

general *Donors of Longmen* fully engages the scholarship on the grottoes, providing insights into both the history of Longmen, and the rich complexity of Buddhist devotion, best appreciated when its context is reconstructed by an able historian as it is here.

John Kieschnick
University of Bristol

Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice, Ian Harris (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 352pp, \$62/£39.95, ISBN 0824827651

Among the earliest sustained studies of Cambodia was Adhémard Leclère's 1899 *Le Bouddhisme au Cambodge*. This remarkable but problematic volume stood alone for over one hundred years in its attempt to provide an overview of the history and practice of Buddhism in Cambodia, arguably the single most important aspect of Cambodian identity itself. Ian Harris was not the first to notice this gaping hole in Khmer and Buddhist studies, but he has proved the only scholar willing and able to take on the challenge of filling it. One wonders who was faced with the more daunting task: Leclère, who pioneered the field, drawing what conclusions he could from tentative translations of sparse primary source material read against, and indeed contributing to an elementary knowledge of both Buddhism and the Khmer vernacular; or Harris, who set out to compile, decipher, analyse and synthesize the vast range of primary and secondary source material produced on the subject in the intervening century. The resulting volume, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*, is itself nothing less than a remarkable feat.

Harris's work is genuinely comprehensive. It makes intelligent use of a mind-boggling amount and range of material: ancient Khmer epigraphy and art; classical Buddhist literature; historical, political, anthropological and literary studies of Cambodia and its surrounding region; journalism, NGO reports and radio logs; personal interviews with actors in the field – and I am surely forgetting something. A first stumbling block for many interested in the subject is the language of research publication. Much of the material is in French; in some cases, a particularly esoteric or erudite form of academic French. A fundamental accomplishment of *Cambodian Buddhism* has been to make the material accessible to a broader audience. Yet Harris's work in this regard has not been one of simple translation (if translation is ever simple); nor has it been one of simplification. His success has been, rather, in composing a viable, coherent yet complex narrative out of a heterogeneous array of sources.

In the Preface, Harris tentatively claims originality for only the second half of the book, in its explorations of politicized Buddhism in the modern period. I beg to differ with him on this point, in so far as the work of compilation as he has accomplished it was only possible through the complementary originality of a subtle understanding of Buddhist practice in earlier historical periods, and subsequent insight into associations between historical and modern practices. This is due in part to Harris's grounding in classical Buddhist studies, which is dishearteningly rare in Khmer studies today: confronted with Harris's

Forsten, 1995); and Hou Xudong's 侯旭東 study of early medieval Chinese Buddhist epigraphy, *Wu liu shiji beifang minzhong fojiao xinyang* 五六世紀北方民眾佛教信仰 (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui kexue Chubanshe, 1998).

broad knowledge of Buddhist textual and ritual traditions, the disparate Cambodian evidence has begun to make better sense. But this is also due to Harris's political acuity, for the thought-provoking explorations of politicized Buddhism in the modern period arise from a marked scholarly orientation toward the political aspects of Buddhist practice since the very inception of Cambodian history, and thus from the very opening of the book. An introductory remark on an ongoing and formative debate in Khmer studies is indicative in this regard. Harris points up polarized interpretations of the nature of ancient Khmer-language epigraphy, and then, that of ancient Khmer society as a whole. In the eyes of some, the epigraphy demonstrates the essentially religious character of the culture; others see in it testimony to a profoundly materialist society. Harris's orientation towards the political aspects of religious history and practice effectively reconciles these two poles. So the appeal is wide: *Cambodian Buddhism* will serve as a reference for specialists in Khmer and, more broadly, Southeast Asian studies, as well as Buddhologists with area or other practice-specific interests.

The Preface provides a concise yet critical account of the extant secondary source material on Cambodian Buddhism; in the absence of any annotated bibliography on the subject, this is in and of itself a precious document. We also find here a useful chapter-by-chapter summary of the book. The first two chapters cover the ancient and middle periods, up to the advent of the French colonial presence in the region. If Cambodian history is not strictly inseparable from Buddhism at all times, the near fusion of the two is such that the history of Buddhism in Cambodia found here amounts to a veritable history of Cambodia *tout court*, be it with an emphasis on the specifically Buddhist evidence. Harris's measured analysis of the ancient source material and scholarly work thereon leads to the clearest presentation we have to date of the types of Buddhist practice known in the pre-Angkorian and Angkorian periods, along with their probable origins, associations and implications in the Khmer religio-political context over time. Of particular import is his reading of early Buddhist evidence with an eye to the complex but well documented quasi-tantric trajectory of Cambodian Buddhism in the modern period. Keen attention is paid to sectarian associations mentioned in ancient inscriptions, or made apparent through his readings to suggest, for example, a possible influence of the Yogācāra school of thought; similarly, early reference to the *Vimuttimaggā* is seen to suggest, but, importantly, not confirm, links with the Abhayagirivihāra of medieval Sri Lanka.

