

Profile and Contribution of Buddhists in Victoria

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Introduction

Buddhists are the largest religious minority and the fastest growing religion in Victoria and Australia wide. Currently there are over 100 000 Buddhists in Victoria catered for by nearly 100 Buddhist organisations.

The objective of this book is to offer a perspective on the Buddhist community in Victoria through a description of 16 representative Buddhist organisations. This book is loosely organised around two themes: a description the major tenets of Buddhism and an outline of the key phases in the historical development of Buddhism in Australia. Part two incorporates demographic analysis, based on census data, with a case study of the 16 Buddhist organisations, to arrive at a profile of the Buddhist community in Victoria. The case studies are based mostly on material collected by the author through interviews with representatives of Buddhist organisations. The findings of the study provide information on the history of these Buddhist organisations; this includes a description of their tradition and lineages, organisational structure and the range of activities offered by each of the groups. The study will thus address the paucity of information regarding Buddhist communities in Victoria.

The findings of this study also have a broader implication relating to the greater integration of Buddhism into the Victorian community. The information presented provides extensive illustration of the increasing contribution of Buddhist groups to the broader community through providing a wide range of welfare and community support services. Also notable is a gradual shift leading to the indigenisation of Buddhism through the training of Buddhist teachers and the ordination of Buddhist monks and nuns in Australia.

The findings however do have limitations. This is not a comprehensive study of Buddhism in Victoria. Despite this, the 16 groups in this study were chosen to include all the major ethnic Buddhist groups as well as the main schools of Buddhism and as such are representative of the Buddhist community in general. Therefore, the study provide a window on the way Buddhists groups in Victoria organise themselves and the nature of their activities.

Chapter one

The main teachings of Buddhism

Buddhism was founded in the 6th century by Siddhartha Gotama (c. 566-484BC). The original *Pali* Buddhist Scripture are the "*Tripitaka*" or "Three Baskets" which are the nearest approximation to the actual doctrines taught by the Buddha. The *Tripitaka* consists of three sets of Scripture: *sutta pitaka* which contain the discourses of the Buddha to his disciples; *vinaya pitaka* which contain the monastic rules and *abhidhamma pitaka* which are further teachings on Buddhist philosophy and the nature of consciousness.¹

The fundamental teachings of Buddhism consists of the laws of Karma, Rebirth and Dependent Origination, the Five Aggregates, the Three Signs of Beings, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and Nirvana. The following account of these doctrines does not engage in a systematic discussion and is a brief description for the purpose of introducing the beliefs which guide the practices of the Buddhist community.

The laws of Karma, Rebirth and Dependent Origination are closely related. Briefly, the notion of Karma is based on the idea that every action has an effect and similar actions will lead to similar results. The effects of karma may be long or short term but these effects will nonetheless come to transpire either in this life or the next life or over several lives. Rebirth is the part of the continuous process of change, so that not only are we reborn after death, we are reborn every moment. In Buddhism there are many realms of existence and rebirth in any of these is determined by one's karma. The doctrine of Dependant Origination is based on the principles of causality, action and consequence. According to the doctrine of Dependant Origination nothing is independent, all phenomena exist because of the presence of certain pre-conditions and therefore cease to exist upon the removal of these pre-conditions. The doctrine of Dependant Origination applies to Karma and Rebirth by explaining the reason we are born in the situation that we are in.

Buddhist psychology analyses personal experience in terms of the Five Aggregates or *Skandhas*. The first aggregate, *Rupa*, corresponds to physical form, the second *Vedana*, relates to feelings or sensation, the third *Samjna* is the aggregate of perception, the forth *samskara* relates to mental formation and the fifth *vijnana* is that of consciousness.

According to Buddhism all forms of life are characterised by no soul, impermanence and suffering. All phenomena, including life, lack an enduring and permanent essence or soul; all beings are in constant change and nothing remains the same from one moment to the next. Because of this all beings are enmeshed in suffering.

