

## Research topic

In Sri Lanka, a prominent Sinhalese Buddhist monk publicly proclaims that it is not a sin to kill Tamils. In Japan, the family register kept in a Buddhist temple and specifying the outcaste status of a lineage is provided to private detectives investigating the marriageability of a young woman. Throughout premodern Asia, monks in Buddhist monasteries are served by slaves and indentured servants. How is this possible? Doesn't Buddhism promote peace, equality and freedom?

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### *Overall aim & key objectives*

Any religious tradition knows tensions between the inner dynamics of doctrines and ideologies and the situations of institutions and social structures in the wider world. Reciprocally, societies evolve in dialogue with, and are shaped by, religious traditions. The project 'Buddhism and Social Justice' explores relations among competing religious ideals, and between these ideals and social realities, in Buddhist traditions of Asia through the lens of issues of social justice. Starting, both historically and conceptually, from an examination of slavery, forced labor, caste discrimination and prejudice in ancient Indian Buddhism, it asks how Buddhists articulated their ideals of equality, justice and freedom, and what the relationships were between such ideals and real-world exploitation and discrimination in both premodern and modern Buddhist-influenced Asian societies from Sri Lanka to Japan.

The project has five elements, a core project by the applicant and four satellite projects:

1. Applicant: 'Liberation and Bondage: Buddhism and Slavery in ancient India,' and 'Different Equalities: Buddhism and Caste.'
2. Post-doc: Slavery in Korean Buddhism.
3. PhD 1: *Burkumin* ('outcastes') in Japanese Buddhism.
4. PhD 2: 'Serfdom' and Tibetan Monastic Economy.
5. PhD 3: Ethnicity and Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Since all Buddhist traditions explicitly ground themselves in the religion's Indian roots, our project parallels this orientation. Mirroring the relation between abstract 'Buddhism' and local, historically particular cases, the Indian material serves as a central focus, in dialogue with which the other projects engage their sources. The projects parallel each other by sharing three overlapping methodological foci:

- \* text-historical and philological examination of textual sources expressive of (often competing) doctrinal and ideological stances toward questions of labor and social status.
- \* historical examination of the adoption, adaptation and transformation of these ideas, and their instantiation as practices throughout Asia into the present.
- \* socio-anthropological observation of the modern impacts of these inherited ideologies, which in different circumstances appear to function either to mitigate or to promote various forms of discrimination, inequality and injustice.

Utilizing these methodologies, we consider two basic questions:

- ◆ What ideals are articulated in Buddhist writings regarding questions of social justice?
- ◆ What are the economic and social realities of relations between Buddhist institutions and the wider society?

This research is consequently situated not only within the realms of Buddhist Studies and

Asian History, but also at the crossroads of Religious Studies, Economic History, Political Science and Anthropology, as it engages issues including those of Church and Society, Slavery Studies, the study of Race, Ethnicity and Caste, and the very definitions of justice and freedom.

'Buddhism and Social Justice' differentiates itself from most previous work by its starting point, overall stance, and its utilization of sources. Since the lens through which the project will focus its gaze is one of Buddhist Studies, the way in which it asks questions and the type of answers it seeks differ both from those of apologists from within the tradition, and scholars in other disciplines.

## **Scientific Background**

*Originality and/or innovative elements of the topic*

### *General considerations*

The societies of South, Southeast, Central and East Asia are, despite their considerable diversity, historically united in sharing a common cultural basis of profound, and in most cases formative, Buddhist influence. Fundamental aspects of their world-views have consequently been strongly shaped by Buddhist ideologies, which in turn and symbiotically have evolved within particular cultural contexts. This might seem to entail a dichotomy of 'Asian' versus 'Western,' and in turn create difficulties for us in framing questions of Asia from a Western perspective. However, while clearly there is no single unitary 'Asian' view or attitude, any more than there is a unity 'the West,'<sup>1</sup> part of what 'Buddhism and Social Justice' seeks to explore is whether the pervasion of Buddhist ideology through most Asian civilizations has led to some uniformity of views with respect to issues of social justice.

Though it cannot help but sound like an exaggeration, or even arrogance, the plain fact is that next to no reliable and informed scholarly work has been done on the fundamental question which lies at the core of this project: how do Buddhist ideology and thought inform ideas and practices of social justice in Buddhist Asia? Moreover, the absence of serious consideration of this issue ipso facto implies the failure of Sociology, Legal Theory and other fields to take its data into account in their formulations of general theoretical models, which almost without exception already fail to pay adequate attention to non-Western materials.

We do not begin with a level playing field, but face the impediment of romantic preconceptions. Behind common expectations about Buddhism and social justice we often find an implicit assumption that since Buddhism is 'good,' and teaches ways to (spiritual) liberation, Buddhist ideology must also attack, and Buddhist institutions work to oppose, the evils of (social and economic) bondage. Moses Finley (1980), noticing this same problematic logic at work in modern attitudes toward Classical slavery, attributed it to what he called the 'Teleological Fallacy,' which "consists in assuming the existence from the beginning of time, so to speak, of the writer's values ... and in then examining all earlier thought and practice as if they were or ought to have been on the road to this realization." The aim of our project is therefore two-fold: to undo some of the romanticizing of Buddhist traditions, and more importantly to discover the inner dynamics of the tradition itself, its own values and mores. If we succeed, both Buddhism and the societies it has influenced may be understood more reliably.

