

## Book Reviews

*The Teachings of Takuan Soho. Immovable Wisdom: the Art of Zen Strategy.* Compiled and translated by Nobuko Hirose. 2013. Floating World Editions (originally published by Element Books in 1992).

Having struggled to understand Zen Buddhism, I have found it a great pleasure to read a book about one of its foremost practitioners. Although a deceptively slim volume, this book is a real treasure trove of material about Takuan Soho, a Jack of all trades and Master of them all. He was a monk with a slapstick (maybe very appropriate in Zen) sense of humour, with legendary culinary talents, a skilled wielder of both sword and calligraphy brush (his calligraphic skills beautifully presented in the frontispiece of the book) and a frequenter of poetry parties. One gets a vivid sense of the all-pervasive nature of Zen Buddhism from this book.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645) lived in turbulent times and Nobuko Hirose's opening chapters provide a detailed description of how he navigated those times and the people he met and befriended. He was at the beck and call of many a Japanese nobleman and had to use all his diplomatic skills in an attempt to prevent his beloved Buddhism being used as a political tool. I would recommend reading the opening two chapters in one sitting, to get an overview of the Master's long and distinguished life and the setting in which he flourished. The following chapters would, in my opinion, be better savoured ... like Japanese pickles ... a small amount at a time. The Master himself gives excellent advice at the beginning of the book: "Dwell on the sage's words. Do not swallow at one gulp." There are translations of Takuan Soho's famous texts, which would particularly appeal to any practitioners of martial arts. Chapter 5 comprises short, pithy tales about Takuan Soho. My favourites are a tale about a painter asked to paint the sound of a drum, and a cheeky tale where our intrepid monk misbehaves and blames a nobleman in order to challenge the nobleman's poor attitude to life. We learn how

Takuan tackles bandits, makes the most of the therapeutic properties of poetry to cure a madman and displays his versatility and infamous immoveable wisdom in many situations and at different stages of his life.

In the translations of Takuan Soho's evening Dharma talks, the monk's metaphors helped me, a dusty layperson, to have a glimpse of the more complex, philosophical ideas of Zen Buddhist teachings. There are helpful endnotes providing further explanation of the more complex terms. Occasionally, I would have preferred more detailed explanation of some of these ideas. For a layperson not terribly familiar with Zen teachings, there are aspects of the teachings that can shock and confuse on first encounter. I'm comforted by Takuan Soho's remark to one student faced with a bamboozling poem, who begs Takuan for an explanation ... "I don't understand it either"!

The occasional juxtaposition of English and Japanese in the same sentence made for challenging reading at times. As I am not familiar with Japanese terminology, this style slowed me down considerably. It forced me to re-read many paragraphs and encouraged a more reflective style of reading.

*Immovable wisdom* comes ready packed with a health warning to all academic Buddhist scholars: beware too much textual study and analysis! I would recommend this book to any overworked Buddhist Studies academic. Perhaps, in time, the OCBS could be renamed as the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Non-studies in honour of Takuan Soho. Nobuko Hirose has done an admirable job of bringing this monk to life through her translations and re-tellings and I find myself wishing to return to re-read and savour this wise monk's take on life.

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***The Scientific Buddha: His Short and Happy Life.* By Donald S. Lopez, Jr. Terry Lectures Series. 2012. New Haven, Yale University Press. ISBN 978-0-300-15912-7 (alk. paper.)**

Donald S. Lopez, Jr. once again clarifies the West's formation of, and in some cases fascination with, Buddhism. This time he does so by demystifying the connection (rather disconnection) between Buddhism and modern science. *The Scientific Buddha* is a short book with profound, long lasting and far reaching impacts. As the title suggests, it is a biography of the Scientific Buddha who was born in a study room in 1844 in Paris, travelled to Asia and then back to the West. He has made Buddhism a world religion known for its peace and reason. Lopez suggests, "It is now time for him to pass into nirvana." With constant clarity and occasional humour, Lopez lays out the story of the Scientific Buddha in five chapters.

The first chapter, "A Purified Religion", sets the scene. As the book is a product of a series of Terry Lectures delivered in 2008 at Yale University, this chapter explains how Buddhism, particularly that which has emerged in association with science, meets the Terry Foundation's lecture theme of "purified religion." Whatever this purified Buddhism tends to claim in connection to science, asserts Lopez, is nothing but limited, partial and in some cases misleading (8-9). Then he briefly mentions the socio-political (i.e., colonial) cultural (science vs. religion) and inter-religious (Buddhism vs. Christianity) contexts of the mid 19th century, in which so-called Scientific Buddhism emerged. Perhaps the most poignant moment in this introductory chapter is when Lopez asks, "If Buddhism was compatible with the science of the nineteenth century, how can it [with timeless truth] also be compatible with the science of the twenty-first [century]?" (13).

In the second chapter, "The Birth of the Scientific Buddha," Lopez argues that this particular buddha emerged not from the hearts and minds of living Buddhists but out of the 19th century orientalist's philological efforts to make sense of ancient Buddhist texts. He locates the birth of the scientific buddha in Eugène Burnouf's long introduction to the *Lotus Sutra* in 1844, in which "Buddha was a man who reached a degree of intelligence and of virtue" (38). The core of this chapter is Lopez's observation of an evolution in the West's portrayal of the Buddha "from an idol into a man, indeed, into a philosopher" (38). These diverse portrayals of the Buddha, according to Lopez, derived from experience as Westerners encountered living Buddhists, antique statues and ancient texts respectively. That historical account is the core of this chapter.