The Four Noble Truths may be divided into two groups: the first two deal with suffering and identify desire as the cause of suffering, the second two with the end of suffering through the

elimination of desire and the path to the end of suffering namely the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path is the "practical morality" within Buddhism and consists of Right Understanding, Right Thoughts or Motives, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Means of Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Concentration and Right Meditation. The word "right" refers to the embodiment of the quality in its perfect form.²

All branches of Buddhism offer Nirvana as the ultimate goal of Buddhism. "Nirvana" means, 'extinction-a blowing out of the fires of greed, hatred and delusion [...]. This is characterised by the total cessation of suffering and rebirth. In entering this transcendent, supermundane realm of existence, only accessible through mystical experience, one emerges with the highest transcendent consciousness, resulting in supreme unconditioned happiness and illumination'.³ Following the Noble Eightfold Path is the precondition to the attainment of enlightenment. Embodying the Noble Eightfold Path leads to insights into the three key characteristics of existence. These are the doctrines of *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering) and *anatta* (no self). A consequence of this insight into the essential character of existence is enlightenment.⁴ The three steps in the Noble Eightfold Path that contribute to the cultivation of states of consciousness which are a precondition of experiencing enlightenment are, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. The consequence of these is the cultivation of self-reliance and an attentive and calm state of consciousness which is a precondition for enlightenment. Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration are embodied in Buddhist meditative practices which are at the core of the Buddhist path to enlightenment. Buddhist meditation has two components, physical and mental. The physical components of meditation consist of an upright back and the legs in either the full lotus or a variation of this position. The mental aspect of meditation consists of the initial training of mind to concentrate on a single object, such as the breath, to the exclusion of all else. The more advanced stages of meditative practices involve maintaining an open and non-discriminatory awareness of all that enters the mind. Adam and Hughes describe this as a, 'uniquely Buddhist meditation of mindfulness, awareness and observation'.⁵

The above beliefs constitute the core of the Buddha's teachings and are accepted by all Buddhists. However, over time different interpretations of these core beliefs have developed and this has led to the emergence of three main traditions: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism.

Theravada is regarded by some as the 'original orthodox Buddhism'⁶ which adheres to the Pali *Tripitaka*. In the Theravadin school rituals are kept to a minimum and the emphasis is on monasticism. Monks are expected to follow the Buddha's example to lead an austere life, to wear yellow robes, to beg for food and to follow a disciplined monastic life in which meditation plays a central role in order to achieve enlightenment. Theravada Buddhism is primarily followed in South and South East Asia, in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

The Mahayana school of Buddhism developed during the 1st century and by the 7th century it had not only developed its distinctive identity but had also grown in popularity: Mahayana monks numbered around 100 000 at this time.⁷ The sacred texts of Mahayana are *sutras* which were written in Sanskrit. Mahayana Buddhism shares with the Theravadin schools of

Buddhism the basic teachings of the Buddha. However, Mahayana schools reject the Theravadin belief that Buddhahood and enlightenment can only be attained through the strict observance of the Rules. Mahayana Buddhism maintains that, 'Buddhahood already dwells within, and only needs developing'.⁸ Another point of divergence between the two traditions is that Mahayana Buddhism sees the Theravadin goal of individual liberation as selfish and instead advocates the ideals of *bodhisattva* who from compassion for all beings delays, 'his or her own Buddhahood in order to help others attain it as well'.⁹ The term Mahayana itself means great vehicle, which refers to the Mahayana goal of liberating all sentient beings. Mahayana Buddhism is mainly followed in China, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan.

Vajrayana or the "diamond tradition" is an off-shoot of the Mahayana tradition which maintains that it is the preserver of, 'a tradition secretly taught by the Buddha to a group of monks, and transmitted in a form only understood by initiates'.¹⁰ Consequently Vajrayana Buddhism uses esoteric symbols and rituals to convey teachings. The recorded beginning of Vajrayana Buddhism dates back to the 7th century; originally the teachings were passed on orally and were later systematised as Tantras. Tantras, which were originally the mystical scripture in Hinduism, involve meditative devices such as *mudras* (ritual gestures), visualisation of holy beings such as a deity, mantras and mandalas. Mantras are, 'powerful sacred formulae or symbols [which] convey meaning and are used in meditation and devotional practices. *Mantras* may be visualised, chanted or written'.¹¹ Mandalas are a key practice of Vajrayana Buddhism which involve the creation and contemplation of diagrams of symbolic meaning. Vajrayana Buddhism is primarily practised in Tibet and Mongolia; it has 4 main schools each with its own distinctive Scripture and practice, these are, Gelug, Kagyu, Nyingma and Sakya.