A relative lack of clarity in the second chapter, on the middle period (fourteenth to mid-nineteenth century), reflects the quantity and quality of source material available for this time. This is particularly the case for the early middle period, which saw an apparently rapid and extensive spread of Theravāda; accordingly, the chapter increases in clarity in its closing pages dedicated to the later middle period. In this chapter Harris relies largely on translations of royal chronicles. Composed for the most part in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, these documents retrospectively relate historical legend. As such, they constitute invaluable but less than straightforward source material for historical reconstruction. While Harris is painfully aware of the methodological issues at hand, these remain a challenge. A number of pertinent hypotheses are formulated through analyses of the symbolic import of legend. This is necessary when working on the middle period, although Harris perhaps at times goes too far in treating his conclusions as if they were based on fact. Although good use is made of (my own) work on the Theravādin reappropriation of ancient religio-political sites and constructs, it is regrettable that Harris's intriguing speculations on continuity in Buddhist practice from ancient to modern times, first suggested in Chapter 1, are not borne out with middle period evidence. This would

require original comparative regional historical and Buddhological work, as well as further exploration of the Khmer material, concentrating perhaps more on epigraphy than chronicles, along with a good deal of creative critical thinking, work that admittedly falls outside the explicit project of Harris's book. However, in singling out possible connections between ancient and modern practice, Harris points up the potential value of such research. Indeed, one of the book's writs is to highlight areas or problems in Khmer studies that call for further research.

The following two chapters set aside the chronological narrative to develop more detailed accounts of distinctive features of Cambodian Buddhism. Chapter 3, 'Territorial and Social Lineaments' surveys the Khmer religious landscape with an emphasis on the intermingling of Animist, Buddhist and vestigial Brahmanic elements in traditional practice. Fundamental pre- or extra-Buddhist notions of spatial organization are described along with networks of associated ancestral and other spirits, the full range of nominally non-Buddhist ritual officiants, as well as their characteristic accessories and practices. This provides a contextual backdrop for discussions of the physical, ritual and economic organization of the Khmer Buddhist monastery. In Harris's hands it becomes clear to what extent Buddhist texts and terms populate the Khmer supernatural world, just as the monastery is traditionally animated by beings and beliefs from beyond any orthodox Theravādin realm. Historical considerations figure usefully into these accounts without ordering the narrative.

Chapter 4, 'Literary and Cult Traditions' provides an overview of the Cambodian textual landscape since the introduction of Theravāda. A brief presentation of genres and the formal aspects of manuscript traditions is followed by more detailed accounts of select categories: Pali literature, vernacular works of moral instruction (*Crup*), the Cambodian *Rāmāyaṇa* and, finally, esoteric Buddhist texts and associated cult traditions. This last section, which constitutes the latter half of the chapter, is an eminently useful précis of François Bizot's important work on extra-canonical Khmer Buddhist texts. Harris reviews related primary and secondary source material, notably regarding the Cambodian ancient period, in an attempt to historically and doctrinally situate, as accurately as possible given the current state of research, the extraordinary esoteric tradition documented and analysed primarily by Bizot. The nuanced and appropriately inconclusive conclusion is that the Cambodian tradition does not simply involve a syncretic amalgamation of Theravāda and Tantric ideas, and while it may be related to the Abhayagirivihāra, it is not necessarily non-Mahavihāra as the orthodox Sri Lankan movement may itself have had secret components. An insightful resume of the general characteristics of the Cambodian tradition is followed by discussions of specific texts and practices, at long last making this key aspect of Cambodian Buddhism accessible to a wider public. From a Buddhological point of view, these Khmer specificities, which distinguish Khmer Buddhism from Theravādin practice as it is generally known in other contexts today, are of particular interest. It is appropriate, then, that the fate of this tradition in the modern period comes to guide the narrative trajectory of the rest of the book.