I find Lopez's meticulous historical analysis fascinating; however, his explanation of why the Buddha was humanized by the 19th century orientalists is disappointing at best. For example, referring to the Buddha as a philosopher and Buddhism as a philosophy, Lopez explains, "This Buddhism would be built largely from texts. Because there were no Buddhists living in India during the colonial period, [Pali] Buddhism...became the domain of European and later American and then Japanese scholars" (39). I wonder about the correlation between textual construction of the Buddha/Buddhism and the absence of Buddhists. Early orientalists who constructed "humanized" Buddha/Buddhism were mainly philologists; therefore, texts rather than Buddhists were their sources. Yes, Buddhism ceased to be a dominant force in India long before the 19th century; however, it remained as a living religion of minorities in fringe areas like the contemporary Katmandu Valley in Nepal and Chittagong in Bangladesh. These fringe communities may have been unknown to the 19th century philologists, but would that have been the case with 19th century colonial subjects like the Sinhalese Buddhists? I would argue rather that philologists' textual construction of "humanized" Buddha/Buddhism derived from their scholarly paradigm defined by 19th century historicism, Eurocentric and colonial ideologies that resulted in prioritizing texts over the colonized, living Buddhists.

The third chapter, entitled "The Problem with Karma", is the core chapter of the book. In it Lopez makes the strongest case to delineate how Buddhism in fact contradicts science, here represented by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. First, he denies the historical claim that Buddhism in fact influenced Darwin. After a brief discussion of Buddhist doctrines of karma and rebirth, the ideas used to establish compatibility with the theory of evolution, Lopez argues that karmically determined, consciousness driven rebirth in Buddhism contradicts Darwin's theory of natural selection by the random mutation of matter (68-69). The pursuit of pleasure, the driving force of the intergenerational existence of species in the theory of evolution, is in Buddhism perceived as suffering. The existence of species in the evolution theory, even if prolonged by adaptation, leads to eventual extinct. But the existence of sentient beings in Buddhism continues forever, unless it is consciously stopped (nirvana) by following the Buddhist path. Lopez also underscores how Buddhism and science differ in their theories of truth. Truth in science remains undiscovered and constantly changing; in contrast, the truth that the Buddha claimed to realize had been already discovered by previous buddhas and would remain unchanged for the future buddhas (75). Thus remembrance

of truth rather than discovery of it characterizes Buddhism. A Buddhism that is squeezed into being compatible with science would be nothing but “materialistic Buddhism” deprived of its other-worldly (*lokottara*) aura. Therefore, Lopez suggests, we would be better off allowing “Buddhism to remain a religion, and to be a pre-scientific religion” (78) and “the Buddha to remain beyond the world, completely at odds with the world, and with science” (79).

Lopez names his fourth chapter “A Primer on Buddhist Meditation,” and he calls it “interlude.” The purpose of this chapter is to remind the readers “what meditation has meant in the history of Buddhism” (81). Lopez reminds us that the enquiry of what exact meditation practice led to the Buddha’s enlightenment has generated many Buddhist texts delineating many conflicting theories and a plethora of practices. Some of them are discussed in this chapter. Challenging popular conceptions, Lopez argues that “all forms of meditation over the long history of Buddhism are ritual practices” (84), and some of them can easily be categorized as “myth” (85). Lopez ends the chapter with a brief history of contemporary mindfulness based practices initiated by a Burmese monk (Ledi Sayadaw) in the late 1880s in colonial Burma and popularized by a German monk (Nyanaponika Thera) in the 1950s in Sri Lanka. Particularly the latter’s reinterpretation of ancient Buddhist meditation as a universal and non-religious practice, says Lopez, has contributed to the mindfulness movement since the early 1980s. The crucial point in this chapter is when Lopez criticizes the current mindfulness movement. He says, “it is inaccurate to assume that Buddhist meditation is encompassed by something called mindfulness” (92). The technical term “*sati/smṛti*” originally meant memory, and “mindfulness” is a recent rendering of the term (79).

Lopez acknowledges that *sati (smṛti)* has both meanings, namely memory/recollection and mindfulness; however, his overemphasis on the former has led him to find fault with contemporary mindfulness circles. Bhikkhu Bodhi, the well-known Pali text translator, argues that it is not “memory” but the meaning of mindfulness, contemplation and awareness that separates the Buddha’s distinct use of the term from other non-Buddhist thought in ancient India. He says, “To designate the practice that became the main pillar of his meditative system, he [the Buddha] chose the word *sati*. But here *sati* no longer means memory. Rather, the Buddha assigned the word a new meaning consonant with his own system of psychology and meditation. *Thus it would be a fundamental mistake to insist on reading the old meaning of memory into the new context*” (emphasis added, Bodhi 2012: 22).