What sets this project apart from so much that has been written on and around similar general questions is its starting point and the nature of its sources: working from within the study of Buddhism, we begin from an informed awareness of Buddhism based on primary source materials in original languages and a first-hand familiarity with Buddhist thought. Our sources include canonical scriptures, commentaries, post-canonical writings, polemical materials, and historical sources, together with fieldwork and archival studies, considerations of popular media,

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning this even some otherwise thoughtful observers seem confused. Patterson (1991: x) wrote: "For most of human history, and for nearly all of the non-Western world prior to Western contact, freedom was, and for many still remains, anything but an obvious and desirable goal." This blindness is noticed by Bernal 1992, who excoriates Patterson for his approach to the non-Western.

in all cases in the original languages (Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Singhala). The time periods to be covered range from roughly the fourth century BCE in India to early-modern Korea to contemporary Sri Lanka, Tibet and Japan.

### *This-worldly and other-worldly orientations*

Like any religious tradition, Buddhism can be seen both as an abstract, translocal entity (in a form that encourages one to say, without further qualification, “Buddhism maintains ~”) and as a collection of individual, particular instantiations on the ground in specific times and places (local Buddhisms). To some extent, this reflects a tension that corresponds to one between theory and practice, between ideational and real. Naturally, there is a mutual dependence between the two poles: there can be no individual instance of Buddhism without a whole ‘Buddhism’ to which it belongs, and no generality ‘Buddhism’ without the collection of Buddhisms which form it. In addition to this pair of translocal and local, which normally assume an etic standpoint, we can also identify within Buddhist tradition itself another helpful dichotomy, this concerning the way Buddhist thought conceives existence in the world and its transcendent goal.

Melford Spiro (1982) coined the terms ‘nibbanic’ and ‘kammatic’ orientation to emphasize the tradition’s contrast between, respectively, transcendent and immanent ends. Buddhism in toto aims at the attainment of liberation, freedom from the suffering of this world, nibbana (Sanskrit nirvana), while given the basic ethical belief in rebirth and karma (Pali kamma, hence Spiro’s term), it is also important to direct one’s behaviors toward one’s future weal within this world. The karma doctrine maintains that one’s own actions dictate the fruits one will enjoy in the future, for better or for worse. Hence, ethical action is self-evidently in one’s own interest. Too simply put, the tension is then between other-worldly and this-worldly aims, between working for complete liberation from worldly rebirth on the one hand, and seeking a good and prosperous rebirth in the world on the other. Our key question emerges out of the this-worldly, kammatic orientation: In Buddhist traditions and societies, do concerns with this world translate into concerns with equality and/or justice, and if so, how? Does ethical action, designed to enhance one’s karmic status, entail equal treatment of all, abstention from discrimination and exploitation in economic or social spheres? Or, do Buddhist traditions draw different conclusions, problematize different issues, establish different ideals, conceive of justice differently? Does the nibbanic orientation also have real-world justice implications, or is it exclusively other-worldly directed?

### *Social Justice*

For most theorists the term ‘social justice’ refers to a question—or revolves around related questions—of what *should be* in a free society, with the aim often articulated explicitly as the provision for equal outcomes. An absolute judgment of moral rectitude is therefore required. There are, however, fundamental theoretical problems with this position, and F. A. Hayek (1976) has argued in detail that attempts to articulate in any specific way what ‘equality’ (and hence ‘justice’) means in such a framework are bound to fall into the trap of idiosyncratic totalitarian authoritarianism (also Flew 1993, 1995; cp. Novak 2001: 119-141, Sen 2009.). Although for convenience we use the shorthand ‘social justice,’ our stance is completely different. In the first place, we are not concerned with prescription or proscription, but only with description and interpretation. We define ‘justice’ as the provision of equal treatment, not equal outcomes, and therefore ‘social justice’ as equal treatment in the social sphere (in this world, in contrast to how equalities promised for an after-life are to be considered). We therefore investigate Buddhist attitudes toward, and practices concerning, fairness of treatment, equality and inequality.

For these investigations to be meaningful, we need not only to clarify what we really want to ask, but also to translate our questions into Buddhist terms, as it were. We must then search within the Buddhist tradition or traditions for its or their definitions of equality, justice and the like. This is bound not to be completely straightforward. For as Peerenboom (2003: 16) observes: “there are many rights such as the right to be free from discrimination that people agree are good things when stated at a very high level of abstraction. But agreement at this level of abstraction is not helpful in resolving most pressing social issues. As a result, there are many

controversial human rights issues for which there is no universal agreement including what counts as discrimination.” Since Buddhist ideologies of virtually every stripe certainly promote and advocate sets of values, we must ask first what they are, and second what the relation is between those values and the practices promoted or discouraged in Asian and Buddhist societies. In other words, we are interested primarily in uncovering emic understanding, in exploring Buddhist traditions on their own terms, in seeing what Buddhists thought and think, and in examining their behaviors in that light, rather than in light of our own assumptions and expectations. In this regard, local specificity of the sort stressed in our project is essential. It is meaningless to look, for instance, as so many authors do, to the Pali Buddhist literature of Sri Lanka (not coincidentally, conveniently available in English) to shed light on Japanese practices. The only meaningful confrontation here is that between competing Japanese ideals, and Japanese ideals and practices.

