

**Dharma Diversity:
The Many Forms and Faces of Buddhism in America**

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Diversity has been an essential element of Buddhism since its inception in India; the Buddha taught to all, irrespective of the *varna* (caste or class) or gender of the listener. In a thoroughly stratified, hierarchical and patriarchal society, he even founded an order for women. And, ever since the Buddha first pronounced the Fourth Noble Truth; namely, *there is a Path leading to the cessation of suffering*, Buddhism has been a religion which acknowledged a diversity of practice methodologies. The Path was never singular. Rather, the scriptures say, the Buddha in his wisdom taught as many as 84,000 different paths. The varied traditions and methods we have come to know as *Zen*, or Tibetan *tantra*, *vipassana* and *metta*, Korean *Won* or Chinese *ch'an*; these are all manifestations of the Buddha's skillful means in leading beings and of the Buddhist tradition's capacity to expand and to adapt to beings' needs. Still, the aim is one: by cultivating the Path that leads to the cessation of suffering, we may all win enlightenment, wisdom and compassion, for ourselves and for others.

Today Buddhism in a staggering multiplicity of forms is becoming a fairly prominent feature of the religious and cultural landscape of the United States. The estimated number of American Buddhists varies, ranging from just under two

million to more than six million, but the demographic statistics are fairly consistent in telling us that about 80% of these Buddhists are of Asian descent and 20% are non-Asian, so-called “white” or “convert,” Buddhists.¹ The numbers are hard to gauge because identifying or defining who we mean when we say “Buddhist” in the American context is difficult to gauge. Yet, even without specificity in this regard, we can still note with certainty something quite remarkable: for the first time in its more than 2500 year history, almost all of the various Asian traditions of Buddhism are present here-- in *one geographic space* at one and the *same time*. (A contemporary Buddhist joke adds, “And that is so just for Los Angeles!”) Such ready ease of access makes for immense and unprecedented opportunities. Asian traditions that were formerly cut off from one another can more freely communicate with each other and “Americans” have unprecedented access to a variety of traditions without getting on a plane. Yet, at the same time, the U.S. landscape itself presents a strikingly new and different environment for formerly Asian, now world, Buddhism(s) and this fact is producing a variety of new forms of the tradition--forms that are dynamic, sometimes troubling, and in a continuing process of development. Indeed, as the multi-layered cultural ideas of “Buddhism” and “America” make contact with each other, some scholars have suggested that we are witnessing a time of change within Buddhism that is so great and so new that we should call it a Fourth Turning of the Wheel of Dharma, or a “Fourth Yana.”² Whether or not that is so, I am reminded of an old television commercial in which a Black college professor says to inspire his class, “Today is a wonderful time in which to be alive!”

Forms and Faces; Who is a Buddhist?

One of the most intriguing questions coming out of the sub-field of Buddhism in America studies today has to do with how we go about defining and locating or situating our target group of adherents or practitioners. The project is larger than Buddhism and has to do with the very notion of religious identity itself. How do we define religious identity? Many Buddhist scholars have taken up this task.³ Jan Nattier asks the question, Who is a Buddhist?, in an essay entitled, "Who is a Buddhist? Charting the Landscape of Buddhist America." She writes:

One issue that must be faced at the outset in any study of American Buddhism is precisely who is to be included within the category of "Buddhist." Is it enough merely to call oneself a Buddhist, or are other features—certain beliefs, certain ritual practices (such as meditation or chanting), or perhaps even membership in a specific organization—required as well? ...To take a not uncommon example: if a college sophomore buys a book on Zen by Alan Watts, reads it, likes it, and subsequently begins to think of himself as a Buddhist—but without ever having encountered any form of Buddhism beyond the printed page—should he be included within the scope of a study of Buddhism in North America?⁴

Scholar, Thomas Tweed, pushes the scope of the inquiry even further. He asks, in an essay titled "Who Is a Buddhist? Night-Stand Buddhists and Other Creatures":

How do we define religious identity? (Who is Catholic? Who is Buddhist?)
And how do we view those who have *interest* in a religion but do *not*
affiliate?⁵ (Italics mine)

What Tweed suggests is that we scholars should "add another category—*sympathizer*—to those we use to interpret religious life."⁶ Doing so, he suggests, would help us to not overlook those who have not offered full or formal allegiance to a given tradition but who do "sympathize" in some sense with it. He further

notes in his piece that he calls “those thirty thousand Tricycle subscribers and the hundreds of thousands of unaffiliated meditators *sympathizers*, or, in a flashier but less precise and inclusive phrase, *night-stand Buddhists*.”⁷ By the latter term, Tweed means to emphasize “Americans sympathizers’ engagement with Buddhism through reading”⁸ as well as to indicate “the breadth of Buddhist sympathy in the culture.”⁹