Furthermore, Lopez dumps three interconnected terms into one; in doing so, he overlooks their nuances. The early Pali Suttas provide three interconnected terms: *sati*, *anussati* and *anupassana*. Although *sati* implies memory, it is the second term, *anussati*, that is more connected with memory. As Analayo, another prolific translator of Buddhist texts, says: “The connotation of *sati* as memory becomes particularly prominent with the recollections (*anussati*)” (46). Lopez refers to “the memory or recollection of death” and “the memory or recollection of the Buddha” to highlight the importance of memory in Buddhist meditation. In fact, in all these cases it is not *sati* but *anussati* that is used, i.e., *Buddhanussati*, *Marāṇanussati*, etc. Perhaps more importantly, the term *anussati* appears nowhere in the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, the Pali discourse commonly used in the circles of Buddhist meditation and science. Instead, what we find in the discourse is *sati* (i.e., *Ānāpānasati*) and *anupassana* (i.e., *Kāyanupassana*) which connote “mindfulness” and “contemplation” respectively. Neither of these two terms directly renders the meaning of memory/recollection.

The final chapter, “The Death of the Scientific Buddha”, contains a few new punches to knock down the Scientific Buddha. Lopez reminds us that since the mid 19th century, first Theravāda, followed by D. T. Suzuki’s Zen in the 1950s, and then in the 1960s and 70s Nagarjuna’s Madhyamaka philosophy represented Buddhism in its dialogue with science. However, for the last few decades Tibetan Buddhism has dominated the contemporary discussion on neuroscience-meditative experience. Challenging the rhetoric of similarities between science and Buddhism, Lopez argues that they in fact belong to two opposing categories. Buddhism, unlike science, induces stress to get out of Saṃsāra. It prioritizes morality over scientific facts. It celebrates altruism, which science identifies as the obstacle to evolutionary survival. Unsatisfied with on-going scientific experiments, Lopez suggests that the Buddhism-neurology discussion should focus on the centuries old descriptions of meditation to unpack their connections to Buddhist doctrines. For that, one should use neurology to answer questions posed in Buddhist meditation, not the other way around (113). This may clarify the relation between meditation and doctrine (115). Lopez also challenges the idea that a fruitful science-Buddhism dialogue is conceivable only through two-fold translation, i.e., translation of doctrine into meditative states and then the latter into scientific data (120).

*The Scientific Buddha* is a thought-provoking book for a wide audience. It may find an audience among Buddhist meditation enthusiasts; however, it may disil-

lusion them. It is a must read for academics who are interested in religion/Buddhism and modernity/science. Particularly Buddhist scholars of contemporary Buddhism would find it quite enlightening. It is a strong case study that would fit well in senior undergraduate or graduate syllabi on religion and modernity. Particularly religious studies students would benefit tremendously not only from its science-Buddhism discussion but also its instruction about, perhaps illustration of, the job of religious studies scholarship. For example, Lopez instructs, "It is not the role of the scholar to protect, preserve, and defend the religion that he or she studies. Religions, or at least their adherents, have done that themselves over the centuries. It is the task of the scholar to document and analyze those efforts. Religions change over time. It is the task of the scholar to document and analyze that change. To understand what a religion is, it is essential to understand what it has been at other points in space. It is essential to remember. And it is the task of the scholar to aid in that remembering" (78-79).

The scholar's job in remembering and reminding what religion was and has been is admirable. This admirable job, I would add, should not be clouded by one's (be it personal or institutional) wishful thinking. I wonder whether Lopez is inadvertently making that connection in his following statement: "I suggest that we honor the Scientific Buddha for all he has done over his short life of 150 years... and that we then allow him to pass away, like a flame going out" (xi). Accordingly, he entitles his last chapter "The Death of the Scientific Buddha." I wonder who we are, as scholars of Buddhism, to suggest or wish any buddha (scientific or not) dead? Instead, what we can, perhaps should, do is to document how the religious Buddha demands due respect, recognition and credit for the non-religious (scientific) use of his dharma. Here is an example. An authoritative voice within the Buddhist tradition expresses: "I feel that if psychotherapists can draw upon Buddhist mindfulness practice to help people overcome anxiety and distress, their work is most commendable. If clinicians find that mindfulness helps patients accept pain and illness, that is wonderful.... They [however] should recognize that while the Dhamma bids everyone come and take what they need, they are drawing from *an ancient well of sacred wisdom* [emphasis added]" (Bodhi 2012: 36). Obviously the Scientific Buddha has not yet passed into nirvana, and neither does he intend to do so soon. Instead, he seems to be more interested in extending his life span, as Lopez would say, with a "post-scientific" spin.

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***The Birth of Insight: Meditation, Modern Buddhism and the Burmese Monk Ledi Sayadaw*. By Eric Braun. Chicago and London. University of Chicago Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780226000800**

Erik Braun's book is about how a remarkable man's leadership came to the rescue of Burmese Buddhist identity and how a very modern Buddhism was born. Around the turn of the twentieth century, colonial power was devastating Burmese institutions of state and religion. The Dharma itself was under threat and the reality of change demanded adaptation.

An ambitious Burmese Monk, Ledi Sayadaw, born in 1846 of humble origins, applied his considerable intelligence to a career within the corridors of the Sangha's power. This required excellence in study combined with political judgment. His character was forged and a leader was made.

When the time came and millenarian fears justified decisive action, Ledi Sayadaw could see that democratisation of power through making Buddhist learning accessible to the laity was the means to preserving the Dharma and renewing hope in a broken Burma. This task required simplification of theory and practice. As a result he created the blueprint for a new expression of Buddhism that could travel to the West.

Of course, nothing exists in isolation and everything depends heavily on its context. This seems obvious, but perhaps we should remember the Buddha's advice to Ananda when he exclaimed:

"It's amazing, lord, it's astounding, how deep this dependent co-arising is, and how deep its appearance, and yet to me it seems as clear as clear can be."



