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Buddhist Warfare

Michael K. Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer, eds.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. ix + 257 p.

How does Buddhism reconcile the doctrinal theory of peace and non-violence with the reality of wars and violence? How does a Buddhist interpret war ideologies and violence with ethical discourses of Buddhism? Among many, *Buddhist Warfare* addresses these critical questions, and insightful answers are provided. The investigation into war ideologies, doctrinal justification of war, and recent ethnic violence in Sri Lanka and Thailand is explored by means of textual criticism, historical reflections, and ethnographic approaches, arguing that Buddhism is no different from other religious traditions. This volume reveals a greater understanding of the Buddhist example of sacred violence and war.

Besides the introduction and afterthoughts, the book has eight chapters and an appendix. Each chapter provides an enormous amount of information about the violent and military cultures of Asian Buddhist history. The volume contains similar themes of discussion to other works edited by Michael Zimmermann (*Buddhism and Violence*, 2006); however, this new collection of essays suggests that there are more studies needed on the issue of war and violence in Buddhism.

In the introduction, Michael Jerryson contends that, throughout Buddhist history, violence has been part of the ethical choices of Buddhist individuals (7). The book appropriately begins with Paul Demiéville's article on "Buddhism and War" (originally written in French and published in 1957), in which he explores historical reflections of the association of war in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Buddhist traditions. He argues that Buddhism was adopted in East Asia to gain military advantages (22).

In the second chapter, Stephen Jenkins explores philosophical stances for the legitimatization of various forms of violence in Mahāyāna Buddhism. His intertextual analysis thus reveals that Indian Mahāyāna propagates the theory of compassionate killing and recommends military campaigns to spread Buddhism (60). Using Foucault's power of discourse in the third chapter, Derek Maher reviews the politically motivated writings of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) and his attitudes towards religious violence and warfare.

Connected to the same Tibetan Buddhist tradition in chapter 4, Vesna A. Wallace further investigates the violent history of sixteenth century Mongolia. In her argument, not only did Buddhist warrior Khans violate the *dharmic* norm of peace but also the many monks that committed acts of violence. Like his earlier works (*Zen War Stories* 2003; *Zen at War* 2006), Brian Victoria again offers a well-grounded critique of Japanese

Zen soldier monks. On account of the doctrinal misunderstanding of non-self and the ultranationalist sentiment held by Japanese Zen monks who killed millions of people (119-121), Victoria judges that this is where elements of Zen Buddhism went wrong.

Xue Yu, similar to other works (*Buddhism, War, and Nationalism*, 2005), addresses war-related movements and activities of the Chinese Buddhist clergies during the Korean War in 1951-1953. Yu argues that Chinese Buddhists' participation in the Korea War and resistance to America lay in patriotism. Thus, patriotic sentiments of Buddhists resulted in campaigning for the donation of a Buddhist airplane and the recruitment of military personnel. The last two chapters, by Daniel Kent and Michael Jerryson, based on their fieldwork, provide an ethnographic account of recent ethnic violence in Sri Lanka and Thailand. Both contributions advocate the importance of political anthropology and research beyond textual interpretation of war in Buddhism. In the afterthoughts, Bernard Faure comments on each chapter with his thought-provoking questions. Accordingly, he urges us to explore beyond the contextual representation of sacred war and to consider more nuanced features of violence in Buddhism.

There are a few mistakes. Faure considers that *Satyakaparivarta Sūtra* is mentioned in Wallace's chapter, while the *sūtra* is actually extensively discussed by Jenkins. The front page depicts a Burmese novice-monk holding a pistol, but the editors did not include an article from Burma, a country famous for political violence and issues of monastic prisoners. Inclusion of an essay about Burma, and perhaps about Cambodia, would have bolstered the book. Nonetheless, the strength of the book is excellent. *Buddhist Warfare* deserves to be read by all Buddhist specialists and graduate students, particularly to those interested in violence in Buddhism. The book immensely contributes to Buddhist studies, the anthropological study of Buddhism, and political and Asian studies.

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