If one includes film, the numbers surely balloon even more. I offer here an example from personal experience. In April, 2008 I had the privilege of offering a lecture to an assembled group of about 150 Tibetan Buddhist monks at Kopan Monastery in Nepal. Asked by their learned headmaster, Geshe Sherab, to tell the monks something about Buddhism in America, I began –as we scholars often do—with a general description of the American religious landscape, giving a brief demographic picture. Since the Pew Foundation figures on Religion and Public Life in the US¹⁰ had just recently come out, my task seemed relatively simple. I even drew “pie chart.” I told the monks that, according to the Pew Study, just over 51% of Americans counted themselves as Protestant Christians, 24% as Catholic and 16% as “unaffiliated.” The remaining 9% was divided between all other world traditions, with Judaism claiming 1.7% and Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism, having 0.7%, 0.6% and 0.4% adherents, respectively. The monks were eager listeners and enthusiastic respondents. They couldn’t wait for our Q and A. A young and very savvy monk, Lama Jinpa began the questioning by saying that the figures for the number of Buddhists in America could hardly be correct for they were clearly too low. Many of the other monks chimed in in

agreement. Lama Jinpa continued. "What about *Little Buddha*?" he asked. "And *The Cup*? What about *Kundun*?" Of course, in a sense, Lama Jinpa is absolutely right. Even though the 0.7% population figure would mean that there are only 2.1 million Buddhists currently in America out of a population of just over three hundred million, the impact and influence of Buddhism in America--and on American religion and culture--far outshines those numbers.

Besides the recent movies which have highlighted or featured Buddhist themes, many of the nation's most-read periodicals have carried features about Buddhism's rising popularity here. Time, Newsweek, US News and World Report have all carried cover stories about it.¹¹ Images of Buddhist monks are seen regularly in advertisements for various telecommunications companies, and many of us have seen that towering digital image of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Times Square which for a number of months dwarfed everything else there and proclaimed for Apple that we should all "Think different." Such images leave little doubt that many Americans do indeed have some idea about Buddhism (if not detailed knowledge) when they encounter it. Hollywood- and music celebrity-Buddhists, like Richard Gere, Harrison Ford, Goldie Hawn, Tina Turner, Steven "Tinseltown Tulku" Seagal, and the Beastie Boys' Adam Yauch¹² don't hurt the Buddhist cause either! Interestingly, a quite recent 2009 study by Wuthnow and Cadge¹³ suggests that, in terms of *influence*, Buddhism has impacted Americans in unprecedented numbers. Their study claims that "one American in seven claims to have had a fair amount of contact with Buddhists and that one person in eight believes Buddhist teachings or practices have had an important influence

on his or her religion or spirituality.”¹⁴ Clearly, we are seeing a religious and social phenomenon of some importance.

What should catch our attention here, however, is that both Nattier and Tweed, in the passages quoted above, are speaking about so-called “convert” Buddhists, those non-Asian, or non-“ethnic” practitioners of Buddhism in America. And it should be noted that roughly 80% of all the books published on Buddhism in America focus on convert-Buddhists also.¹⁵ Yet, as I stated earlier, these folk account for only 20% of the Buddhists in America. What about the *rest* of those Buddhists, the other four-fifths? Why is equal attention *not* focused on them?

“Two Buddhisms”

For the past three decades or so it has been fashionable among scholars of Buddhism in America to speak of “two Buddhisms.”¹⁶ The idea was first hinted at by Charles Prebish in his 1979 ground-breaking work, American Buddhism. By the mid-1990s the idea had morphed a bit—from its original notion of institutionally stable groups vs. more free-form groups of Buddhists—into a twofold typology based primarily on race and ethnicity.¹⁷ (See Prebish’s 1993 essay, “Two Buddhisms Reconsidered, Buddhist Studies Review, 10(2), pp. 187-206.) The two components of the typology have been described variously but a succinct and cogent description and analysis of the two appears in a recent online piece by Jeff Wilson.¹⁸ According to Wilson, “the first of the two Buddhisms has been variously called Asian, Asian-American, Oriental, cultural,

heritage, birthright, immigrant, cradle, hereditary, and mass Buddhism” and “the second type has been referred to as white, convert, American, Occidental, new, Caucasian, European-American, and elite Buddhism.”¹⁹ As Wilson further comments, “Each of these terms has had its proponents in the academy, and the typology has proven to be highly productive, generating new studies of both types of Buddhism as well as many responses seeking to nuance, refute, or defend this approach.”²⁰ In terms of characterizing these two separate groups of Buddhists, Wilson’s descriptions are, in my opinion, also correct. He notes,