[The Buddha responded:] "Don't say that, Ananda. Don't say that. Deep is this dependent co-arising, and deep its appearance. It's because of not understanding and not penetrating this Dhamma that this generation is like a tangled skein, a knotted ball of string, like matted rushes and reeds, and does not go beyond transmigration, beyond the planes of deprivation, woe, and bad destinations." (DN51, Online Translation, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1997.)

So let me explain a little about the context in which this review is written: A mixture of surprise and pride came over me when Richard asked me to review this book. I have little by way of the academic credentials that one might expect of someone asked to write such a review for an academic journal, but Richard assured me that I was the person he wanted to do the job.

Not being an academic, I cannot treat Braun's book as an academic object whose merit stands outside the context of its comprehensibility and usefulness to me.

I apply what I understand of the Buddhist tradition in my life and work. I am looking for credible sources or evidence which provide the foundation for clearly explained ideas. Ideas which interest me are ideas that make sense of the world in which I live and give me a rationale for action. The quality and clarity of writing, well researched source material and the ideas he expresses have made Braun's book a pleasure for me to read.

I teach mindfulness, and what I teach draws on an evidence-based understanding of how "Buddhist insight meditation" can prevent depression. What I teach in my workplace applies a cognitive behaviourist theory of how an "active ingredient" of "insight meditation" prevents recurrent depression to general stress and work related performance. In the therapeutic context the "active ingredient" is delivered in an eight-week teaching programme, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). MBCT is a secularized, reproducible intervention that has provided opportunities for experimental testing. It was found it to be effective at reducing the rate of relapse of depression by 40-50%.

MBCT represents a bridge between an epistemology with Buddhist roots and scientific epistemology. In the scientific context, causes become independent variables, conditions are controlled and effects are dependent variables. All the elements of the processes of a phenomenon under scientific study need to be defined and measurable or controllable. The subject of scientific study becomes an object, which exists independently of the context in which it is studied; hypothesis becomes theory and theory becomes fact.

When it comes to the scientific study of therapy, subjective experience is taken as objective data. On the other hand, Buddhist knowledge is based entirely on examining subjective experience subjectively. Here, it could be argued that Buddhist knowledge is more about the nature of experience of things than about the nature of things that exist independently of experience.

Braun explains how Buddhism morphed in Burma during the colonial period to meet the needs of its people, state and identity. He charts the life of an exceptional man who played a key role in reshaping Burmese Buddhism to meet the needs of the times.

By his own ingenuity, Ledi Sayadaw took on the role of bridge between a pre-colonial traditional Burma and modernity in his country. He rose to eminence in the precolonial Sangha by means of his ambition, application and intelligence. He then applied what he had learnt in his early life to translate traditional structures of power into a more democratic sense of responsibility and identity during times of colonial upheaval. He led a popular movement to safeguard Burmese identity and Buddhism when the traditional institutions of King, court and Sangha crumbled.

What I am interested in is how this process adapted Buddhism into a form that then spread to the West. The Abhidhamma needed to be simplified to make it possible to teach to the lay population. In turn, this enabled lay teachers to become the guardians of the teachings and stewards of the Dhamma and Burmese identity. Not only did the theoretical foundations of the Dhamma need exegesis, but the understanding of the function of meditation also needed to shift away from a focus on profound states of concentration, only possible after prolonged practice, to an exercise that could be cultivated by less intensive practice.

A short cut to experiential insight was made possible by stressing the importance of “mindfulness” in the development of what has become understood as “insight meditation”. A stripped down theoretical framework to make “mindfulness” the central function in “insight meditation” came with this form of meditation. Later this made it possible, when it was introduced to the West, to understand “mindfulness” as a means to understand psychological processes so as to reduce the impact of unhelpful thinking and thus turn it into a self-help tool in a humanist context.

Ledi Sayadaw thought that the Abhidhamma would engage the scientific mind. Representing Buddhism as a tradition built on reason could align it to science and therefore give it legitimacy under colonial rule. Ledi Sayadaw’s intent was

not to reduce the Dhamma to science, but that is what he may have inadvertently achieved. By starting a movement that has led to the creation of a simplified approach to Buddhist “insight meditation”, he set in motion a historical process that may have satisfied his nationalist intentions but may also have had the unintended consequence of the colonisation of Buddhism itself.

What I teach in the workplace takes the active ingredient of “insight meditation” but employs a delivery tool which fits a workplace context. I have converted an eight-week therapy of about 50-60 hours of meditation (MBCT) to a form that asks for about 25% of that time.

Braun helps the reader to understand that both the form and the content of the Buddhist tradition cannot exist outside a social context. To the reader interested in contemporary mindfulness, his book leads to the realization that the “active ingredient” and the “delivery mechanism” in MBCT may be accidents of history rather than necessary principles of action. This does not fit well with the assumptions implicit in the scientific method or with the views of those in our times who wish to define and practise an original Buddhism as taught by the Buddha himself two and a half thousand years ago.

