. Again, what distinguishes this chapter is its methodology, here participant-observation. Chandler became more of a participant than an observer at times, and though such moral difficulties and their analysis are nothing new in anthropology, they are new to Buddhist studies. Chandler sets us off on the right foot. This section concludes with Penny Van Esterik's even more anthropological account of rituals establishing Lao identity in North America. In recreating seemingly unexportable rituals they fashion a new identity, contiguous with the old, yet reflecting American realities (where, for instance, the Vientiane stupa is recreated in Styrofoam [62], and offerings include Coca-Cola and Oreos [59]).

In Part Two we move to "new" Buddhists, the other side of the divide.

Thomas Tweed introduces the range of these Buddhists in his chapter, expressly including as Buddhist anyone who claims to be Buddhist. While I have trouble with this purely emic view of Buddhists, his work does sensitize us especially to the neglected margins of Buddhism in America. Next, James Coleman presents the first fruits of his data on who these new Buddhists really are. Coleman's work confirms many long-held impressions of new Buddhists being culturally elite (especially in education), yet it surprised me in suggesting new Buddhists' continuing overwhelming belief in both karma and reincarnation (98). I very much look forward to a more complex analysis in Coleman's forthcoming book. Immediately following is Hammond and Machacek's presentation of early data from their large study of Soka Gakkai Buddhists in the United States. Their data and background bring Soka Gakkai into an existing dialogue on conversion and contemporary religious searching in America. Again, I look forward to reading their book.

Part Three juxtaposes three chapters on Buddhism *extra muros*. First, Paul Numrich's chapter treats new developments in American inter-Buddhist organizations. Numrich points out that the current pluralist attitude of these organizations contrasts not only with inter-Buddhist competition in history but also with seemingly fusionist tendencies in European Buddhism. Charles Strain's chapter defends Gary Snyder's environmental ethics. Strain clearly demonstrates he knows his material and suggestively supports his points, but I simply cannot tell if his argument holds. This seems due to Strain's belief that to attend to Snyder we "must break apart the formal rigidities of an academic essay" (p. 167, n. 88). While Strain may be right, this philistine reviewer was unsatisfied with a chapter that echoes the fragmentary voice of Snyder's poems. Rounding out these treatments of Dharma transmission is Richard Hayes's short chapter on Buddhism on the Internet, especially Internet discussion groups. Hayes concludes by telling us of the gold mine of raw data on Internet Buddhism, waiting to be shaped (178). As Hayes has been a pioneer in this dimension of Buddhism, I wish he had done more of that shaping in this chapter.

Part Four of the book concerns the scholar's place and interestingly picks up on Hayes's most important point: "I would urge that we have a duty not only to study American Buddhists but also to inform them" (177). Prebish leads off the book's treatment of the scholar's place with an examination of how scholars have done the former, but might increasingly do the latter. Prebish (repeating a chapter in *Luminous Passage*) puts together a great deal of information on the work of scholars of American Buddhism. His most intriguing hope is that "'scholar-practitioners' of today's American Buddhism will fulfill the role of 'quasi-monastics,' or at least of treasure troves of Buddhist literacy and information" (208) for American Buddhists. Prebish's hope echoes Hayes's; and Robert Goss's chapter on Naropa Institute provides an example of how such roles are even now being filled by figures like Reginald Ray, who is both well-trained academically and personally committed to Naropa's tradition. Naropa may be rigorous as well as "practitioner-friendly," but I wish Goss had clarified where his descriptions stop and Naropa's own begin. Reading phrases like "Students are then mentored in integrative

meditative practices to rebuild their lives with gentleness, spaciousness, and love" (227), I got the feeling a Naropa promotional leaflet had somehow been slipped into the book. In the last chapter, Seager comments on his *Buddhism in America*, showing us at least where he stands. When he writes "I know what many undergraduates want—Richard Gere, Tina Turner, the Beastie Boys, the Dalai Lama, Jack Kerouac, and 'way cool' metaphysics" (241), we had better pay attention. Undergraduates are not only academic students; many of those who will continue creating Western Buddhism will come to it through our classrooms. We must teach them more than just the figures above if we want them to critically understand the rich traditions of Buddhism. Seager's chapter hints at how to go beyond what undergraduates want and give them what they need.

A final comment on the state of the field. The book concludes with two appendices: a four-page listing of dissertations and theses on American Buddhism, and a 45-page listing of North American dissertations and theses on topics related to Buddhism. A review of the first reveals these numbers (with apologies to *Harper's magazine*):

Ph.D. dissertations on American Buddhism:		48
Ph.D. dissertations that are mostly historiography:		19
Ph.D. dissertations on Buddhism and psychology:		12
Ph.D. dissertations exclusively on Gary Snyder:		7
Ph.D. dissertations on Soka Gakkai:	(none since 1984)	5
Ph.D. dissertations on Tibetan Buddhism:		1
Ph.D. dissertations on Theravada other than psychology:		1
Ph.D. dissertations on Korean Buddhism:		0

Snyder dissertations as a percentage of the other two *yāna*s combined: 350%

Yes, this has been a banner year and this is an exciting book, but both year and book remind us there is plenty of work left to do.

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