“On the whole, the first Buddhism has been described as more conservative, seeking to maintain traditions established in Asia in order to nurture new immigrants to America and pass on a religio-cultural heritage to new generations. These groups have often struggled with issues of racial prejudice and economic marginalization that groups of mostly white Buddhists can effectively ignore, and they sometimes have difficulties stemming from language barriers of Asian cultural practices and patterns that clash with the dominant American mainstream. *On a fundamental level, their narrative is one of Buddhists seeking to become American....*(italics mine).²¹

Continuing with his description, Wilson writes,

The second group is often characterized as more progressive in orientation, looking to Buddhism for new religious practices and perspectives but often hesitant to adopt them wholesale without a process of critique and alteration. These groups are mainly made up of individuals who have intentionally joined Buddhism as adults, and only a minority of them practice in a family situation or even seek to actively pass their adopted religion on to children. They are often as much shaped by countercultural and liberal American ideals as they are by anything directly derived from Buddhist traditions, and they take pride in developing self-consciously democratic and feminist forms of Buddhism. *Their basic narrative is one of Americans seeking to become Buddhist, or at least to strike a balance between their cultural heritage and their personal Buddhist practice* (italics mine).²²

What analyses like Wilson's and others—for example, the good work of Paul Numrich²³—highlight for us is the *parallel nature* of the two Buddhisms, and the parallelism of the “two Buddhisms” model.

I have an example here as well. When I teach my seminar on Buddhism in America I require students to go on field trips to centers of at least two different Buddhist traditions. Many students over the years have visited a nearby temple in New Britain, Connecticut, the Hai An Pagoda, a Vietnamese-led non-sectarian center.²⁴ What always surprises the students is that they go into a converted warehouse building and find, on the first floor, three large Buddha statues and flowers and incense going and family groups of Vietnamese who typically try but can't speak to them and then a monk shows up and tells them to go to the back of the warehouse and upstairs for “the English-only meditation session.”

Okay, one might say. This is so; it is a fact. There are two Buddhisms operative in America. But what is the harm in that? The “two Buddhisms” have, after all, very different functions here: the ethnic-Buddhists are concerned with attending to conserving their cultural heritage in a new land, while the convert Buddhists are doing something (?) different. I suppose this parallelism would be okay were it really so benign; but it is not. I take it that the recognition that it is not benign is what led Rick Field's to write two essays on the ethnic-American divide, namely “Confessions of a White Buddhist” in 1994 and “Divided Dharma: White Buddhists, Ethnic Buddhists, and Racism” in 1998.²⁵ In both essays, although Fields suggested that there was nothing so wrong in using the terminology “white Buddhists” for the first of the two Buddhisms (because of its

“historical resonance” and “heuristic value”),²⁶ he did note a number of problems with the divisions created by the model overall, one of which was the *arrogance* and self-importance of white/convert Buddhists vis-a-vis ethnic Buddhists.²⁷ American white-convert Buddhists often think that, being unencumbered by outmoded and foreign cultural forms, they have more direct access to the heart of Buddhist practice which, for them, is meditation.²⁸ Another issue arises from Americans’ dislike for the constriction of monastic rules. We want to practice, as laywomen and laymen, a form of Buddhist practice that for all its history in Asia was mostly the preserve of monastics. As Shunryu Suzuki observed, we are “not quite monks and not quite laymen.” Moreover, we seek to practice as individuals rather than as part of a nexus of community, as practice functioned throughout Buddhist history in Asia. Americans like the freedom of being able to “pick and choose.” We don’t often recognize, however, that this method involves “subtracting” or leaving out. In the 1970s we were running away from everything that smacked of devotionism, ritual or religious institutions. Meeting Buddhism in the East, we separated out and subtracted from it all these things until we saw only meditation, a pristine and individual spiritual path. A young African American woman on her first People of Color Buddhist retreat, feeling that something was missing, asked me if “anything had been left out.”²⁹ Fearless, we ignore the idea that we might actually be “throwing out the baby with the bath-water” or that we might be creating a new “Dharma *lite*.”³⁰

Other scholars, like Nattier, see a problem with the “two Buddhisms” model because it does not lend itself either to addressing adequately the

varieties of ethnic Buddhists nor the varieties of convert Buddhists. I agree with her here. Nattier's model calls for a threefold division which distinguishes between Buddhists in America by studying them "in terms of the types of transmission that have led to their formation."³¹ Her threefold-model includes what she terms 1) "Import Buddhism" which is that type that we (who are "elite" Buddhists, with money and leisure) *bring in* to the US; 2) "Export Buddhism," that is *brought* to us by Asian Buddhist missionaries with evangelical zeal (here Nattier notes only the efforts of the Soka Gakkai) and 3) "Baggage Buddhism" which is the Buddhism that Asian immigrants bring with them, in their baggage so to speak (what we have here been calling "ethnic Buddhism").