The next step in understanding the mind within the scientific approach must be built on what has been established by the scientific method. So here is where I suggest that Braun’s book becomes particularly useful. It tells a story that enables the importance of context to be appreciated in the study of the functions of the human mind. Braun’s book gives us a well-resourced argument that demonstrates that what we might be tempted to believe is an objective “active ingredient” of “insight meditation” is in fact something that has emerged from a historical and cultural context. Furthermore, after reading Braun’s book not only must we come to the conclusion that the “active ingredient” and the “delivery mechanism” of MBCT are not objects carved in stone: we can no longer even be sure that there is a real difference between them. Perhaps it is not so much that the Dhamma has become scientific as that the scientific method may now be understood in the context of Braun’s insights into the history of Buddhist thinking. Perhaps we can now see science, as well as the Dhamma, as social processes subject to the laws of dependent co-arising as taught by the Buddha long ago.

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***How Ajātaśatru was Reformed: the Domestication of “Ajase” and Stories in Buddhist History.*** By Michael Radich. *Studia Philologica Buddhica* XXVII, Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2011. ISBN 9784906267651. vi + 238 pp.

At first glance, this slim volume has a relatively narrow focus of interest: the changes in the various narratives of Ajātaśatru from their appearance in early Pali texts to twentieth century versions of the story of “Ajase” (the Japanese version of the name Ajātaśatru) in the context of Japanese psychoanalytic theory, more specifically, the theory of the “Ajase complex”. It is, as the author states at the outset, “the story of a story” (p.1).

However, it is also much more than this modest introduction implies. In the process of a richly detailed textual exploration of the variations and transformations of the Ajātaśatru narrative, Radich not only demonstrates the ways in which this story has been adapted and re-interpreted in specific historical and cultural settings, but also uses this “story of a story” to reflect on both the globalization of Buddhist ideas and the use of these ideas in the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Japanese nationalism, and later in the discourse of *Nihonjinron* (theories of Japaneseness).

The book begins with an examination of the range of Ajātaśatru narratives in early Buddhist and Jaina texts. The variation here makes any concise summary of the story impossible – that would imply a coherence and consistency that do not appear to be present – but Radich does provide a useful list of the main features that recur in most of the versions which I found myself referring to as I traced the development of the story through subsequent chapters. A key aim here is to demonstrate the variety and plasticity of the narrative – Radich is concerned to contest the notion that there is a single authentic original source narrative to which later variants can be compared. Rather, he argues convincingly that a range of disparate elements can be identified in early texts, which are then combined in various ways.

Early Pali texts feature stories of how Ajātasattu, encouraged by Devadatta, usurped the throne of his father, together with a parallel set of stories of Ajātasattu’s repentance and confession to the Buddha of having killed his father. However, later Indic texts are far more elaborate. The main elements listed by Radich are: bad omens before Ajātaśatru’s birth, which in some versions lead his mother to attempt to abort the pregnancy; Ajātaśatru plots against his father, and

takes his throne and in some versions imprisons him and subjects him to starvation and/or torture; the king dies (in most, but not all texts); Ajātaśatru repents; the Buddha pronounces on what will now happen to Ajātaśatru – this varies from versions that state that he will be reborn in hell to versions that state that his sins have been eradicated. In a sub-set of these texts there is also a section that Radich calls “the prison sequence”, which contains references to Ajātaśatru’s mother trying to help her husband by smuggling in food for him, and also to the deposed King engaging in religious practice while in prison and being sustained by the Buddha.

Two particularly influential texts that Radich considers are the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa and Contemplation sutras. However he also notes that these contain a number of unusual features which differentiate them from other sources. For the Mahāparinirvāṇa sutra Radich notes the emphasis on Ajātaśatru’s suffering: he is afflicted with foul-smelling boils as a result of his crimes, and although his mother attempts to treat them she is unsuccessful. His eventual cure and also his release from the anticipated consequences of his deeds (such as being reborn in hell) come through his encounter with the Buddha. Radich summarises this as a “shift of focus to Ajātaśatru’s salvation from sin”, and links this to a concomitant shift in the way in which various teachings in this sutra are presented to focus on “the nature of sin and guilt and liberation from them” (p.36).

Another passage of note in this sutra deals with the events before Ajātaśatru’s birth as recounted to Ajātaśatru by Devadatta, who tells the prince that before his birth his father had killed a sage he encountered in the forest, who as he was dying vowed to cause the King’s death in his next life. As a result of this, the king and queen arranged for the queen to give birth to the child through a skylight in a tower so that it would be killed by the fall. It is these events, in this version of the story, which lead to Ajātaśatru becoming angry and having his father imprisoned, and also to attacking his mother and threatening to kill her when she attempts to visit the king in prison.

In the Contemplation sutra, Ajātaśatru’s mother takes a central role in the narrative. Again, Ajātaśatru attempts to kill her, this time because he is angry on discovering that she has been feeding her husband in prison. In a feature unique to this version of the narrative, the queen is then imprisoned, and experiences visions of the Buddha and learns about Amida’s pure land. Ajātaśatru’s repentance in this version is for the attempt to kill his mother – his father’s death is not mentioned. This shift to an emphasis on Ajātaśatru’s relationship with his mother

foreshadows the twentieth century use of the narrative by the Japanese theorists Kosawa Heisaku and Okonogi Keigo, explored further below.

Radich notes that the sections dealing with the Ajātaśatru narrative in both the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa sutra and the Contemplation sutra may well have been written partly in China, or under Chinese influence, and in chapter four he offers an analysis of the ways in which aspects of early medieval Chinese society and culture may have contributed to the popularity or even the shaping of these versions of the narrative. These include the growing popularity in medieval China of ideas of the Pure Land and “other power”, and the modification of notions of filial piety to include an emphasis on the mother-child relationship.

