



# Contemporary Buddhism

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## Editorial

Kate Crosby, Pyi Phyo Kyaw, Stefania Travagnin & Olivia Porter

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## Editorial

*Contemporary Buddhism* was first published in the year 2000, at the opening of the new millennium, and this volume therefore marks its 20-year anniversary, and its 21st volume. Like so many things of 2020, it is in fact appearing somewhat after schedule, two years late. So we begin this editorial with apologies to our readers, authors and would-be authors for the delay and interruption. We would also like to thank them for navigating any challenges presented by changes to submission and production processes, or by changes to the editorial and production team. We hope the rich collection of topics in the two new volumes shortly before you will go some way to recompense you for your patience.

This volume opens with a special section on transnational Buddhism, so appropriate to the scope of the journal, focusing on Chinese contexts (Cheng, Reinke and Chia). The individual articles that follow begin with an exploration of the phenomenon of colossal Maitreya statues in Mongolia (Charleux), and continue with an examination of ecological narratives in contemporary China, where Buddhist discourses are filtered through governmental policies (Ríos Peñafiel), the study of responses to the environment crisis by American Buddhists (Capper), a comparative analysis of Buddhism's complex responses to COVID-19, involving adaptations and societal contributions during lockdown restrictions (Obadia), and an assessment of the reactions to organ donation by Tibetan Buddhists (Voyce). Then come explorations of the transformation processes of Buddhist meditation apps (Mayerhofer), the role of Buddhism in countering consumer and non-sustainable living in the Czech Republic (Cirklová), a new Buddhist counselling technique (Lee), a psychological-cognitive rereading of dependent origination to support counselling (Ellis), and the contested function of guilt in Western Buddhism (Vinten). Two articles then take us into the history and poetry of American Zen (Baroni, and Byrne and Mason, respectively), and then comes an examination of long-distance running drawing on mindfulness and the memoir of Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami (Nilsson). We close, ahead of the reviews section, with an examination of Buddhism in relation to the international laws that regulate armed conflict (Bartles-Smith et al.). This last article introduces a new area of practice-related research, Buddhism and international humanitarian law, which is then the subject of our next volume (vol. 22), a double

special issue, the result of a collaboration among humanitarian actors, religious and military practitioners, scholars, jurists and members of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

After a two-year gap in production, then, readers will see the publication of two volumes in short succession, each incorporating the usual two issues for each year. Having introduced what is to come, let us now return to the changes of the recent past. The most visible change is the stepping down of Andrew Skilton as editor after a decade at the helm. He now joins founding editors Michael McGhee and John Peacock as editor emeritus on our editorial board. The role of editor involves many hours of voluntary and mostly unnoticed labour, and, having co-edited with him for six of those 10 years, Kate Crosby, now returning as co-editor for the interim, knows just how true that is of Andrew. He often worked long into the night to help authors form a clear expression for their research and master the formalities of bringing their important new contributions to light. For, while many of our authors are among the most experienced in their field, for some this journal has been the first international vehicle for their work. The result has been a continued emphasis on bringing new fields to bear on Buddhist studies, a rich diversity of voices and topics, and a significant increase in international representation that we hope to continue and build on as we take over this role.

When we invited Andrew to offer his thoughts on his decade of editing *Contemporary Buddhism*, he picked out some highlights:

The sense of supporting both new scholars and new trajectories through the Buddhist studies field – not least as a result of the interdisciplinary nature of many of the submissions – has been very gratifying. This gave the sense of new interfaces between Buddhist studies and other disciplines being created and a sense of expanding the field. The challenge of finding readers for peer review to address sometimes very unexpected disciplinary combinations was both bracing and a measure of the dazzling diversity of the permeation of Buddhism into new societies, and unfamiliar disciplines.

Seeing *Contemporary Buddhism* included in various citation indices, its page budget expanding from 350 to 500 pages per annum, and its rise in the newly emerging ranking systems was both pleasing and alarming. Looking back one can see a body of well over 4000 pages of published material that one helped bring into the public arena. It would be invidious to mention particularly notable articles or special issues from among those pages, but looking back over a decade of issues many stand out in the memory – not necessarily the most learned – with sometimes rueful affection and enjoyment.

To collaborate with guest editors for special issues and of course in the earlier years with my co-editor, Kate Crosby, has been a special pleasure, as has the continued contact with my predecessors Michael McGhee and John Peacock, and some very supportive and responsive reviewers including those on the editorial board.