The last four chapters of *Cambodian Buddhism* are devoted to the modern period, from the establishment of the French Protectorate in the second half of the nineteenth century to the contemporary post-Khmer Rouge era. Chapter 5 gives a detailed account of the geopolitical interplay, which led to the formation of Cambodia's two Buddhist sects, the Thommayut and the Mahanikay, and the gradual development of internal division in the latter. Particular attention is given to the links between colonial reforms and the rise of the Buddhist modernist project as French authorities suspicious of Thai influence on Cambodian politics through the Thommayut order lent increasing support to Mahanikay

elements oriented towards modernist reform. Having demonstrated the specificity of traditional Cambodian Buddhism to lie in practices henceforth relegated to the newly formed domain of the 'Old Mahanikay', Harris's narrative highlights the historical stakes of these early modern developments. The formal classifying of Buddhist practice in this way was driven by political forces heralding 'modernity'. The emerging Buddhist groups would, in turn, play significant political roles over the course of the modern period.

Chapter 6 examines the growth of Cambodian nationalism out of these very Buddhist seeds, and the manifold influences and uses of Buddhism in both right- and left-wing anti-colonial movements. In an academic context frequently dismissive of Sihanouk's 'Buddhist Socialism' as singularly insincere, manipulative or inept, Harris's more nuanced readings of this dominant nationalist political formation are particularly welcome. We see post-Independence developments as part of a historical continuum in which religion and politics have always been linked. Buddhism is not seen to have been a simple façade for any particular actor's political gains.

Chapter 7 considers the Buddhist underpinnings of the Khmer Rouge worldview. Harris's analyses here make a significant contribution to an extensive body of literature seeking explanation for the seemingly inexplicable. He goes beyond an examination of the roots of the Khmer Rouge in Buddhist nationalism to venture sociological, even psychoanalytical interpretations of historical developments. His propositions are daring, but largely convincing. Harris sees, for example, a crypto-monastic arrangement in the Khmer communist drive to extinguish sexual desire in society at large; emptied of its population, the centre of Phnom Penh becomes a sub-conscious collective formulation of a Buddhist pure land; and so on. Thoughtful and informed both in terms of Buddhist tradition and Khmer Rouge history, these readings are a far cry from the superficial and essentializing characterizations of the Khmer 'mentality', or of Khmer Buddhism, which can appear to dominate work in the field. Harris's appeal to further study of the indigenous cultural factors that may have influenced the Khmer Rouge movement is indeed mindful of other, external motivating factors in historical developments *and* of the inadequacy of attention given to internal factors to date.

The final chapter follows contemporary developments from the fall of the Khmer Rouge. If preceding explorations of the ways in which Buddhism was subsumed into Cambodian communism over the course of the twentieth century have not sufficed to disprove the oft-heralded death of Buddhism in Cambodia, this chapter will: Harris documents in great detail how Cambodian Buddhism has shown itself to be very much alive, if not necessarily always well, over the past few decades. The political orientation of the book is at its most explicit here. The official re-establishment of first the Mahanikay and then the Thommayut order is set in the context of the rise of the Cambodian People's Party and the ever-problematic introduction of capitalist forces and democratic processes into the war-torn, poverty-stricken nation. Harris demonstrates Buddhism to play a key role, at the very least in name, in every post-Khmer Rouge political formation, with both those in and out of power attempting, mystically or strategically, cynically or not, to harness religious power. Monastic involvement in political oppression as well as democratic agitation is exceedingly well documented. Harris complicates the more simple pictures often painted: of an apolitical individually oriented religion, or of the pacifist/activist monk resisting authority. This divide is, first, historicized in Buddhist terms, and further nuanced in the slippery contemporary socio-political Khmer context.

Most importantly perhaps, in terms of the history and practice of Buddhism in Cambodia, is this last instalment in the book's long narrative thread on 'traditional' Khmer

Buddhism: the quasi-tantric Theravāda practices that came to be subsumed under the term 'Old Mahanikay' in the colonial period, and that contemporary scholars are tending to classify (in what I see to be a reifying gesture of dubious utility) 'the *boran* (ancient) movement'. Harris's narrative demonstrates how the political contours of an ongoing delineation between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' are tellingly reminiscent of those in the colonial period. In short, colonial support of the reformed Mahanikay (modernist) group can be seen to have been reborn in the guise of the international community; while 'traditional' monks find support in the people, and in the ruling People's Party. The activist (reformed Mahanikay) monk finds himself in a predicament not unlike that of the early New Mahanikay reformers: he risks becoming a servant of non-Khmer forces seeking to establish a foreign political order within Cambodia. Allied with the neo-colonial forces (of rationalism, democracy, etc.), socially engaged Buddhism is increasingly perceived in opposition to traditional esoteric practices, particularly as these are harnessed by party authorities seeking to consolidate power.