Buddhist religious practices and rituals vary depending on the tradition and culture. However, the most basic ritual in Buddhism is the taking of the "Three Refuges" and the "Five Precepts", 'whereby a person formally becomes a Buddhist or if already one, reaffirms their commitment to Buddhism'.¹² Another basic ritual is prostration or bowing before the statue of the Buddha. Different Buddhist schools vary in their symbols and ritual objects; common to almost all is the statue of the Buddha. Other popular objects include the *bodhi* tree symbolising Buddha's enlightenment, and the wheel symbolising his teachings.¹³

The key Buddhist festivals also vary according to the tradition and culture. Those shared by all Buddhist traditions consist of the Buddhist New Year and *Vesak* (or *Wesak*). In the Mahayana tradition the New Year is celebrated in late January or early February according to the lunar calendar; the Tibetans usually celebrate this about one month later. The Theravadin Buddhists in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia celebrate the New Year for three days in the middle of April. In Theravada Buddhism *Vesak* is the occasion of the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha which are celebrated together on the first full moon day in May; in leap years *Vesak* is held in June. In the Mahayana tradition, the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha are celebrated on different days depending on the country. For instance in Japan the birth of the Buddha is celebrated on the 8th of December whereas the Chinese celebrate it on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month. The World Fellowship of Buddhists has initiated the idea of all Buddhists celebrating *Vesak* on the first full moon day of May.

The *Katina* Ceremony is an important Theravadin festival, held within one month of the conclusion of the Rains Retreat.¹⁴ It is the time of the year when new robes and other requisites may be offered by the laity to the monks. Another festival which is celebrated in the Mahayana tradition as well as in the Theravadin tradition in Laos, Cambodia and Thailand is *Ulambara*, when the union of the family ancestors with the living is celebrated. The festival lasts from the first to the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month, except in Japan where it is celebrated on the thirteenth of July, 'It is believed that the gates of Hell are opened on the first day and the ghosts may visit the world for fifteen days. Food offerings are made during this time to relieve the sufferings of these ghosts. On the fifteenth day, *Ulambara* or Ancestor Day, people visit cemeteries to make offerings to the departed ancestors'.¹⁵

Chapter Two

Historical developments

The following section traces the development of Buddhism in Australia and its emergence as the largest religious minority and the largest religion after Christianity in Australia.

Previous accounts of the history of Buddhism in Australia have been based on chronicling a number of key phases in its development.¹ This study will adopt Spuler's "historical periodisation" approach to arrive at an understanding of the transplantation of Buddhism to Australia, its subsequent development and major characteristics.² According to this approach the key phases in the historical development of Buddhism in Australia are:

- The arrivals of the first Buddhist immigrants in the 1840s.
- The emergence of organised Buddhism dating from the establishment of the Buddhist Society of New South Wales in 1952.
- The visits by Buddhist teachers from overseas.
- The arrival of resident teachers and the establishment of monasteries.
- Rapid expansion of migrant/ethnic Buddhism as a consequence of Asian migration and the arrival of Asian refugees.
- The growing ecumenism and organisational unity among Buddhist groups.³

These stages are elaborated next, and it will be demonstrated that the outcome of these developments has been the indigenisation of Buddhism and a greater integration of Buddhism into Australian society.