Three Different—and Diverse--Waves of Buddhists in America

I prefer to look at the situation slightly differently, from an *historical* (as well as sociological) point of view. If we do so, I believe we can see more clearly that *America's various encounters with Buddhism—from the very beginning--have been encounters involving at times hostility, and at other times fascination, but that regardless of which of these two it has been, both responses evidence a type of racialized and/or exoticized reaction; what we might call a racist* response. There have been three distinctive waves of Buddhists in America and the specific characteristics of these different waves have to do, in part, with *when* these groups appeared. The three are 1) the early East Asian Chinese and Japanese immigrant Buddhists, 2) the counterculture American "convert" Buddhists and 3) the South and Southeast Asian Buddhists who came here as

refugees following the War in Vietnam. What is important, I believe, to bear in mind--and to appreciate more fully--is that *there is diversity within each of these three waves* of Buddhists.

The Arrival of the Early Buddhists:

In histories of Buddhism in America there is a tendency to cite as America's earliest encounter with Buddhism the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893.³² But, by that time, there had been Buddhists living in America for almost fifty years. Only, these Buddhists were Chinese. Having migrated to the West Coast's "Gold Mountain" as early as the 1840s, by 1860, the California state census reports that one out of every ten Californians was Chinese.³³ Most worked initially in the mines, but later moved into other occupations, like railroad building. They worked under very difficult living conditions. (At the same time, on the East Coast during the mid-and latter nineteenth century, a group of folk--Thoreau, Emerson and others--were becoming fascinated by the sacred literature of the "East." In 1844 Thoreau published in The Dial his translation--from Burnouf's French edition--of The Lotus Sutra.³⁴) However, back on the West Coast, as the Chinese population increased, anti-Chinese racial prejudice intensified. About this prejudice, Paul Numrich remarks,

National anti-Chinese sentiment peaked in 1882 when the U. S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was extended in 1892 and made permanent in 1902. For the first time in American history, a specific ethnic group was legally prohibited from entering the country. In the next few decades, U. S. immigration policies would become more limiting in general, but lawmakers viewed Asians as especially undesirable.³⁵

The Japanese began coming to the US between 1868 and 1912. In 1870, there were fifty-five Japanese living in the US; by 1920 there were more than one hundred thousand. The Japanese, too, were met with anti-Asian sentiment and, in 1924, the US Congress passed the Immigration Act which effectively closed off immigration from Asia by denying immigration to "aliens ineligible to citizenship."³⁶ They were deemed ineligible to citizenship because they were "considered racially and culturally incapable of blending into the dominant group in U.S. society, Euro-Americans, the descendants of immigrants from Europe."³⁷ They could not physically blend in because of their eyes and their yellow skin. Like African-Americans, these Asian groups were visibly different, incapable of blending in. Generations passed and Japanese became Japanese Americans. But then came Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 and in 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, giving the US Army authority to relocate Japanese and Japanese Americans on the West Coast. Numrich tells us that "a total of one hundred twenty thousand people were relocated, two-thirds of them U.S. citizens and three-fourths of them under the age of twenty five."³⁸ We all know about this dark history of the camps.³⁹

Wave Number Two:

Just after World War II, a new wave of American interest in Buddhism began which saw at first a sporadic trickle of Japanese Zen centers appear in cities like Chicago, New York and Los Angeles and then a tidal wave around the

country. In 1957 at Columbia University, D.T. Suzuki lectured to audiences of psychologists (like Eric Fromm) and Beat poets (Kerouac and Ginsberg).⁴⁰ But the Beats' fascination with Buddhism and the cultural impact it had on the "Beat Generation" really took off in the late 1960s and 70s. It was then that the countercultural hippies—"baby-boomer" spiritual seekers, sometimes called "Buddha-boomers"—journeyed to the East in search of their Dharmic destinies and later brought home their Asian gurus and masters. By the late 1980s, Don Morreale could write a book called The Complete Guide to Buddhist America⁴¹ which listed nearly 1100 American convert-Buddhist meditation centers (ninety-eight percent of them founded since 1965 and fifty-eight percent since 1985⁴²). There are, reportedly, slightly more than 2200 such centers today.⁴³ Though The Complete Guide was, and remains, useful to convert-Buddhists, it was never "complete." It made no attempt to list traditional, ethnic Buddhist temples and it neglected to mention the Soka Gakkai, a group at the time of the book's earliest publication, boasted more African American and Latina/o members than all the other American convert centers combined. White convert Buddhists had decided that, for a number of reasons,⁴⁴ the Soka Gakkai was *not* really an "American" Buddhist group. Consequently, the only group with an actual "diverse," multicultural, membership was denied a place within "American Buddhism."