Any study which attempts to approach anew basic problems such as those associated with freedom and bondage or one person’s domination of another must, if it wishes to put itself on solid ground, set forth clearly and coherently its starting points in regard to the broadest theoretical issues. Therefore, one cannot simply advert, for instance, to the concept of social justice discussed most famously by John Rawls (1971), although at least one scholar (Cho 2000) has tried to apply Rawls’s work to Buddhism in a creative way, and so-called Engaged Buddhists (e.g., Queen and King 1996; Queen, Prebish and Keown 2003; Tsomo 2004) also make use of both the term and the approach, although again in a largely prescriptive manner. Discussing how to approach the domain of our study will be an early concern of the joint seminars directed by the applicant (see below).

Our concern with questions of social justice places our inquiries in the realm of ethics and values. But how can we be sure what we are looking for, without assuming that which we need to prove? Peerenboom (2003: 44) points out that in contemporary discussions of human rights, “one of the dominant themes ... [is] whether Confucianism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other Asian traditions are compatible with, or can be reconciled with, democracy and contemporary human rights.” Speaking of attempts to reconcile tradition and modernity, he states that “[A] typical approach has been to search traditional texts and practices for analogues to modern rights or indigenous values similar to the values that underwrite contemporary human rights, and then to argue that there were, or at least could be, Confucian rights, Buddhist rights, and so on.” This sort of ‘cherry picking’ of evidence, even if done through primary sources, does not allow us to understand what a tradition or society was or is, but only what its author thinks it should be. Nevertheless, without some starting point, we are lost. Therefore, we frame our broadest concern as that of ‘equality,’ as discussed above.

### *Freedom*

It is natural to move from discussions of equality and justice to those of rights, and to link these to freedom. When radically different notions of freedom are in play, however, this can be confusing. Discussions of ‘freedom’ in Buddhist traditions are prone to such complications, and Kalupahana 1989 is a good example of the way in which most who have dealt with the issue have proceeded. For Kalupahana, ‘freedom’ is nirvana, understood as ‘absence of constraint’ in the sense that one is free of “unwholesome psychological tendencies such as greed and hatred.” He ties this most directly to doctrinal formulations, without making reference to social life, economy or to the bounds of ‘freedom’ as it would usually be understood in modern discourse (cf. also Lad 1967). This gap between everyday usage of the term ‘freedom’ and Kalupahana’s is an artifact of his effort to discover his own values in Buddhist antecedents. One way in which those who fail to locate their own values in tradition proceed is, once again, clearly identified by Peerenboom (2003: 76n260): “those looking for rights in Asian traditions have sought to move beyond the narrow understanding of rights as (deontic) anti-majoritarian legal entitlements enjoyed by individuals to a broader understanding of rights as moral rights.” Referring to claims, for example, that Buddhist notions of liberation may be equated with freedom, Peerenboom makes his conclusions clear: “This move results in cries of bait and switch. These may be examples of freedom, but they are not freedom in the relevant sense in that they do not and did

not lead to modern liberal conceptions of individual freedom, rights against the state, democracy, civil society, and so on. Rather they are embedded in a very different context and served different ends. Daoist hermits may have been free, but their freedom was apolitical.”

Is Peerenboom right? Does the misdirection typified by Kalupahana suggest that only ‘nibbanic’ freedom is to be found in Buddhist traditions, that questions of equality and justice are not considered natural outcomes of worldly ethical concerns? Our project must ask how Buddhist traditions understood an ideal life in society and whether, and if so how, rights and freedom(s) in a modern sense, in social and economic circumstances, are (also) articulated in Buddhist traditions. This seeming imposition of our questions onto the tradition does not contradict the goal of exploring Buddhism on its own terms; it enriches it.

### *Charity*

Correct appreciation of the relations between Buddhist institutions and society may require us to reorient our expectations. One example concerns the relation between the monastery and the laity. As expected in Buddhist theory, material support of the monasteries is considered meritorious. The very existence of the monkhood and the willingness of the monks to engage in the religious life is the laity’s reward. This characterizes the basic Buddhist virtue of charity. A question to explore is whether making the monk and the monastery the most worthy object of donation prevents the development of an explicit or formal positive social ethic of charity directed toward the less fortunate. Mahayana Buddhism, exemplified in the traditions known in East Asia and Tibet and sometimes characterized as more attentive to the desires and needs of the laity, does not appear to differ from any other Buddhism in this respect. There are certainly ample examples of Buddhist institutions or individuals throughout the Buddhist world in various times and places working for material and mundane benefits, but in contrast to charity directed at religious persons and institutions, this sort of work is not formally (doctrinally) recognized as meritorious in any special way.