A series of auxiliary documents enhance the book's utility for various audiences. Khmer specialists will find highly useful inventories of Buddhist material from the ancient and middle periods in Appendices A and B. The list of ecclesiastical titles constituting Appendix C will be of interest to scholars of Cambodian Buddhism and other Buddhologists. An extensive glossary provides precise and sometimes extensive definitions of terms used in the body of the text; this renders the book accessible to non-specialists of Khmer and Buddhist studies. Khmer readers will be relieved to find a word list with the Khmer spelling of words found in transliterated or phonetically transcribed forms in the text proper. The bibliography is itself a monument to Cambodian Buddhism and to Ian Harris's undaunted thoroughness. A comprehensive index facilitates the use of the volume for reference, of course, but also the reading of a text laden with complicated recurrent names and titles.

Ian Harris's strengths do carry within them certain weaknesses. At times the narrative becomes overwhelmed with the sheer volume of material taken into consideration. The encyclopaedic mass of details can on occasion give one the sense of missing the forest for the trees.

And finally, it strikes me as important to note, as Harris does in the Preface, that he came to this project as a Buddhologist; he was to become a Khmerologist only over the course of the project. Traces of this trajectory can be found throughout the text. In so far as he may be seen at times to lack a 'native' absolute familiarity with both the research corpus and the field, Harris is not always adequately discriminating with regard to his source material. Many such instances are relatively benign; others on occasion lead to generally minor cases of misinformation or misinterpretation. One queries, for example, the reduction of the number of rites associated with ancestral spirit (*neak ta*) worship to 'three basic types' (p. 55). Likewise, it is surprising to hear that the still commonplace funerary ritual of 'turning the body' (*pre rup*) is 'now quite rare' (p. 99), or that New Year's celebrations can 'border on the orgiastic' (p. 173). Excessively general characterizations are scattered throughout the text, with the notable exception mentioned above of passages concerning Khmer Rouge history, a domain in which Harris appears to have already been particularly familiar at the time of embarking on the project. We read with astonishment, for example, that 'modern Khmer reject any common ancestry with the montagnard ... and prefer to regard themselves as descendants of Hindu princes' (p. 49); or that in a case of a head monk having relations with a woman, 'there is no conception ... that the misdeeds of an individual might adversely affect the condition or standing of the monastic order as a whole' (p. 76). Similarly, in a note referring to 'the Khmer penchant

for gambling' (p. 285), we see a complex socio-historical phenomenon swept away through an appeal to a vague notion of national character. Of course, any synthetic work of the order of *Cambodian Buddhism* runs the risk of over-generalization at every turn. Indeed it cannot be avoided; in some cases, however, further contextualization might have served to remind the reader of the dilemma.

Points of confusion most frequently arise in relation to Khmer linguistic usage. I will give a few examples here because this is indicative of more general problems in Khmer studies due in large part precisely to the sorts of extreme cultural and historical complexities that Ian Harris's book explores (e.g. the ungainly and competing systems of transliteration/transcription that are the product of a long and multifaceted cultural history of which *Cambodian Buddhism* is also a part). For instance, Harris draws from an extremely curious gloss of a common colloquial expression to support a questionably broad historical statement regarding the political engagement of Buddhist ritual officiants (*achar*) (p. 78). In describing traditional manuscript texts, Harris characterizes *vien* as 'shorter texts' in opposition to *satra*, in so far as the latter can be 'particularly lengthy' (p. 81). While this distinction in the relative quantity of content often holds, the defining difference between the two manuscript types is in the length of the leaves themselves. A note tells us that "'bon", the Khmer word normally translated as "merit", also denotes "dignity or rank"' (p. 255). This *bon* is none other than the Sanskrit *puṇya*, which appears as such in the glossary.