I would like to see the Soka Gakkai *cease being the sole example* of a diverse Buddhist group mentioned in these contexts. I think we should all work toward that goal. While the numbers of diverse ethnicities represented in SGI membership is impressive, there are African American and Latina/o Zen

practitioners as well as vipassana students and teachers. There are African American Tibetan lamas and students; I am myself one of the latter. And there are “Baptist-Buddhists”—here again I count myself—just as there are *Jubus* (Jewish-Buddhists). I have written about some of these African American Buddhists in a piece called “Diversity and Race: New *Koans* for American Buddhism”⁴⁵ and many other Buddhist people of color speak in Hilda Baldoquin’s edited work, Dharma, Color and, Culture (to say nothing of the impressive work recently published by Naropa’s own Gaylon Ferguson.) Perhaps in this post-modern age, hybridity/hybridization of identity is the more appropriate term, and the new norm.⁴⁶

Add to this mix the many new hybrid forms of Buddhism being created by American convert Buddhists’ continuing penchant for picking and choosing and the *new audiences* to which these Buddhisms are being carried—to various *regions* of the country (See, for example, Jeff Wilson’s “Down Home Dharma”⁴⁷ where he describes the Black-eyed pea offerings on some North Carolinian Buddhist altars), into schools, and into a great many of our nation’s prisons⁴⁸ where inmates find freedom in Buddhism⁴⁹--and one begins to get a sense of the ever-increasing diversity of Buddhist forms and practices springing up under the rubric of “American Buddhism.”

Wave Three:

The third wave was actually a second wave of new Asian immigrants who began coming to the US as refugees just after the Vietnam War. According again to Numrich:

In 1965 Congress passed the Hart-Celler Act, expanding the openings created between 1943 and 1952 for Buddhists and others from Asian countries to enter the United States. More than a third of all legal immigrants during the 1970s and 1980s came from Asia.⁵⁰

There was a great diversity of backgrounds among these ethnic Asians: many in the years just after 1965 were professionals with high academic qualifications. In later years, most came from lower economic strata and were fleeing war-torn Southeast Asia. Hence we see, on the one hand, prosperous Taiwanese able to construct the thirty million dollar Hsi Lai ("Coming to the West") Temple in Los Angeles and, on the other, the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai and Burmese refugees whose lives here since 1975 have remained less than ideal. Numrich cites the case of Cambodian Americans as illustrative of the difficulties of the refugee experience. He writes:

In 1970, when the war in Vietnam spilled over into neighboring Cambodia, almost no Cambodians lived in the United States. About a decade later, however, the U.S. government began resettling thousands of Cambodian refugees here, and by 1990 the U.S. census reported nearly 150,000 Cambodians in the country (probably fewer than the actual total)....Medical workers in the Cambodian-American community report many cases of post-traumatic stress disorder and other health problems....One survey estimated that eighty-four percent of Cambodian households in California had a least one person under medical supervision. Four of every ten Cambodian families in the United States live below the poverty income level....⁵¹

In spite of such hardships, or perhaps precisely because of them, more than 300 immigrant and refugee temples have sprung up fairly recently to dot the American landscape.⁵² In 2004 Jeffrey Paine declared that "Tibetan Buddhism was the fastest growing form of Buddhism in America,"⁵³ but these new Southeast Asian temples are traditional, Theravada establishments.

Buddhism in America is incredibly diverse, both in terms of its forms and in terms of its practitioners. In trying to characterize these, scholars have come up with a number of typological models. But people and forms don't remain fixed forever. Change, after all, is a cardinal principle of Buddhism and, as Chuck Prebish told us recently, "typologies are not set in stone."⁵⁴ With generations on American soil behind them, "ethnic" Buddhists have become "American" Buddhists. Many American convert-Buddhists no longer strive to become *Buddhists* (if they ever did), but rather wish to become *themselves*, a very *American* goal, one could say. It is too early to say how the challenges of diversity will play out here;⁵⁵ though it would certainly be better if diversity and difference could be appreciated for the richness they bring, rather than the divisions. Ultimately, perhaps, we should all take to heart the words of Thai meditation master, Ajahn Chah: "Don't be a Buddhist. Don't be a Bodhisattva. Don't be anything at all. If you do, you will suffer." Even so, I am excited to see what Buddhism in America will become. And I believe, like that Black professor of old, that this remains "a wonderful time in which to be alive."