What of the idealized images of the helpful bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhist cosmology, saint-like objects of intense devotion who promise their aid in times of distress? Such figures have been characterized by Lopez (1988: 195) as “cosmic social worker[s], not merely seeking the ultimate spiritual welfare of sentient beings but providing for their most immediate, existential needs.” Notably, however, this cosmic world of the imagination has nothing demonstrable to do with the real world. A conclusion we might be tempted to draw, namely that this insight led these authors to encourage monastic involvement in the remediation of such troubles, is not supported by evidence. Rather, they left healing the world as a task for the bodhisattvas. This illustrates a fairly common pattern: some conclusions we as moderns might draw from certain principles enunciated in Buddhist texts were simply not drawn either by the authors of those texts, or by their successors in the tradition. A clear example of such anachronism is seen in Kajiyama (1982: 69): “Being a philosophy of non-distinctionism, the philosophy of emptiness absolutely negates discrimination between men and women.” While perhaps logically true from the standpoint of first principles, there is no even theoretical evidence that it was ever understood in this way by anyone in the pre-modern world, and plenty of practical evidence that it was not. We must be alert for just such cases, since by their very difference they provide excellent evidence for Buddhist understandings.

### *Qualifications of the applicant*

‘Buddhism and Social Justice’ flows naturally, both directly and indirectly, out of my earlier work. Relevant contributions include my 1992 “A Bibliography on Ancient Indian Slavery,” and a 2004 encyclopedia article on the same topic (another will appear in 2010 in the *Larousse Dictionary of Slave Systems*). In 2002 I explored some of the ways that Buddhist ideologies relate to economic issues, such as control of monastic financial resources. Recently, I published a monograph on monastic administration in Indian Buddhism (2008b), in which I made an effort to clarify who was responsible for the day-to-day running of Buddhist institutions, both with regard to their internal order and the manner in which they interact with the outside world, chiefly in regard to fiscal affairs. In another study (2008a), I explored issues of sexual ethics and

the creation of rhetorical polemics, with central attention given to questions of how Buddhist authors manipulated their self-presentations for political ends.

My work centers on the Buddhisms of India, China and Tibet, and I have studied extensively in Japan. This breadth enables me to focus and supervise the satellite projects. The trans-Asian range of the project, and its extension from classical periods into the present, demands participation of scholars with a broad range of linguistic and cultural competences. Far too many of those who would evaluate Buddhist traditions, perhaps especially with respect to their value in the modern world, are able to access the literary and historical record only through secondary sources, and are unable to speak to contemporary Buddhists in their own languages. On the other hand, specialists in Buddhist thought and literature, though competent linguistically, all too often confine their attention to what in Christian traditions, for example, would fall under theology or dogmatics. More can and should be done to bridge the gap between such (albeit essential) philological and historical studies and those which confront 'big questions.' It is a synergy of the competences, approaches and methodologies to be deployed in this project, and the range of areas we will together be able to cover, that will power our collaborative project.

### *Previous scholarship*

Despite the regular publication since 1968 of the *Journal of Buddhist Economic Research* (*Bukkyō keizai kenkyū*), written in Japanese and dealing almost exclusively with Japan, and the appearance since 1994 of the online *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, to cite two examples, the landscape of relevant scholarship is surprisingly bleak.<sup>2</sup> Basic works on ethics (Harvey 2000b, and note the broadness of his definition of 'ethics') usually concentrate on what might be termed a systematic theological approach (e.g., though in different ways, Saddhatissa 1970, Harvey 2000a, Keown 1992, 2005). Some focused work has been done on the economic nexus of Buddhism in historical societies, including by the applicant, although it is rarely combined with a concern for social or ethical issues. For example, concerning China, see Gernet (1995), and the critique in Silk (1999). The problems of a limited and uncontextualized textual approach to the question of 'freedom' in Chinese Buddhism can be seen in Baltgalve (2006). On Sri Lanka a masterwork is Gunawardana (1979), and on the ethical dimension broadly the papers in Sizemore and Swearer (1990) are representative. For a micro-study of one area of ancient India, which while based on good evidence demonstrates the unfortunate results caused by lack of familiarity with Buddhism, see Njammasch (2001) and the critique of von Hinüber (2004). In addition, there are of course attempts to investigate the status of the 'underclasses' in India, though without a specific focus on Buddhism, e.g., Sharma (1958, 1965), Yamazaki (1987, 2005).

One scholar who made seminal if little-known contributions on Buddhism and economy is Tomomatsu Entai (1932a, 1932b, 1932c, 1933, 1935, 1965, 1970, 1972). Paying special attention to the interrelations between formal doctrine and economic attitudes, Tomomatsu explored the theme of economy in doctrine and doctrine in economy. Much of what appears to be economically oriented discussion is for Tomomatsu indexical of the ideological outlook of its authors, and vice versa. He goes so far as to say: "Buddhist texts seem, on the surface, to be discussing the Buddha, but actually they are treating each school's economic circumstances."

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2 Related avenues of inquiry such as those concerning gender discrimination or the application and tolerance of violence, will not form part of our focus (except as necessary, for instance in the case of the violence attending the essentially ethnic and national struggle in Sri Lanka), since they have been better served, though not all such work reaches the same standard as most of the papers in Zimmermann 2006, for instance. Brian Victoria's famous *Zen at War* (1997), while raising important questions, is uninformed about the Buddhist background. Shahar's recent work (2001, 2008) on the Shaolin monastery and its martial arts ('kung-fu') traditions is a step in the right direction, as are Adolphson (2000, 2007) on 'warrior monks' in Japan. On gender one may get a small glimpse of the range of studies from Ueki (2001) and Tsomo (2004). I have discussed one aspect of this question in detail also in Silk (2008a). An up-to-date if very partial bibliography stressing the dynamism of the field in Japanese Buddhist Studies is given in Yusa (2009). Although our avoidance of gender and violence may appear as a gap in the project's scope, other specialists will collaborate in the project's international conference and the volume it will produce, thereby supplementing our coverage.

