

BOOK REVIEW

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***The Norton Anthology of World Religions: Buddhism.* Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (ed.). Series edited by Jack Miles. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company; 2015. Pp. 787 + xxviii. ISBN 978-0-393-91259-3.**

Reviewed by: Paulina Kolata, The University of Manchester

Buddhism, edited by Donald S. Lopez Jr., is a collection of translated primary Buddhist texts framed by editorial commentaries, and accompanied by an editor's introduction to the volume and the general introduction to the anthology series by Jack Miles. Lopez's introduction emphasises the richness and cultural diversity inscribed into the textual history of Buddhist teachings and practices. In dialogue with the primary texts, the volume is a query into the complexities of what makes someone a Buddhist. If, as the editor explains, a Buddhist is one who takes refuge in "the three jewels" - the Buddha, the *dharma* (the doctrine or the Buddha's teachings) and the *sangha* (the community of Buddha's disciples) - the texts in this volume provide an insight into the conceptualisations of what (or who) constitutes the individual jewels and the act of 'taking refuge'. Along with a chronological overview table and a map of major Buddhist sites, the introduction provides a framework for a discussion on the temporal and regional diversification of Buddhism narrated in the subsequent collection of sixty-seven primary sources and accompanying commentaries.

The anthology foregrounds narratives on practice in the various forms of Buddhism, and tones down the more typical discourse on Buddhism as a rational and intellectual religious tradition. The chronologically-arranged texts highlight intricacies of and controversies within the Buddhist teachings concerned with the Buddha's life, paths to enlightenment, gendered monastic communities, relationship with the state, and Buddhist cosmologies, among other themes. The volume cuts across literary genres, focusing on the malleability of dispersed Buddhist teachings and practices. Starting with *The Agganna Sutta*, the chronological section of the volume begins in India ("the cradle of Buddhism" (pp. 90-91)), and delves into Buddhist narratives of the world's beginning and end times. This opens the portion of the volume that

investigates the core teachings attributed to the Buddha and the beginnings of Buddhist philosophy. Lopez designates this section as “The Shared Tradition” (pp. 92-277), as it includes narratives accepted and shared across all Buddhist traditions. The subsequent selections of Mahayana sutras and treatises, and Buddhist tantric texts explore the important interdependencies between monastic communities and laity, issues of patronage and gender, and virtues of practice.

The second part of the book is focused geographically on selected writings from China, Korea, Japan, and Tibet. The texts explore the Buddhism’s arrival in each country respectively. Themes such as enlightenment, unity of doctrine and practice, the importance of dissemination and transition of the teachings, and the disciple-teacher relation are also highlighted. The final section is a nod towards a further diffusion of the Buddhist traditions more globally. It concentrates on the “distinctly new and international” (p. 76) writings on ‘Modern Buddhism’ that transcend beyond sectarian and doctrinal barriers by focusing on an experience-focused conception of Buddhism. It includes a selection by influential Buddhists such as Anagarika Dharmapala (his speech from the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 1893), Shunyu Suzuki (on San Francisco zen) and the Dalai Lama (his Nobel evening address). This section pays attention to the ongoing process of adaptation in the Buddhist teachings and practices spreading beyond Asian continent; however, it could have been enriched by an inclusion of doctrinal writings by Buddhist new religious movements, such as Sōka Gakkai in Japan, that also exhibit strong presence in the West.

The editor approached the unavoidable issue of scope by ultimately following a clear exploratory path into various incarnations of “the three jewels”; and limiting it, in a latter part of the volume, to the developments in Mahayana writings. Despite limitations and omissions, the selected texts and editor’s commentaries should inspire the reader towards further explorations. The volume provides “just a glimpse of the scope and complexities” (p. 62) of multiple Buddhist canons, whilst presenting a fascinating collection that showcases the richness of Buddhist literary forms, and encouraging the reader to question what it means to be and act like a Buddhist (from a textual perspective). Navigating with the editor’s explanatory notes, the reader explores the role of commentaries as a vital form of textual engagement with the translated primary works, and also as written commentaries to the oral teachings of the Buddha. The book is a thoroughly enjoyable and educational read that can serve as a valuable contribution to a reading list of any introductory course on Buddhism. It constitutes an exciting beginning of a long conversation on the developments and influence of Buddhist teachings and lived traditions.