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¹ Many Buddhist studies scholars have attempted to gauge the number of Buddhists in the U.S. Charles Prebish and Robert Thurman are often consulted by popular journals to give their latest estimates. Richard Seager, in his 1999 *Buddhism in America*, p. 11, wrote: "A few statistics on American Buddhism are available, but they vary considerably. One source put the total number of practicing Buddhists at around one million in 1900, but another at 5 or 6 million only a few years later." At the time, Seager deemed Martin Baumann's figures "the best available." Baumann's figures, recorded in "The Dharma Has Come West: A Survey of Recent Studies and Sources," in the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* [online] 4 (1997), suggested that "converts

consistently are outnumbered by immigrants." In the U. S. Baumann estimated that there were "800,000 converts and between 2.2 and 3.2 million Buddhists in immigrant communities." More recently, Peter Gregory, in "Describing the Elephant: Buddhism in America," p. 236, notes that, "Beginning in the fifties with the so-called Zen boom (and) gaining significant momentum with the counterculture movement in the second half of the sixties, and continuing to expand exponentially throughout the seventies, eighties, and nineties with the waves of new immigrants from Asia, Buddhism is sometimes hyped as the fastest growing religion in America today. Indeed, the number of Buddhists in the United States has grown by a multiple of fifteen to twenty in the past forty years." Again, Melton and Jones' study, p.5, notes, "While converts make up less than 25% of the Buddhist community, more than 80% of the writings on American Buddhism focus upon this segment of community. This emphasis on the convert community has strongly affected the image of American Buddhism in a variety of ways."

² The suggestion of a "Fourth Yana" comes from Christopher Queen in his edited volume Engaged Buddhism in the West, pp. 22-25. Queen is specifically focused here on the newness of "Engaged Buddhism."

³ The issue of how one defines "Who is a Buddhist" has been discussed by numerous Buddhist Studies investigators, to wit: Prebish, Nattier, Seager, Baumann, Tweed and Wilson, to name only a few.

⁴ Nattier, J., "Who is a Buddhist? Charting the Landscape of Buddhist America." In C. Prebish and K. Tanaka (eds), The Faces of Buddhism in America. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p.

⁵ See Tweed, T. "Who is a Buddhist? Night-Stand Buddhists and Other Creatures" in Prebish and Baumann, Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia, p. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁰ See The Pew Foundation's "Forum on Religion and Public Life," U.S. Religious Landscape Survey. 2008. The website is <http://religions.pewforum.org/affiliations>. Other surveys have been produced by ARIS, or the American Religious Identification Survey (whose 2009 figures put the Buddhist population at about .5% of the total US population) and ISAR, Institute for the Study of American Religion.

¹¹ For example, in October of 1997 a nine-page feature story on "Buddhism in America" authored by David Van Biema, Jeanne McDowell (LA) and Richard Ostling (NY) ran in Time magazine. In part, that piece reported:

"A new makeup is called "Zen Blush"; a new sitcom, Dharma and Greg. A designer fruit-juice container entreats, "Please recycle this bottle. It deserves to be reincarnated too." A Buddhist temple is where Al Gore came into some dubious campaign money, and monks star in computer commercials. Type buddhism into the search engine of amazon.com the Internet bookstore, and it spits back 1,200 titles, from scriptures to modern inspirational writings to a robust selection of cookbooks. And then there is Hollywood, where more and more people seem torn between a sincere desire to conquer ego and the drive to be seen doing so."

¹² Adam Yauch of the Beastie Boys wrote the lyrics to a fairly popular song entitled "Bodhisattva Vow." A selection of the lyrics reads:

The Bodhisattva path is one of power and strength
A strength from within to go the length
Seeing others are as important as myself
I strive for a happiness of mental wealth
With the interconnectedness that we share as one
Every action that we take affects everyone
So in deciding for what a situation calls
There is a path for the good of all.

¹³ See Wuthnow and Cadge's "Buddhists and Buddhism in the United States: The Scope of Influence" in Journal for the Study of Religion 43:3 (2004), p. 363.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 363.

¹⁵ See the study report by Melton and Jones, "Reflections on Buddhist Demographics in America: An Initial Report on the First American Buddhist Census," p. 5, where this point is noted.

¹⁶ Almost all Buddhist Studies scholars of the past two decades have employed or commented upon this typology.