Building on this, in chapter five Radich examines further developments in the Ajātaśatru narrative in sixth and seventh century China, including the treatment of the narrative by Shandao, one of the patriarchs of the Pure Land Buddhist tradition, who is in turn a very influential source for later Japanese versions of the story.

In chapter six, Radich turns to Kamakura Japan, and the importance of the Ajātaśatru narrative in the work of Shinran, the founder of the Jōdo Shinshū school of Pure Land Buddhism. In the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran quotes versions of the narrative drawn from the Mahāparinirvāṇa sutra in order to explain the importance of reliance on Amida Buddha. In this version it is only through reliance on the Buddha that Ajātaśatru can escape suffering—both in the sense of relief from his physical suffering in the present, which he interprets as punishment for his murder of his father, and in the sense of escaping rebirth in one of the hells reserved for perpetrators of the five grave offenses of Buddhism. Another aspect of this is the linking of the Ajātaśatru narrative with the notion of “rootless faith” (one interpretation of this notion is faith granted by the Buddha), also an important element of Shinran’s thought.

Chapters seven to nine continue the story of the Ajātaśatru narrative in the Japanese context, exploring influences from medieval Japan through to the early modern period and the elaboration of Kosawa’s theory of the Ajase complex, first published in 1931. Formulated in response to Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex, Kosawa’s original article focuses on the suggestion that two kinds of guilt exist: the guilt of the Oedipus complex as described by Freud, which is driven by fear of punishment for the murder of the father, and the guilt of the Ajase complex, in which the impulse to murder is “melted” by the self-sacrificing actions of the parent and gives way to a sense of gratitude. In Kosawa’s version of the

story, this relates to Ajase/Ajātaśatru wishing to kill his mother, but then having this impulse “melted” by her actions. The emphasis here moves away from Ajase’s actions towards his father to his relationship with his mother. This second type of guilt thus centres on the mother-child relationship, rather than the father-son relationship of the Oedipus complex. A further new element to the story is also introduced: Ajase’s mother is depicted as “fearing the loss of her youth and beauty” (p.98) and therefore fearing the loss of her husband’s love. It is this fear that makes her wish for a child, in order to draw her closer to her husband. In line with this re-focusing of the narrative, the mother is also made responsible for the killing of the forest sage, thus setting in train the ensuing events.

Okonogi, Kosawa’s student, reviving Kosawa’s theory of the Ajase complex in the 1970s, modifies the narrative again, and shifts the emphasis further onto the mother. In early versions produced by Okonogi, the mother cures Ajase of his boils without the help of the Buddha, and in later versions she is the instrument through whom the Buddha cures Ajase. Okonogi also derives new elements in the story concerning Ajase’s mother, suggesting that she experiences a conflict between her role as mother and her role as wife. In the various versions of the story produced by Kosawa and Okonogi, therefore, the central drama becomes that of the conflicting relationships within a central triad of family roles: mother, father, and son – fertile ground for psychoanalytic reflection on twentieth century family life in Japan (and also probably elsewhere).

Although Radich notes that Kosawa and Okonogi have been criticized by Buddhologists for their departures from textual sources, he argues convincingly that they were not exceptional in their selective highlighting and re-working of aspects of the stories associated with Ajātaśatru. And he points out that some of the distinctive features of their versions are pre-figured in earlier sources, as outlined above.

Radich is also concerned here to argue that changes in versions of the narrative, and the different emphasis given to the different elements of the story, are linked with the social and historical contexts in which the different versions were produced. He suggests that we can see these narratives as “the mirror of an age”, moving from preoccupations with regicide and kingly legitimacy in the early period of Buddhism, to concerns of “other power” Buddhism and the use of the narrative by Shinran to illustrate the primacy of entrusting oneself to the Buddha, regardless of what acts one might have committed, and in the twentieth century to re-working the story as “a drama of the nuclear family, or of private, individual

psychology” (p.132).

This is in some ways perhaps a rather obvious point. Narratives are constantly being re-worked in ways that reflect contemporary concerns, and there are numerous examples of this in literature and theatre, as well as in stories from various religious traditions. However, it is still a point worth making in order to counter the tendency, noted by Radich, to view contemporary adaptations as somehow “debased”, departures from an authentic original source (p.135). For the Ajātaśatru narrative at least, Radich convincingly demonstrates here that the variation in the available versions of the narrative, even in the earliest surviving texts, makes the identification of an authoritative version an illusory goal. Importantly, Radich’s analysis also suggests ways in which “the story of a story” can also become a window into the study of social and cultural change.

All this relates to the wider issues of globalization and the history of Buddhism. Kosawa and Okonogi’s use of the Ajase narrative can be linked with broader socio-political changes following the opening of Japan in the late nineteenth century. Buddhism was implicated in these changes in a number of ways. Initially Buddhist institutions came under pressure in Japan from the forced separation of Buddhism and Shinto, and the persecution of Buddhism in the early part of the Meiji period. However, from the end of the nineteenth century, until the Pacific War and afterwards, there was a shift in how Japanese Mahayana Buddhism was positioned, both within Japan and abroad. On the one hand its representatives sought to position Japanese forms of Buddhism in the context of an emerging essentialising discourse of Buddhism as a global religion (and alternative to other world religions or systems of philosophy), while on the other hand, paradoxically, Japanese Mahayana Buddhism was increasingly linked with a putative “unique” essence of Japanese culture.