Inconsistent transliteration can produce nearly insurmountable hurdles to comprehension. In an introductory note, Harris points out the difficulties arising from persistent scholarly use of different systems for rendering Khmer words in Roman script. He affirms that, with the exception of material derived from publications by the École Française d'Extrême-Orient, which typically use a system based on that widely accepted for transliterating Sanskrit, the book employs 'a simplified rendering with stronger emphasis on oral articulation'. Yet there is nothing simple about Harris's usage. As he follows no singular system, nor does he institute his own, a single word or expression can appear in multiple guises throughout the text. We find, for example, *kmait long* defined as 'a ghost of someone who was murdered or committed suicide', one in a series of types of 'ghost (*khmoc*)' (p. 59). *Khmoc* and *kmait* are in fact the same word; the former, more common spelling of the word, which accurately renders the Khmer spelling according to the Sanskrit-based transliteration system, appears in the Khmer word list at the end of the book; the latter does not. Furthermore, *long* simply means 'to haunt'; the common expression *khmoc long* does not refer to any specific type of *khmoc*; it simply means a haunting ghost. A host of similar problems can be found in this same passage. The *baysayt*, defined here as 'a ghost that lives on dirt and excrement and is capable of taking human or animal form' is rendered *beisach* only pages earlier (p. 55), where we find it defined as the retinue of an ancestral spirit (*neak ta*). In this case, neither spelling appears in the Khmer word list or the glossary. Further in the former passage we find the *priey* defined as 'a ghost living in a large tree with the ability to turn into a ball of fire' (p. 59). We have come across the same term earlier, but spelled *bray*, and defined as 'another class of exclusively female and highly dangerous spirits of virgins or of women who have died in childbirth' (p. 55). Only the latter spelling appears in the Khmer word list. Likewise, few readers will be able to discern that 'Khvav Brah Dhatu' (p. 32) and 'Preah Theat Khvao' (p. 248) are one and the same site, and thus that the legendary history of the said site recounted in late-nineteenth-century royal chronicles is taken up in contemporary beliefs. A more blatant oversight is the inversion of captions accompanying photos of two nationally important spirit shrines, that of Neak Ta Khlang Moeung in Pursat Province, and that of Neang Chek Neang Chum in Siem Reap.

To all but a tiny and bespectacled cohort of linguists and Khmer specialists, these will be imperceptible blemishes on the surface of an extraordinary book: a sort of google-earth view of Buddhism in Cambodia, from the smallest details to the biggest picture. Ian Harris is a new star in the Khmer studies constellation whose next contribution is eagerly awaited.

Ashley Thompson
School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Leeds
a.c.thompson@leeds.ac.uk

Zen Classics: Formative Texts in the History of Zen Buddhism,
eds Steven Heine & Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006),
viii + 283 pp, £14.99, ISBN 0-19-517525-5

In the words of the editors, *Zen Classics*, a sequel to *The Zen Canon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), invited 'scholars doing original research on China, Korea and Japanese Zen literature to survey a single work or genre of works that, because of its power and influence, has helped shape the Zen tradition and caused it to be what it is today' (p. 3). Inclusion was driven by the interests of individual authors rather than an attempt to survey all the most important Zen works: Zen classics rather than the Zen classics. There are, for instance, no chapters here on the *Platform Sūtra* or the *Shōbōgenzō*, while works of less importance to the tradition are covered. But if *Zen Classics* does not serve as a concise survey of the major works of the tradition or as a comprehensive reference work, it does reflect the fruits of recent decades of research by leading scholars in the field.

While the sequel volume, *The Zen Canon*, gives greater weight to the Chinese (Chan) tradition, *Zen Classics* focuses on Japan, with only one article – Mario Poceski's piece on the *Guishan jingce* 瀉山警策 – specifically about a Chinese text. There is only one entry on Korea – Charles Muller's chapter on Sōn commentaries to the Diamond Sutra – and none on Vietnam, reflecting the relative weakness of Sōn and Thien studies. Other texts and genres covered include Eisai's *Kōzen gokokuron* 興禪護國論, *Eihei Dōgen Zenji Goroku* 永平道元禪師語錄, the 'Rules of Purity' in Japanese Zen, koan 'capping phrase books', Tōrei's 東嶺 commentary on the *Damoduolo chanjing* 達摩多羅禪經 and Menzan's 面山 *Jijuyū Zanmai*.

More than brief summaries of the contents of these works, the chapters include extensive discussion of their historical and literary background. The essays are particularly strong in placing works under discussion in the context of other Zen writings and Buddhist literature more generally, illustrating both the distinguishing characteristics of different traditions and the ways in which they interacted. Korean commentaries on the *Diamond Sūtra*, for instance, reflect the greater prominence given to the scholastic analysis of scripture in Sōn than in Chan or Zen (p. 44); 'rules of purity' in Japanese Zen periodically drew on a similar genre in China as it developed from the Song through the Ming dynasties (p. 138); capping phrase books were inspired on the one hand by Zen practices and writings, and on the other by Chinese literary games (p. 173). Once we understand the origin and development of these genres we better appreciate the diverse forces that shaped the Zen tradition.

Taken as a whole, *Zen Classics* illustrates both the variety and the importance of genre in Zen writings. Zen writers tackled different issues from different perspectives depending on whether they were writing hagiography, 'recorded sayings', koan collections, monastic rules or commentaries. When compiling 'recorded sayings' a monk might criticize medita-