¹⁷ See Prebish's 1993 essay, "Two Buddhisms Reconsidered," Buddhist Studies Review, 10(2), pp. 187-206.

¹⁸ I am grateful to Jeff Wilson for allowing me to quote from the full typescript of this piece.

¹⁹ Wilson, typescript, p.9.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

²¹ Ibid., p. 10

²² Ibid., p. 10

²³ See Paul Numrich's Old Wisdom in the New World: Americanization in Two Immigrant Theravada Buddhist Temples.

²⁴ The Hai An Pagoda's online material reports the following information about the Temple: "The Hai An Pagoda is a non-denominational spiritual fellowship open to all Buddhist affiliations and all faiths." The materials further note that the "English speaking sangha meets each Thursday night from 6:30pm - 8:30pm EST."

²⁵ See current Bibliography for reference details.

²⁶ See Field's "Divided Dharma..." in The Faces of American Buddhism, p. 198, where he notes: "The term *white Buddhist* is certainly problematic. Still, I feel the term has a certain provisional and heuristic value at this point in American Buddhist history. After all, what unites the adherents of white Buddhism is ...their identified color in the new land of America. Historically, European immigrants arriving in America invented whiteness as a classification to upgrade their status and privilege themselves as separate and superior to blacks. So the term seems to illuminate more than it obscures, and gives us at least a provisional if provocative description. It shed some light on the racism (unconscious though it may be) that makes up one many-braided strand of American society and so of American Buddhism. What's more, those whom I have described as "white Buddhists" immediately recognize themselves in the description." Fields continues by asserting that, "As it turns out, the term white Buddhist also has a certain historical resonance" and references the appellation's first use in connection with a description of Col. Henry Steel Olcott.

²⁷ See Fields, "Divided Dharma," pp. 204-206.

²⁸ Again, almost every researcher of Buddhism in America notes this. As examples of convert Buddhists' tendency to equate Buddhism solely with Buddhist meditation, see the 1998, 568-page Buddhism in America: Proceedings of the First Buddhism in America Conference compiled by Al Rapaport, in which the focus is clearly meditation, and Don Morreale's The Complete Guide to Buddhist America where only Buddhist centers "where meditation is practiced" are listed.

²⁹ I have written about this question, the complexities of the query and my responses to it in my piece, "Dharma Has No Color," in Hilda Baldoquin, ed., Dharma, Color, and Culture: New Voices in Western Buddhism, pp. 217-224.

³⁰ The phrase "Buddhism lite" was used by David Patt in his piece "Who's Zoomin' Who? The Commodification of Buddhism." In Tricycle: The Buddhist Review, Summer, 2001.

³¹ See Nattier, J. (1998). "Who is a Buddhist? Charting the Landscape of Buddhist America." In C. Prebish and K. Tanaka (eds), The Faces of Buddhism in America. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p.

³² See R. Fields, Sutin, et al. For a thorough exploration of the Parliament and its place in American life and society, see Richard Seager's The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter, Chicago 1893. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

³³ See Fields' How the Swans Came to the Lake, pp. 70-71. Fields writes: "By 1852, the gold rush had drawn twenty thousand Chinese. In 1860 one of every ten Californians was Chinese, and by the end of the decade there were sixty-three thousand."

³⁴ See Fields' ibid., p and L. Sutin, all is change, pp.

³⁵ Numrich, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America, p. 7.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 20.

³⁹ There are many sources here; I recommend a 2002 poignant and brilliantly understated novel-cum memoir by Julie Otsuka called When the Emperor Was Divine. New York: Anchor Books.

⁴⁰ The New Yorker magazine devoted a full-page with a sketch of DT Suzuki. See

⁴¹ Donald Morreale's The Complete Guide to Buddhist America was published by Shambhala Press in 1988 and again in 1998. On its p. xviii, Morreale's book tells us that it "only lists centers and temples where meditation is taught" and does not include "the vast numbers of temples and centers where meditation is not the focus...Also not included are many ethnic temples where English is not the principle language."

⁴² On such figures, see Morreale, Numrich, Gregory and others.

⁴³ See figures from Harvard's Pluralism Project and from the Melton and Jones Study Report.

⁴⁴ Sandy Boucher succinctly lists some of the un-stated reasons for this omission of the Soka Gakkai. See her Turning Wheel, pp. 262-263 and 306-307.