The first period in the history of Australian Buddhism was the arrival of Buddhists from China, Sri Lanka and Japan. The first wave of Buddhists to arrive were Chinese immigrants who came to work in the goldfields in 1848, although their practice of Buddhism also incorporated elements of polytheism, Confucianism and Taoism. The remains of Mahayana Buddhist statues are evidence of their presence. The next group of Buddhist immigrants arrived from Sri Lanka in the 1870s and settled in the Mackay area and on Thursday Island in Queensland where they planted two *bodhi* trees and built a small temple. Japanese immigrants established themselves on Thursday Island at about 1901, where they remained until 1941.⁴

The second and the third periods in the history of Buddhism in Australia consist of the establishment of Buddhist organisations and the first visits of Buddhist teachers to Australia. These first organisations catered predominantly to the interests of their Anglo-Australian founders: they largely followed the Theravadin tradition, and emphasised the practice of meditation and the philosophical aspects of Buddhism.⁵ The earliest known Buddhist group in Australia, the Little Circle of the Dharma was founded in Melbourne in 1925 by Max Taylor, Max Dunn and David Maurice, and followed the Theravadin tradition. Later, in 1938 Leonard Bullen started the Buddhist Study Group in Melbourne, which focused on the philosophical and psychological aspects of Buddhism. They explored these in monthly talks and discussion

groups, where Buddhism was emphasised as a, 'workable school of psychology for modern problems [which can] provide a technique for living and a system of mental discipline'.⁶ The two oldest surviving Buddhist societies in Australia, the Buddhist Society of New South Wales and the Buddhist Society of Victoria, were both formed in 1953. This was followed by the formation of the Buddhist Federation of Australia in 1958, which later produced a magazine called "*Buddhism Today*" and developed international ties by becoming a member of the World Federation of Buddhists. The emergence of Buddhist organisations around Australia paved the way for further developments of Buddhism in a number of ways. For instance, most organisations offered regular meditation, discussion and study groups and invited Buddhist teachers from overseas to visit Australia and to offer public talks and retreats. These activities raised public awareness about the teachings of Buddhism and its presence in Australia. Among the first teachers to arrive in Australia were sister Dhammadinna, an American Buddhist nun, who arrived in Australia in 1952. The Buddhist Society of New South Wales invited Ven. Somalok, a Sri Lankan monk, who visited Sydney in 1971. He later established the first Buddhist monastery in Australia in Katoomba, New South Wales.⁷

The fourth period in the history of Australian Buddhism is characterised by an increase in the number of Australian Buddhists, both ethnic and convert, and a corresponding proliferation of Buddhist traditions present in Australia in the 1970s. The increase in the number of Australian Buddhists heralded a significant shift in the development of Australian Buddhism, since it increased the need for resident teachers and the subsequent growth in the number of centres where they could stay and offer teachings. Ven. Phra Khantipalo, an English-born monk who was trained in Thailand, was among the first teachers to arrive. In 1974, together with three other monks from the Thai tradition, he established Wat Buddharangsee in Stanmore, New South Wales. In 1978 Phra Khantipalo established another monastery, Wat Buddhadharma, in Wiseman's Ferry, New South Wales. The 1970's also saw the introduction of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism into Australia. Robert Aitken, an American Zen teacher from Hawaii, who in 1976 helped establish the longest running Zen group in Australia, the Sydney Zen Centre. Lama Yeshe, the first Tibetan Lama to set foot in Australia, arrived in 1974. He gave a 30 day course in Diamond Valley, Queensland, as well as lectures in Melbourne and Sydney. An outcome of this visit was the donation of 160 acres of land in Queensland, which later became the Chenrezig Institute for Wisdom Culture. Many Australians were introduced to Buddhism through Lama Yeshe's teachings. Phra Khantipalo, Robert Aitken and Lama Yeshe are the three foremost Buddhist teachers whose visits exerted tremendous influence on Australian Buddhism, and are described as the 'most influential "patriarchs" of recent Australian Buddhism'.⁸

In the fifth phase of the development of Australian Buddhism, a factor which contributed to the significant growth in the number of Australian Buddhists in the 1970s was the increase in Asian immigration. This was in part due to the end of the "White Australia Policy"; as a consequence the number of migrants from Asia arriving in Australia increased from 1 800, or 25 per cent of all immigrants in 1977 to 6 000 in 1991 which was 50 per cent of immigrants. Another factor affecting the increased number of Asian immigrants was the arrival in Australia of a large number of Indo-Chinese refugees from Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, after the end of the Vietnam war in 1975. This led to a further diversification of Buddhist traditions in Australia. Although initially the migrants joined already established Buddhist

centres, later they formed their own temples which catered for both their cultural and religious needs. These temples grew and were further consolidated with the arrival of monks from their homelands, and had a profound impact on the development of Australian Buddhism.