Inspired by his studies, we can detect in Buddhist literature many other examples of economic discourse than those which appear to us at first glance (one attempt to explore this idea is Silk 2002).

## Approach and Innovation

### *Synergy*

The applicant's two-fold project on the formative Indian background, 'Liberation and Bondage: Buddhism and Slavery in ancient India,' and 'Different Equalities: Buddhism and Caste,' and his interest in the underlying theoretical paradigms, provide the pivot around which the other four projects revolve. These projects make constant reference to the basic project of the applicant (and vice versa), and engage in mutual conversations amongst themselves. The post-doc's project will concern slavery in Korean Buddhism (#2), while the three PhD projects will deal, respectively, with *Burkumin* ('outcastes') in Japanese Buddhism (#3), 'Serfdom' and the Tibetan Monastic Economy (#4), and ethnicity and Buddhism in Sri Lanka (#5).

To study the Buddhism of India without any reference to developments in the Asian lands to which the religion spread over the centuries is to renounce an interest in understanding Buddhism organically or in its historical particularity. It is to essentialize the tradition in an entirely artificial way. At the same time, to study non-Indian Buddhism without reference to Indian antecedents is to deprive these descendent Buddhisms of their proper historical context, and therefore to make it nearly meaningless to think of them as instances of 'Buddhism' tout court. It is only by examining how interpreters of Buddhist ideas receive and adapt central notions from the (prototypical) Indian sources that we can grasp their innovation and uniqueness. By studying these two aspects together, however, we attain a true synergy.

## Projects

### 1. Applicant:

The applicant's project will focus on ancient India, a period lasting roughly until the disappearance of Buddhism from the South Asian subcontinent in the thirteenth century CE. For practical purposes consideration is limited to paradigmatic Buddhists, monks and nuns, and the organizational structure within which they functioned, the monastic institutions. The historical investigation becomes thus de facto an inquiry into the relation of Buddhist monastic institutions to slavery and caste. Consequently, the project has two phases of two years each, producing two monographs, to be followed by a final year in which the applicant edits a conference volume, and writes a synthetic essay.

#### Monograph 1: 'Liberation and Bondage: Buddhism and Slavery in ancient India'

##### The definition of slavery

At the extreme end of inequality of treatment and hence socioeconomic exploitation lies slavery; consideration of this problem will constitute the subject of the first monograph. The definition of 'slavery' is contentious. If one understands the concept in terms of obligations, or power relations, however, as developed by Patterson 1982 (cp. Davis 1984), slaves may be seen as those who owed obligations to many, but were owed few or none by others, thus avoiding the complications introduced by seeing slaves, as in classical law, as things (*res*). Of course, since the socioeconomic systems of different places and periods vary radically, it is impossible to generalize; in particular, the ties that many people in the premodern world had to the land meant that donations of property to Buddhist monasteries included the right to the labor of those attached to that land. Whatever such individuals are called, their limited autonomy with respect to the state and to society is clear.

Land and labor

Discussions of slavery can hardly be separated from those of issues such as land ownership, or practices such as *corvée* labor, and in each case the whole complex must be investigated in light of the large-scale economic systems within which Buddhist institutions existed. This necessitates discussion of the economic conditions of the monasteries, which were often very wealthy, that wealth consisting primarily of cash and land. Gifts of villages or fields to Buddhist monasteries were common. With the rights over that land came the right to extract profit from it, to collect taxes previously due the former owner (almost always the king), and other rights, privileges and exemptions. One of these is the right to extract forced labor. A number of land grant inscriptions to Buddhist monasteries contain this specific provision, and these grants along with scattered accounts from several Chinese travelers' records illustrate that not only forced labor but also slavery was employed in Buddhist monasteries in ancient India.

#### Attitudes toward slavery

While historical evidence may be sparse, there is much evidence for the ideology of slavery among Indian Buddhists, our sources being canonical and semi-canonical literature, mostly preserved only in its classical translations in Chinese and Tibetan. We can classify the references to slavery in Buddhist literature into two general types: explicit treatments of slavery and slaves, and casual references. Of these, the most prominent explicit references are prohibitions on ordination. All Buddhist sects are governed (in theory) by a monastic code, *Vinaya*, something like a Buddhist version of the Benedictine Rule. Inter alia, these codes lay down the procedures for ecclesiastical acts and the ordered life of the monastic community. The codes of all sects agree that a slave cannot be ordained, but their reasons for doing so clearly lie not in any opposition to slavery but rather in the well recognized reluctance of the Buddhist communities to interfere in previously established relations of social obligation, since it is also generally forbidden to ordain escaped convicts, debtors, those in royal or military service, and so on (Sasaki 1996). Again, when Buddhist texts speak of restrictions on the monastic ownership of slaves, they do so virtually without exception in the context of restrictions on individual—rather than corporate—ownership of wealth in general, and not with the intention of singling out slave ownership as somehow different from any other type of ownership. On the contrary, in Buddhist literature of all varieties, stock descriptions of wealth, even that gifted to the Buddha, regularly include both male and female slaves. Some texts, emphasizing the moral obligation of the monk to receive whatever is given in reverence, in conformity to the ideals of charity discussed above, declare that it is an offense *not* to accept such offerings, the lists of which regularly include slaves. The notion of slavery can, of course, also function as a metaphor, and Buddhist authors sometimes refer to themselves as slaves, even possessing such names as *Buddhadāsa* ('slave of the Buddha').