I remain grateful to all the authors, whether or not co-operative or literate – some of whom I came to regard as friends. My thoughts have often gone also to the much greater number of aspiring authors whose submissions did not, for one reason or another, make it into our pages. I wish them well and hope that they found a safe berth for their work somewhere more appropriate. Working with them all has been an extraordinary learning experience and my own understanding of the field and of the realia of the publishing business has been permanently enhanced in ways that I could never have anticipated or contrived under my own initiative. A list of lowlights would be just as lengthy and heartfelt!

So, a new decade, a new editorial team. Before we introduce ourselves, we would like to thank Andrew for his work and his direction, and wish him well as he returns to a greater focus on his own writing, which he often put aside for others. We also thank the editorial board who supported him, starting with those who are choosing to step down at this time: Stephen Batchelor, Stephen R. L. Clark, David Cooper, John Crook, Jonardon Ganeri, Rupert Gethin, Jeffrey Hopkins, Damien Keown, Thupten Jinpa Langri, David Loy, Lourens Minnema, John Pickering, Patricia Sieber, Robert Thurman and Gay Watson. Even more hidden and likewise deserving of thanks are the reviewers and production team who have provided their support and expertise for the journal behind the scenes.

Your new editors are Kate Crosby, Professor of Buddhist studies at King's College, London; Pyi Phyoo Kyaw, Senior Lecturer in Buddhist studies at Shan State Buddhist University, Stefania Travagnin, Lecturer in Chinese Buddhism at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London; and, for book reviews, Olivia Porter, who is just completing her PhD in Tai Buddhism at King's College, London. All of us have had some experience of working with Andrew in the past, including as co- and guest editors and authors for the journal, and are all similarly committed to the continued interdisciplinary, groundbreaking and both global and regional nature of the research presented in the journal. We are honoured to succeed as the new academic editors and hope to continue his good work. Our expertise encompasses the study of texts, practices, rituals, communities and societal issues, and research related to Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions in various Asian regions and the West.

We are joined by a new editorial board, with some familiar members, such as Laurence Cox and Peter Harvey, and some fresh faces: Yoshiko Ashiwa, Thomas Borchert, Trine Brox, Jane Caple, Wei-yi Cheng, Jack Meng-Tat Chia, Angela Chiu, Florence Galmiche, Tomomi Ito, Levi McLaughlin, Caroline Starkey. We are extremely grateful that so many scholars in the field responded enthusiastically to our call. From different disciplinary approaches, ranging from philosophy, philology and history to anthropology, sociology, and legal and media studies, their research interests include various aspects

and dynamics of the interface between Buddhism and 'modernity' in Asia and across the globe. The research profile of the new editorial team shows continuity with the vision of its founding members, i.e. the diversity of a multifaceted Buddhism that transcends the label of Asian culture and should be evaluated as an international phenomenon. At the same time, it reflects the continued growth in the objectives of the journal, as it adjusts to recent developments within the field of Buddhist studies, especially the renewed engagement with other academic areas. In this new phase, *Contemporary Buddhism* remains multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary in its outlook, and aims to continue to be accessible to specialists and non-specialists alike.

For the future, we invite you to approach us with regard to guest-edited special issues on a variety of topics that fall within the aims and scopes of the journal, as well as with your individual articles. The journal will also publish reviews of recent monographs and edited volumes, and retrospectives, in accordance with our reviews policy (below).

### Reviews policy

The journal will publish reviews of books, including reviews of non-English-language books, films, exhibitions, internet resources, etc. The reviews editor also welcomes proposals for bibliographic essays on specific topics and areas, as well as reports on specific genres, and reviews or retrospectives of less recently published works. If you are interested in writing a review for *Contemporary Buddhism*, please get in touch with the Reviews Editor, Olivia Porter, at [olivia.c.porter@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:olivia.c.porter@kcl.ac.uk).

Kate Crosby

*King's College, London*

✉ [henrietta.crosby@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:henrietta.crosby@kcl.ac.uk)

Pyi Phyto Kyaw

*Shan State Buddhist University*

✉ [ssbu.pyi.p.kyaw@gmail.com](mailto:ssbu.pyi.p.kyaw@gmail.com)

Stefania Travagnin

*SOAS, London*

✉ [st8@soas.ac.uk](mailto:st8@soas.ac.uk)

Olivia Porter

*King's College, London*

✉ [olivia.c.porter@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:olivia.c.porter@kcl.ac.uk)