The final phase in the history of Buddhism in Australia is characterised by the emergence of ecumenical Buddhist groups. The growing organisational unity is signalled through the development of inter-tradition organisations such as the Buddhist Councils in the states of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia, the Federation of the Australian Buddhist Councils and a number of different sangha associations such as the Australian Sangha Council and Sangha Association. Moreover, there are also organisations which exist within federations of groups such as the Tibetan Buddhist Society, the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation of Australia and members of the Mahayana Tradition. There is no evidence to suggest that the development of ecumenical Buddhist organisations will create a unified Australian Buddhism. However, Buddhist organisations in Australia have a much greater representation in broader society, as well as recognition at various levels of government, due to these ecumenical developments. There will be a detailed examination of the role of ecumenical Buddhist organisations in the section on the case study of the Buddhist Council of Victoria.

Given the complexity of religious transplantation and acculturation it is impossible to make any definite projections as to the eventual form that Australian Buddhism will take. However, the historical developments discussed above have laid the groundwork for the emergence of an Australian Buddhism which is increasingly integrated into the diverse tapestry of Australian religious life and is characterised by making greater contributions to the broader community. The key developments within Buddhism which have given rise to these characteristics are the development of facilities in Australia to train teachers and ordain monks and nuns, and the increased social engagement and provision of community and welfare activities by the Buddhist organisations.

The establishment of ordination facilities and the creation of centres to train Buddhist teachers in Australia is crucial to the indigenisation of Buddhism and its integration into Australian religious life. Writing in 1989, Croucher described the Australian Buddhism of the 1980s to have experienced, 'a sense of arrival'.⁹ At the same time he warned of the difficulties in the consolidation of Buddhism in Australia, 'what we are witnessing now is a Buddhism in transition, a Buddhism only half-digested'. He then goes on to say that 'Australian Buddhism will only have forged its own identity when it gives rise to a large number of authentic, home-grown teachers'.¹⁰ The findings of this present study indicate that significant developments have taken place in this direction. The Buddhist organisations surveyed in this study are affiliated with authentic Buddhist lineages, and the majority of them are actively engaged in setting up facilities to train teachers and ordain nuns and monks.

The emergence of Australian trained Buddhist teachers shifts the locus of Australian Buddhism from Asia to Australia. This enables the teachers to teach Buddhism by locating it in an Australian context and should also help overcome the confusion of Buddhist teachings with particular cultural contexts. The distinction between the core elements in Buddhism as opposed to peripheral elements that can be changed has been the subject of ongoing debate, and at times a source of conflict within Buddhist groups. There are different views on how to

maintain a balance between retaining traditions and introducing change in ways which preserve the essence of Buddhist teachings and practices. The integration of Buddhism into Australian life requires a middle ground between these two extremes of rigid conservatism and willy-nilly change. It is to be expected that core Buddhist beliefs and practices will be retained, whilst other cultural aspects will increasingly be shaped to reflect values such as equality for women; so, for example, nuns from across Buddhist traditions who are ordained in Australia will have a higher status than their counterparts in many parts of Asia. Changes such as this will render Buddhism a part of the diverse cultural and religious tapestry of Australian society, 'As long as there are people who are only really trying to be Tibetan, Thai or Japanese, Buddhism may be viewed as an anachronism in Australian Society-something bearing only curiosity value'.¹¹ In addition, this development may also make it more relevant to needs of the second-generation Asian-Australian Buddhists. Currently, first generation members of ethnic Buddhist groups may prefer to interact with teachers from their homeland who speak the same language, understand their past experiences and who can respond to their present needs. However, the second or future generation may feel more comfortable with monks and nuns who are trained in Australia.