#### Scholarship on slavery

As in India, while there is copious evidence for the institutional monastic ownership of slaves from Central Asia (Agrawala 1953), Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand, Korea, China, and Japan, only a small amount of work exists on slavery in any Buddhist context. (The post-doc project on Korea will address another part of this lack.) For India in general, Silk 1992, still needs almost no updating (for brief mentions of Buddhism: Bongert 1963, Law 1948, Schopen 1994 [more broadly 1990, 1995, 1996, 2006], Silk 2004, Chanana 1960). Most general studies of Asian slavery, even recent ones, completely ignore the place of Buddhism (Chatterjee and Eaton 2006, Alpers, Campbell and Salman 2007 and Campbell 2004). Notably, while a tremendous amount of study has been done on Classical and trans-Atlantic slavery, both factually and theoretically, preliminary studies suggest that the situation in Buddhist Asia differs in significant respects from that in other regions. Therefore our studies should also prove to be of interest to more general considerations of world slavery. The value of our research for such comparative studies will be enhanced by studying such creative works as Dal Lago and Katsari (2008), Fitzgerald (2004), Hezser (2005), Martin (1990), Wiedemann (1981), St. Croix (1975).

#### Conclusion

The study will emphasize that for Indian Buddhists, there was no such thing as any “problem of slavery.” Slavery was an unremarkable part of the world of ancient India, which received no special attention from Buddhist authors. In the Buddhism of India, slavery was not a problem because it was never a questioned part of social life. What this implies about the ethics of social responsibility must be explored. Correspondingly, just what Buddhist rhetoric about freedom *does* imply requires elucidation.

### Monograph 2: ‘Different Equalities: Buddhism and Caste’

#### An inner conflict of tradition

The second monograph deals with social discrimination, caste and outcaste. The Indian Buddhist relationship with the caste system is complicated and, in contrast to the case with slavery, thinkers spent considerable energy explicitly criticizing the institution. There is ample evidence for this even in the earliest extant literature. Still, references to outcastes, *caṇḍāla*, throughout that same literature, in metaphors, comparisons and examples, also illustrate the authors’ subconscious prejudices toward them. E.g., in the *Ratnarasi-sutra*, a monk who does not follow the monastic code, yet continues to wear the robe and accept donations from lay people, is calumniated as an outcaste. This ‘schizophrenia’ will be explored in detail.

Sources suggest that the vast majority of monks and nuns in India came from high-caste backgrounds. The same evidence, however, might also simply indicate that monks or nuns elite enough to find a place in the ipso facto elite literature came from, or were attributed origins in, those high castes. The implicit importance of caste status is clear either way. The hypothesis that an earlier, more socially radical Buddhism gradually came to be, as it were, Brahmanized, such that attitudes originally antithetical to the Buddhist critique of the established social order were absorbed and adopted by the Buddhists themselves, is also considered.

It should not surprise anyone that Buddhist communities show themselves to be Indian first and foremost, when it comes to caste struggling with an ambiguous and often inconsistent critique of the established social order. Ernst Troeltsch wrote in his *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (1931: I.133): “[Christians] renounced the world, and yet they compromised with it, and they did not, and could not, dream of making any changes in the social system.” One of our questions is whether the same thing can be said of Buddhists too, in India or elsewhere.

#### Scholarship on caste

Despite the existence of explicit anti-caste rhetoric in Buddhist scriptures, and the vast amount of scholarship on caste in the abstract, relatively little work has been done on the socioeconomic realities of caste and status in the Buddhist world. Such work as exists often displays the pious authors’ insistence that Buddhism systematically opposed the caste system, though some studies are more nuanced (Barua 1959, Bouglé 1971, Malalasekera and Jayatilleke 1958, Sinha 1983, Siriwardena 1987, de Jong 1988, Eltschinger 2000, Samuels 2007, Sinha 1983, Mabbett 1998). Interesting are the treatments of disabilities and employment in light of the karma ideology by Kusama (1989, 1991), highlighting an aspect rarely addressed. We note in this regard that karma theory explains personal circumstances, such as one’s birth status, as due to one’s own past actions, not chance or the influence of others. Therefore, it can be argued that it is not only not necessary but indeed pointless to try to redress perceived inequalities on a social level. Although this argument has certainly been made by some Buddhist thinkers, there is yet no systematic study of the issue (Premasiri 1985, Khantipalo 1964, Ornatowski 1996, Salgado 1987).

