Buddhism in Australia

The number of Buddhists in Australia has grown dramatically in recent years. In 2006 Buddhists accounted for 2.1 per cent of Australia’s population, almost doubling the 1996 figures and making it the fastest growing religion in the country. This book analyses the arrival and localisation of Buddhism in Australia in the context of the globalization of Buddhism.

Australia’s close geographical proximity to Asia has encouraged an intense flow of people, ideas, practices and commodities from its neighbouring countries, while at the same time allowing the development of the religion to be somewhat different to its growth in other Western countries. The book seeks to explore the Buddhist experience in Australia, looking at the similarities and particularities of this experience in relation to other Western countries.

The inception of Buddhism in Australia is investigated and a voice is provided to people on the ground who have been fundamental in making this process possible. For the first time, academic analysis and practitioners’ experience are juxtaposed to show the adaptations and challenges of Buddhism in Australia from above and below. This book is a unique and valuable contribution to the study of Buddhism in the West, globalization of religion and studies in Asian religion.

Cristina Rocha teaches at the School of Humanities and Languages, and is a researcher at the Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney. She is the editor of the Journal of Global Buddhism. Her research interests are Buddhism in the West, globalization, religion and migration studies. Her previous publications include Zen in Brazil: The Quest for Cosmopolitan Modernity (2006).

Michelle Barker is a former academic in the field of Buddhism in Australia and her research interests remain in this field. Her writings include Developments in Australian Buddhism: Facets of the Diamond (Routledge, 2002).
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Contributors

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Lama Choedak Rinpoche (‘Challenges of teaching Buddhism in contemporary society’) is the heart son of His Eminence Chogye Trichen Rinpoche. In addition to his traditional training, he is also a graduate of Australian National University. As an author, translator and teacher he has founded 20 urban centres and two retreat centres in Australia. He lives in Canberra.

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Associate Professor Gordon Waitt (‘Locating a Buddhist temple in Wollongong, New South Wales’) teaches at the University of Wollongong, New South Wales. His research interest addresses social inequalities in the context of place. Publications include Gay Tourism: Culture and Context (with Kevin Markwell, 2006).
For the last two decades, the analysis of Buddhism in the West has brought forward numerous studies that scrutinize the development, transformation and current status of Buddhism in North America and Europe. More recently, similar efforts have been made to document Buddhism in South America, Africa and Australia. In 1989 Paul Croucher published a detailed, chronologically arranged history (Buddhism in Australia 1848–1988) focusing on Buddhist pioneers, teachers and organizations. Now, two decades later, Buddhism in Australia: Traditions in Change, by Cristina Rocha and Michelle Barker, not only continues to narrate this story, but it also opens the field to a multiplicity of disciplinary and methodological approaches. Furthermore, this volume brings together scholars studying the arrival and localization of Buddhism in Australia and prominent Buddhist teachers and community members involved in forming, adapting and indigenizing Buddhist practices and concepts.

Whenever Buddhist ideas and practices, roles and organizational forms have settled in a new culture and society, they have maintained and preserved the tradition in addition to adapting and changing it. The notion of ‘tradition’ – of handing on ideas and rituals – expresses processes of continuation and transformation. In the course of the last 2500 years, the teachings of the North Indian ascetic, Buddha Shakyamuni, have developed into adapted localized forms appropriate to each new culture and society that the teachings have entered. It may well be argued that it is more appropriate to speak of a plurality of ‘Buddhisms’, each marked by the specific adaptations made to the culture, norms, rules and religions of each new host society. In this way, traditions and (sub)schools of Burmese, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Tibetan, Cambodian and many more culturally coined ‘Buddhisms’ have come into being as a result of century-long processes.

Although Buddhist teachings, persons and rituals first came to Australia in the nineteenth century, it is only in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that Buddhism has gained a lasting footing in Australian multicultural society. This timely volume narrates the story in detail: examining how Buddhist concepts, practices, images and organizational structures have become a part of the religious plurality existent in Australia. Like many other western nation-states, Australia has become a place in which the varieties of different Buddhist traditions and schools meet.
This volume highlights the fact that Buddhism in Australia is very much a part of a globalized Buddhism. Processes of globalization are occurring alongside processes of particularization that endeavour to indigenize Buddhism to Australian culture and society. Over time, these developments will lead to the development of a multifaceted Australian Buddhism. The Buddhist journey of preserving and changing the tradition thus continues, accommodating Buddhist practices, ideas, roles and structures to the needs of the new cultural environment.
Acknowledgements

A book takes a long time from its conception to publication. From the first time we discussed the idea of a book on Buddhism in Australia in 2007 to its publication in 2010, many people have been involved in the project. First and foremost, we would like to thank the contributors themselves, without whom this volume would not have been possible. We would also like to thank those whose chapters we could not include in this book at this time, but who are part of the story of bringing, adapting and understanding the developments of Buddhism in Australia. We would also like to thank our friends and family for their ongoing support. Michelle Barker would like to thank Mike and her family for their love and support and Cristina Rocha is grateful to her partner, George Morgan, and her family for the love and encouragement. Cristina would like to thank the Centre for Cultural Research and the School of Humanities and Languages at the University of Western Sydney for their institutional support.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AABCP</td>
<td>Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Psychotherapists</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPE</td>
<td>clinical pastoral education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPMT</td>
<td>Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWBO</td>
<td>Friends of the Western Buddhist Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITCA</td>
<td>Insight Teachers’ Circle of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>local government area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPP</td>
<td>Liberation Prison Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBS</td>
<td>Special Broadcasting Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGI</td>
<td>Sōka Gakkai International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBRL</td>
<td>team-based right livelihood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBD</td>
<td>Wat Buddha Dhamma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBO</td>
<td>Western Buddhist Order (now known as Triratna Buddhist Order)</td>
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