Many of the Buddhist centres in this study are developing programs or building the facilities which will enable the ordination of monks and nuns and the training of teachers. Currently the two most well established such facilities in Victoria are the Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery near Bendigo¹² and Bodivana Monastery. Bodivana Monastery, in Warburton East, focuses exclusively on the training of monastics. Established in 2002 on a 200 acre property, Bodivana Monastery follows the renowned forest meditation teacher Ajahn Chah in north-east Thailand. Bodivana monastery offers a full training program from trainee level to full-ordination, which takes a minimum of two years. Currently there are three fully ordained monks, two novice monks and two trainee monks at the monastery; all except two are Anglo-Australians. In addition to the residents, monks who receive temporary ordination in other Buddhist centres are able to stay at the monastery as trainee monks. They are required to wear white robes, shave their heads and keep the Eight Precepts. Future plans at Bodivana Monastery involve the construction of additional facilities for training nuns, if there is a demand. The monastery was founded through the charity of lay Buddhists, mainly from Melbourne, who are also involved in the committee which administers the monastery.

Another key development which has contributed to the greater integration of Buddhism in broader Australian society is the contribution of Buddhist organisations to the community. These contributions consist of the provision of welfare and community services by Buddhist groups, as well as a broader emphasis on social engagement.

In the ethnic groups in this study, the temple was the focal point for community members. Having temples that are run by abbots, monks and nuns who speak the same language, share similar homeland backgrounds and practise the same religious traditions is an important influence on the retention of various cultural and religious practices, as well as an aid to adaptation and settlement into Australian society. Members of the ethnic Buddhist community utilise their religious organisations for a wide range of services. The temples meet the needs of their members through a range of religious, cultural and community activities; these will be elaborated on in the case studies of individual groups. Buddhist groups offer a range of services in the area of migrant settlement. Instances of these include helping with the

settlement of the newly arrived migrants by meeting them at the airport, helping with accommodation, language classes, help in finding work or learning useful skills that could lead to a job and child care services.¹³ The services offered by the ethnic Buddhist organisations have a broader social significance in aiding the dual process of cultural retention on the one hand, and promoting the greater adaptation, settlement and integration of their members into the wider community on the other hand.¹⁴ Buddhist centres play a major role in the formation, consolidation and maintenance of the religious and ethnic identity in their communities.¹⁵ Buddhism provides an important part of the cultural heritage of many of these migrant groups and is therefore a key issue in their attempt to retain their ethnic and cultural identity in Australia. The role of the religious activities of the temples in the maintenance of ethno-religious identity is particularly relevant to those ethnic Buddhists who are re-discovering their faith here in Australia, a process which is referred to as 'reversion'.¹⁶

In addition to the help that ethnic communities receive from their religious groups, Buddhist organisations (both ethnic and western) are also characterised by a strong emphasis on social engagement which extends beyond their communities. The main services offered by Buddhist groups are in the areas of prison work, hospice and palliative care, grief and loss counselling and overseas aid projects.¹⁷ These contributions are carried out at the organisational and individual levels, 'Individual social change activities tend to be concentrated in the human rights, environmental, peace movements and in the mental health profession'.¹⁸ At the organisational level, Sherwood's research on the activities of 54 Buddhist groups in Australia challenges some suggestions¹⁹ that socially engaged Buddhism in Australia is confined to the help that ethnic communities receive from their religious group, and some limited involvement in hospices and international aid projects.²⁰ According to Sherwood:

There is extensive involvement in a wide range of social welfare and educational activities by 96% of Buddhist organisations, ethnic and non-ethnic. The contribution of ethnically based Buddhist organisations in the majority of cases, is well beyond their own cultural or ethnic communities. The contributions also include education of the public and children, working with the poor, working with those in prisons, addicts, disaster relief in Australia, community based volunteering, social justice activities and working on behalf of the rights of non-human sentient beings.²¹

There is ample historical and doctrinal precedent within Buddhism for social engagement. Such services draw support from the Buddhist notion of interconnectedness of all beings and the empowerment of individuals and their action through the notion of skilful action.²² According to Sherwood:

there is a distinctively Buddhist praxis arising from the Buddhist values of compassion, the linking of inner and outer transformation, and the dissolving of the artificial boundaries between I and you, between human and non human. The profound view of inter being and interconnectedness in Buddhism also means that the arenas for action involving non-human sentient life is uniquely Buddhist.²³

Jameson has also related engaged Buddhism to the Buddhist practice of mindfulness and observes, 'Engaged Buddhism responds to oppressive social structures, abuses of power and human rights, as well as exploring the root causes of conflict and aggression. It is about being fully alive, recreating the present in body and heart. This is the practice of peace'.²⁴ These

underlying principles lead to a distinctively Buddhist approach to social engagement.