### 2. Post-doc: Slavery in Korean Buddhism

In Koryŏ-period Korea (918–1392), the Buddhist monastic institution was one of the major slave holders during the late fourteenth century; the founders of the succeeding Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) transferred eighty-thousand monastery slaves to public ownership, leaving ‘only’

one slave for every twenty monks. Slaves were also, however, owned by individual monks, and these remained unaffected by this legislation. Despite some scholarship (Palai 1984, 1995, Peterson 1999, Salem 1980, Unruh 1971), this remains almost unstudied, at least in Western languages, even when the tensions between putative Buddhist principles and the slave economy have been noticed. As Palai (1995: 417) asked: "Why did Buddhism, praised for its effect in ameliorating the harsh terms of punishment in Koryo, play no role whatsoever in condemning slavery, and in fact participated in it by owning monastery slaves in abundance? ... This is not the proper occasion to delve into [this]." Although this recent past must have exerted fundamentally formative influences on present-day Korea, this too has yet to be the subject of directed study.

The major sources for this project are doctrinal works by Korean Buddhist scholars and historical documents, including government and temple records. The post-doc must be competent in Classical Chinese, modern Korean and have good training in Buddhist Studies. S/he will join the project for years two-four, produce one monograph and at least one major article, and participate in at least one international and one local congress in addition to the team's conference. We will advertise for this position.

### 3. PhD 1: Burkumin ('outcastes') in Japanese Buddhism

Japanese society has over the centuries received significant formative influences from India through the medium of Buddhism, despite its distance from the South Asian subcontinent. And while it is not correct to claim that class structures in Japan necessarily developed on Indian models (Cornell 1970, Laidlaw 2001, Newell 1961), interpretations and understandings of these structures certainly have been profoundly influenced by Buddhist ideologies, which are themselves Indian in origin. In this way, the Japanese 'outcaste' *burakumin* (historically *hinin* or *eta*) have been identified with the Indian *caṇḍāla*. Their fate has been blamed on karma or on their own evil deeds, and Buddhist institutions have, even in modern times, conspired to perpetuate the serious social inequalities to which they are prey (e.g., Ujike 1985, Miyasaka 1995, Bodiford 1996, Hayashi 1997.) Traditional concerns include the moral pollution arising from killing animals and eating meat, and pollution transferred to sacred or elite persons, while in the present some of this concern extends to ideas about poverty, eugenics, disease, and criminality (e.g., Alldritt 2000, Fujitani et al 1982, Hayashi 1997, Heidegger 2006, Ishikawa 1993, Kasahara 1996, Kuriyama 2000). The subproject on Japan will consider from both a historical and contemporary standpoint the question of institutional and individual Buddhist involvement in caste- and status-based discrimination in Japan, studying both interpretations of formative Buddhist writings and modern movements for reform within Buddhism (monastic and lay).

The major sources for this project are doctrinal works by Japanese Buddhist scholars, documents, including government and temple records, and popular works. The candidate must be competent in spoken and written Japanese, have some familiarity with studies of social inequalities, and have good training in Buddhist Studies. The candidate will join the project for years one-four, produce a PhD thesis, and participate in at least one local congress in addition to the team's conference. We will advertise for this position.

### 4. PhD 2: 'Serfdom' and Tibetan Monastic Economy

A great amount of scholarship on Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism is either highly abstruse, dealing with minutiae of scholasticism, or in turn romantic or demonizing (these extremes critiqued e.g. in Lopez 1998, Blondeau and Buffetrille 2008). Premodern Tibet is generally characterized as a theocracy, in which monastic institutions (naively identified with the State) controlled, in essence, all political and economic affairs. Although this is too simplistic, objective, disinterested examinations of the relationship between Buddhist monastic institutions and the economy and social status are almost nonexistent (but e.g., Miller 1961, Murphy 1961, Mills 2003). Especially since the problem is politically and emotionally charged, sober and

disinterested assessment is essential. This subproject inquires into the social and economic relations between monastic institutions and the laity who supported them, voluntarily or not, asking how these relations were affected by Buddhist ideologies which have so clearly permeated Tibetan society since the religion's introduction in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. By doing so it will allow us to see beyond naive questions such as whether pre-modern Tibetan "really had a serf society" (on which e.g., the debate between Goldstein 1971, 1986, 1987, 1989 and Miller 1987, 1988), seeking instead a multi-dimensional picture of social status and how Buddhist ideas and practices functioned in and framed this environment. Depending on access and political conditions, it may also be possible to consider how Tibetan monasteries both in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and in exile now differ in relevant respects from those in pre-invasion Tibet (e.g. Mei 2000).

The major sources for this project are doctrinal works by Tibetan Buddhist scholars, documents, including government and monastery records, excerpts from the vast doctrinal, historical and autobiographical literature, and structured interviews with (now aged) monks trained in Tibetan monastic institutions before the upheavals caused by the 1959 Chinese invasion. The candidate must be competent in spoken and written Tibetan, have some familiarity with economics, and have good training in Buddhist Studies. The candidate will join the project for years one-four, produce a PhD thesis, and participate in at least one local congress in addition to the team's conference. Ms. Berthe Jansen, now completing an MPhil in Oxford, is an excellent candidate for this position.