The development and adaptation of the story of Ajātaśatru/Ajase in modern Japan refracts these discourses of globalization and nationalism in some interesting ways – as Radich points out, it is never entirely clear whether Kosawa and Okonogi’s theory of the Ajase complex is offered as a globally applicable alternative to Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex, or as a phenomenon unique to Japan and arising from culturally specific aspects of Japanese society. The use of a narrative derived from Buddhist texts can be linked to the mobilization of Buddhism within Japan in the pre-war period as both an alternative religion/philosophy/ideology with global credentials, *and* as a philosophical underpinning for nationalist themes. This nationalist aspect is also evident in the use of the Ajase



complex as part of a body of *Nihonjinron* writing concerned with elaborating a culturally specific psychology of the Japanese.

The story of this narrative therefore stands at the intersection of various sorts of histories, including the history of Buddhism and Buddhist ideas; the history of Japanese nationalism and the history of theories of Japanese identity; and the history of psychoanalytic ideas in a cross-cultural context. It also provides a very useful case study of globalization, which, as an anthropologist, I found particularly interesting.

Radich's fine-grained and sophisticated analysis offers a meticulously researched examination of one small corner of what could be called, in Appadurai's terms, the Buddhist "ideoscape" (Appadurai 1990), and the ways in which this has overlapped with other ideoscapes including notably those of national identity and psychoanalytic theory in twentieth century Japan. He gives us a valuable insight into the ways in which particular channels are carved out in what Tsing (2000:330) has termed "the uneven and contested ... terrain" of globalization and how the changes in the Ajātaśatru/Ajase narrative reflect and refract shifting social and cultural contexts. In doing so, Radich resists the temptation to resort to any essentialised notion of local cultures to which a master narrative adapts, and argues convincingly that "it is too simplistic to analyse changes like those undergone by the Ajātaśatru narrative in terms of one or two factors alone, or in terms of a vague and amorphous notion of cultural essence like 'Chinese/Japanese religiosity'" (p.131). This resonates with anthropological theorizing on globalization such as that offered by Appadurai and Tsing, in which the imagery used is of landscapes, flows and channels, rather than interaction between clearly bounded entities. But while some of the theorizing on globalization can be frustratingly abstract, Radich's work shows how these concepts can be applied to one closely examined case.

Radich's account is exemplary in its scholarship and attention to detail. Inevitably a brief review cannot do justice to the full complexity of his argument. It is fascinating to read, and also very well written. Perhaps the only point on which I had reservations was that I felt slightly uneasy about his use of terms such as "salvation", and "faith", which seem to have a particularly Christian resonance. Although I recognize the difficulties surrounding terminology and translation, I wondered whether these were the most appropriate terms to use in some places. This question of translation is a separate debate in itself, and one that has been much discussed in recent years, particularly with reference to Pure Land Bud-

dhism; there is an extensive literature, much of it written by followers of Pure Land Buddhism, simply on the use of the word “faith” and the problems associated with it. However, this is a relatively minor point, and arguably not directly relevant to Radich’s argument here. Overall, this is a very impressive piece of research, which does much to advance our understanding of the processes of globalization of Buddhist ideas. It deserves a wide audience.

## References

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***Indian Buddhist Philosophy.* By Amber D. Carpenter. 2014. Durham. Acumen Publishing. ISBN 97818440652983**

If one wants to recommend an introduction to Indian Buddhist Philosophy to an English-speaking beginning student, one's choice is limited. One may either suggest Williams and Tribe's "Buddhist Thought" to those coming from the perspective of Buddhist Studies, or Siderits' "Buddhism as Philosophy" for the more philosophically inclined. Amber Carpenter has now contributed a new work that seems to be primarily aimed at teaching Indian Buddhist thought to philosophy students without linguistic or other Indological background.

The book is divided into eight chapters which try to strike a balance between an historical and a topical discussion. Chapter 1 focuses specifically on the Buddhist notion of *duḥkha* and its relation to the four noble truths and the eightfold path, taking great pains to provide a philosophical motivation for the *prima facie* quite unintuitive idea that "all is suffering". The second chapter introduces the theory of *anātman* and the five *skandhas*; here the focus is on explaining how this ontological doctrine is linked up with the ethical and soteriological aims of Buddhism. Chapter 3 is called "Kleśas and compassion", though "Nietzsche and the Buddha" may have been a better title. The chapter focuses on the Nietzschean objection that there are aims superior to the elimination of suffering. In discussing the move from the idea of the *arhat* to that of the *bodhisattva* Carpenter explains how various such aims (virtue, love, god, truth, and life itself) can in fact be understood (when properly interpreted) as entailed by, or at least not diametrically opposed to the Buddhist conceptualization of liberation. Chapter 4 introduces Madhyamaka by discussing some key topics from Nāgārjuna's works. This chapter gives a clear, though necessarily condensed explanation of how Madhyamaka can be construed as a critique of the Abhidharma project. My one qualm with the chapter is the discussion of how causal dependency can be seen as implying emptiness on pp 85-86. It fails to highlight how this argument depends essentially on the principle of momentariness, a metaphysical claim for which a separate argument would have to be adduced at this stage.