⁴⁵ See my "Diversity and Race: New *Koans* for American Buddhism" in Findly, E. (ed.), Women's Buddhism, Buddhism's Women: Tradition, Revision, Renewal. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000, pp. 303-316. This piece included interviews and recommendations from a number of African American Buddhist practitioners. The essay's conclusions came in the voices of two of these persons:

Describing the aftermath of a lecture she had delivered at a conference on Buddhist diversity, Lori remarked, "I left there thinking that the Buddhist community needs a forum for an extended discussion of all aspects of race and gender, diversity and discrimination. I was encouraged by Rosa who suggested to me that we must somehow make diversity a central practice. We always wonder what is 'American' about 'American Buddhism,' and Rosa suggested that diversity might be it. What might make American Buddhism distinctive is the challenge to think through problems of racial ideologies. To sit with them. How would you make that not just part of your practice, but the center of your practice?" (p. 315)

⁴⁶ One could argue that religious identity is always hybrid. Students of Buddhist history know this well. Wherever Buddhism traveled in Asia, it adapted, changed, mingled with, mixed or combined with cultural forms that were already extant in the new host culture. Hybridity carries over into the Asian experience in America as well, of course, and in two distinct and intriguing ways: 1) In America, former *Asian*/ethnic Buddhists have become --perhaps for the first time in their religious lives--*Thai*-Buddhists and *Laotian*-Buddhists rather than simply Buddhists as they try to maintain their unique culture and community and 2) after a generation or two, they also become *Thai-American* Buddhists.

⁴⁷ See Jeff Wilson's, "Down Home Dharma." In Tricycle: The Buddhist Review, Fall 2002, pp. 51-53 and pp. 115-117.

⁴⁸ Buddhist Prison ministries have become a key feature of convert Buddhists' activism under the rubric of "engaged Buddhism." See V. Cohn and J. Stultz's "The Angulimala Lineage: Buddhist Prison Ministries" in C. Queen's edited volume, Engaged Buddhism in the West, pp. 347-371. See current Buddhist prison ministries' listings on the online *Dharmanet*.

⁴⁹ See the books written by incarcerated men who have become Buddhist while serving their sentences, for example Jarvis Jay Masters' Finding Freedom: Writings from Death Row, Junction City: Padma Publishing, 1997 and Calvin Malone's Razor-wire Dharma: A Buddhist Life in Prison, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008.

⁵⁰ Numrich, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America, p. 32.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁵² This number is even greater according to some scholars. See, for example, Peter Gregory's figures in "Describing the Elephant...", pp. 238-239 and the tables given as an appendix in Melton and Jones, "Reflections on Buddhist Demographics in America: An Initial Report on the First American Buddhist Census" (a paper presented at the Conference of the Association for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Culture IISAR) meeting in Washington, DC, April 2-4, 2009, pp. 9-10. Also see the Pluralism Project at Harvard University which provides numbers and a listing of centers under various categories.

⁵³ See Paine's Re-enchantment: Tibetan Buddhism Comes to the West, p.

⁵⁴ Prebish, himself, made this declaration in his 2006 "Introduction" to "Forum: Diversity and Divisions in American Buddhism." In Buddhadharma: The Practitioner's Quarterly, Winter 2006, p. 48.

⁵⁵ As Richard Seager comments in his 1999 work, Buddhism in America, pp. 247-248, we are still only in the beginning stages, what he dubs the "heroic age." He writes: My own view is that most American Buddhists, immigrants and converts, are still in what might be thought of as the "heroic age" of the founding of their communities. Thus, questions about the emergence of mature expressions of Americanized Buddhism are less immediate than those about the ongoing process of community formation." To this assessment, he adds, "In this context, immigration remains the single most important force at work."

Interestingly, Seager also sees the utility (albeit, limited) of a threefold model, though he and I differ on our characterizations of the three. In his Buddhism in America, pp. 9-10, Seager delineates the three groups as follows: "One group consists of a mixed bag of native-born Americans who, over the course of the last fifty or so years, have embraced the teachings of the Buddha... They are often referred to as western or European American Buddhists, but they include Asian, African, and Native Americans. I will generally refer to them as convert Buddhists to distinguish them from other Americans, mostly from Asian backgrounds, who were raised and educated in Buddhist communities.... A second groups composed of immigrant and refugee Buddhists from a range of Asian nations who are in the process of transplanting and adapting their received traditions to this country.... Most American Buddhists are in the nation's Asian communities, and they are generally referred to as immigrant or ethnic Buddhists to distinguish them from converts. But for well over fifty years, Buddhist immigrants taught native-born Americans, and many of the founders of convert Buddhist communities were Asian immigrants. A third group is composed of Asian Americans, primarily from Chinese and Japanese backgrounds, who have practiced Buddhism in this country for four or five generations.... They are America's old-line Buddhists, who, in the landscape of late twentieth-century Buddhism, were neither fish nor fowl, neither convert nor immigrant."