### 5. PhD 3: *Ethnicity and Buddhism in Sri Lanka*

Naturally, much attention has been given to recent events in Sri Lanka, but usually without consideration of traditional Buddhist ideas and practices. Moreover, most of those familiar with relevant Buddhist sources are insiders, whose frequent active involvement with polemics casts doubt on their objectivity. The timeliness of work on Sri Lanka cannot be doubted; at this writing, the Sri Lankan army has just consolidated its victory in its decades-long war against Tamil separatists. The background to this war lies not only in aspirations for self-rule but also in a deep religious and ethnic divide, that between Hindus and Buddhists, between Sinhalese and Tamils (although this neat division has been problematized by Schalk 2006a; also 2001, 2002, 2006b). The roles of Buddhist monks and monastic institutions in this context have been explored by many scholars (a small sample would include Abeysekera 2002, Bartholomeusz 2002, Bartholomeusz and De Silva 1998, Deegalle 2006, Grant 2009, Malalasekera and Jayatilleke 1958, Malalgoda 1976, Samuels 2007, Seneviratne 1999; de Silva 1987, Tambiah 1992, van den Horst 1995), but almost without exception without an awareness of or interest in the sources for and influences from traditional and modern Buddhist perspectives.

The major sources for this project are doctrinal works by Sri Lankan Buddhist scholars, colonial and post-colonial records, and popular works. The candidate must be competent in spoken and written Sinhala and written Pali, have some familiarity with studies of social inequalities or conflict studies, and have good training in Buddhist Studies. The candidate will join the project for years one-four, produce a PhD thesis, and participate in at least one local congress in addition to the team's conference. We will advertise for this position.

### *Conclusion*

In a snapshot taken through the very widest lens, the overall theme of 'Buddhism and Social Justice' is nothing other than the question of freedom and justice, and the relationship between them, which rests in local economic and social contexts. We therefore aim first to challenge commonly held notions of Buddhism as a tradition largely defined by and virtually embodying a path to liberation, an otherworldly ideology and technology of spiritual freedom, views which neglect the localization of Buddhist institutions and clergy within the surrounding society and local economy. Simultaneously, we aim to ascertain the inner dynamics of Buddhist traditions as they mold, and are molded by, their social environments. Formative Buddhist ideologies were

adopted and adapted in local settings. ‘Buddhism and Social Justice’ therefore both highlights the tension between historical reality and scripturally expressed ideology and reaches beyond, drawing a picture of a Buddhism simultaneously part of, structured by and challenging its social environment.

**Plan of work**

*Local, national and international collaboration:*

‘Buddhism and Social Justice’ will be hosted in the Leiden University Institute of Area Studies (LIAS). Therein are several colleagues with relevant expertise, including: Ivo Smits (pre-modern Japan), Henny van der Veere (Japanese Buddhism), Barend ter Haar (Chinese history and religion), Boudewijn Walraven (Korea) and Nira Wickramasinghe (Sri Lanka). We will also collaborate with an international network of scholars, including: Damien Keown (University of London, editor of the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*) on ethics, Charles Ramble (Oxford/Paris) and Leonard van der Kujip (Harvard) on Tibet, and Sueki Fumihiko (International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto) on Japan. As an additional bonus, ‘Buddhism and Social Justice’ perfectly fits within the Leiden University key research area (*profileringsgebied*) “Asian Traditions and Modernities.”

- *Research plan*

This project involves a research team of five core scholars (three PhD candidates for the first four years; one post-doc for the middle three years; the applicant for 80% of his time for five years). Each AiO will write a PhD thesis, the post-doc (1) and project-leader (2) monographs. The project will be completed by a conference volume, edited by the applicant, and containing a substantial and comprehensive synthetic essay summarizing the team’s work.

Highlights of the time-table:

Recruitment of AiOs and manager takes place before the project formally begins. Regular team seminars are held throughout the project, primarily to discuss method and progress. Workshops with invited collaborating scholars will be held yearly (or more, if funding permits) The post-doc and AiOs will make research trips to archives, or to interview informants as needed. All team members will participate in relevant conferences during the 5 years. A conference in year 4 will provide a forum to share the project’s results with an international audience, to be followed by a volume with contributions of project members and conference participants. The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS, Leiden) has offered to cosponsor this conference, thereby automatically boosting its profile to a major international level.

**Schedule**

Key:

- A: Joint seminar & reading groups: coordination & direction
- B: Joint seminar & reading groups: participation & presentation
- C: Literature review, outline, draft of introduction
- D: Focused specialized reading; source acquisition
- E: Research trip
- F: Conference attendance
- G: Major writing
- H: Revision and completion

	Topic	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Deliverable Products (minimally)
Appli-	India: (1)	(1): C;	(1):	(2): CA;	(2): A;	Writing	2 mono-

cant	Slavery & (2) Caste	A; F	Completion; A; F	Conference preparation;	Conference direction	synthetic essay; editing conference volume	graphs; 1 conference volume; 1 synthetic essay
Post- doc	Korea: Slavery	—	B; D	B; E; F; G	B; E; H	—	1 mono- graph; 1 conference paper
PhD 1	Japan: <i>Burakumin</i>	B; C;	B; D; E; F	B; F; G;	B; E; H	—	PhD thesis; 1 conference paper
PhD 2	Tibet: 'Serf- dom' & monastic economy	B; C;	B; D; E; F	B; F; G;	B; E; H	—	PhD thesis; 1 conference pape
PhD 3	Sri Lanka: Ethnicity & Buddhism	B; C;	B; D; E; F	B; F; G	B; E; H	—	PhD thesis; 1 conference paper
Major Team activi- ties		Work- shop with inter- national collabora- tor	Workshop with international collaborator	Workshop with international collaborator	Major inter- national conference		

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