The following two chapters interrupt the historical narrative to discuss two systematic concepts. The fifth chapter deals specifically with philosophical problems connected with the notion of karma. It gives a fine differentiation of the different meanings of the karma in Buddhist, Brahmanic, and Jain contexts and discusses important questions such as that of the opacity of karma (does it matter

that we cannot know the consequences of all our actions?), the role of karma in moral thought (is karma a form of blaming the victim?), and the possibility of naturalizing it (can we make sense of karma without reincarnation?). This chapter is particularly useful as the sustained philosophical discussions of karma Carpenter presents in this chapter are otherwise hard to find in the introductory literature.

Chapter 6 looks at the theory of *anātman* in more detail and concentrates on a discussion of a set of increasingly sophisticated Nyāya criticisms of the notion of selflessness, based on the idea that a form of self is required to act as a synchronic and diachronic unifier of the set of mental states that are ascribed to ‘me’.

As the Madhyamaka chapter is focused on Nāgārjuna, the seventh chapter, on Yogācāra, concentrates on Vasubandhu. Again, the coverage of this philosophical schools is not intended to be comprehensive (there is, for example, very little discussion of the philosophical perplexities that accompany the notion of the *ālayavijñāna*), but Carpenter presents a clear discussion of the Yogācāra rejection of external objects and concludes the chapter with a discussion of the question whether the notion of *pariṇiṣpanna-svabhāva* could be considered as re-introducing a notion of the self through the back door.

The final eighth chapter is by far the longest in the book, aptly called “the long sixth to seventh century”. Here Carpenter discusses the theories of Dinnāga and Dharmakīrti, the Madhyamaka critique of Yogācāra, and finishes with a treatment of Śāntideva’s ethics. The chapter manages to bring a variety of issues together, though the structure feels a bit jumpy (the discussion goes from Dinnāga and Dharmakīrti to Yogācāra/Madhyamaka and then back again to *apoha* theory).

The book finishes with four two-page appendices on the languages of Buddhism, its intellectual context, the Abhidharma, and a “snapshot of Indian Philosophy”. I am not entirely sure of the purpose of these. Given their brevity it would have been preferable to incorporate the first three into the main text or the notes; the final one could have been put together with the “Chronology” at the beginning of the book.

There is much to like about Carpenter’s book. Here are four particularly strong points:

1. The book shows a strong focus on arguments, rather than mere exegetical paraphrase. As such it is particularly suitable for being used in philosophy courses, and provides an entrance to Indian Buddhist thought to students outside of Indology or Buddhist Studies.

2. The discussion is based on sound hermeneutic principles (p. 5 “If we pose a question to which the texts seem only to offer stupid answers, or lame ones, we ought to consider whether our question is really as clear or deep as we suppose, or whether there might be a fundamental difference in orientations or aims [...]). Throughout the book Carpenter tries to give the Buddhist philosophers as good a run for their money as possible, thereby achieving a sophisticated systematic discussion of their theses that is unfortunately still far too infrequent in the contemporary literature.

3. Throughout the book Carpenter frequently draws comparisons with ancient Greek philosophy in order to explain ancient Indian views. This is not only interesting because the study of ancient Indian and ancient Greek philosophy faces similar methodological challenges, but also because students are likely to have been exposed to ancient Western philosophy in some way, thus providing an explanatory bridge to an unfamiliar tradition. Given the philosophical focus it is perhaps surprising that there are so few references to the contemporary Western philosophical discussion. Chapter 4, for example, would have profited from some references to the current debate about metaphysical grounding, while the discussion in chapter 6 could have been brought to life even more by some reference to the likes of Parfit, Dennett, or Metzinger.

4. The book contains details discussions of ethical aspects of Indian Buddhist thought that are hard to find in the introductory literature. What is particularly valuable is the stress on the inextricable linkage of ethical/soteriological and metaphysical/epistemological concerns in Buddhist thought that underlines the extent to which Buddhist thought is a unified philosophical project, and also helps to bring out its distinctness from the majority of other philosophical traditions.

One would have hoped that the editors paid more attention to proofreading, especially with respect to Sanskrit diacritics (I spotted five misspellings just in the table “Development of Buddhist Thought in India”) and dates (the “chronology” gives the date of the Buddha as 4th century BCE, two pages later it is 500-400 BCE, on p. 243 Pāṇini lived “between the seventh and fourth centuries BCE”, on 244 “around the sixth century BCE”). The main problem with such infelicities is that they may give the browser the impression that the book has been shoddily put together, which is certainly not the case.

All of Carpenter’s references to primary sources refer to English translations. This is in itself not problematic (though her choice of translations is sometimes not the most fortunate: the reference translation for Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyā-*

makakārikā is now the one by Katsura and Siderits, for the Nyāyasūtra and Bhāṣya it is preferable to consult Angot, instead of the problematic Sprung translation of the Prasannapadā readers should be referred to those of Schayer, May, and de Jong). It would, however, have enhanced the book's potential for use outside of philosophy courses if the endnotes had also given the original texts of the quotations, so that readers with the necessary linguistic background could check the accuracy of the translations for themselves. A translational choice I find particularly problematic is translating *rūpa* as 'form'. Both in the context of *skandha* theory and in the discussion of the Heart Sūtra its most straightforward rendering is 'matter'. Translating it as 'form' is apt to mislead particularly those who may read this term with the Aristotelian form/matter distinction in mind.

Carpenter is to be applauded for having taken on the challenging task of writing a sophisticated introduction to a complex intellectual tradition spanning more than one millenium and a half, and doing so in a way that is clear, accurate, and well-written. Teachers and students of Indian Buddhist thought will be grateful for having this new resource at their disposal.

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