Chapter three

Demographic analysis

The following demographic analysis is intended to sketch the key characteristics of Buddhists in Australia and Victoria and to locate Buddhism within the Australian religious mosaic through a comparison of certain profiles of Buddhists with members of other religious traditions. The major sources of this information are the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, documents published by the Multicultural Office of Victoria, the local government of Greater Dandenong and the Buddhist Council of Victoria. More specific data relating to specific ethnic groups will be presented in conjunction with the respective case study.

According to the data provided by Humphreys and Ward, 'The world Buddhist community is estimated to number 280 million. About 99% of Buddhists live in Asia. There are growing communities in North and South America (including about 1,000,000 in the USA, 300,000 in Brazil and 80,000 in Canada), Russia (900,000), Europe (France 170,000 and the Netherlands 135,000) and Oceania'.¹

The profile of Buddhism in Australia has undergone a significant change in recent years. Comparing the religious affiliation of Australians in the 1996 and 2001 censuses gives a picture of these changes. The Buddhist population grew by nearly 79.1% from 199 812 or 1.1% of the population in 1996 to 357 813 representing 1.9% of the population in 2001.² Table 1 shows the increase in Buddhist population between the 1996 and the 2001 census.

Table 1 Religious Identification of Australians: 2001 and 1996 census

Religion	2001 Census	% of populatio n	1996 Census	Change 1996-2001	% Change 1996-2001
Buddhism	357,813	1.9	199,812	158,001	79.1
Christianity (total)	12,764,341	68.0	12,581,342	182,999	1.5
Christian, n.f.d.	249,460	1.3	181,897	67,563	37.1
Apostolic Church, so described	3,826	0.0	4,212	-386	-9.2
Anglican	3,881,162	20.7	3,903,324	-22,162	-1.2
Baptist	309,205	1.6	295,178	14,027	4.8
Brethren	19,353	0.1	22,063	-2,710	-12.3
Catholic (total)	5,001,624	26.6	4,798,945	202,679	4.2

Religion	2001 Census	% of populatio n	1996 Census	Change 1996-2001	% Change 1996-2001
Western Catholic	4,959,280	26.4	4,778,218	181,062	3.8
Jehovah's Witnesses	81,069	0.4	83,414	-2,345	-2.8
Lutheran	250,365	1.3	249,989	376	0.2
Oriental Christians (total)	36,322	0.2	31,341	4,981	15.9
Orthodox (total)	529,446	2.8	497,014	32,432	6.5
Salvation Army	71,421	0.4	74,145	-2,724	-3.7
Seventh-day Adventist	53,844	0.3	52,653	1,191	2.3
Uniting Church	1,248,674	6.7	1,334,917	-86,243	-6.5
Pentecostal (total)	194,585	1.0	174,712	19,873	11.4
Hinduism	95,473	0.5	67,279	28,194	41.9
Islam	281,578	1.5	200,885	80,693	40.2
Judaism	83,995	0.4	79,805	4,190	5.3
Other Religions:					
Australian Aboriginal Traditional Religions	5,224	0.0	7,359	-2,135	-29.0
Baha'i	11,037	0.1	8,949	2,088	23.3
Druse	2,493	0.0	2,046	447	21.8
Sikhism	17,401	0.1	12,017	5,384	44.8
Spiritualism	9,279	0.0	8,143	1,136	14.0
Theism, n.e.c.	2,538	0.0	1,957	582	29.7
Zoroastrianism	1,753	0.0	1,518	235	15.5
No Religion:					
No Religion, n.f.d.	2,857,304	15.2	2,927,139	-69,835	-2.4
Religious Belief, n.f.d.	229,442	1.2	35,806	193,636	540.8
Inadequately Described	122,657	0.7	18,372	104,285	567.6
Not Stated	1,835,598	9.8	1,550,585	285,013	18.4
Total	18,769,258	100.0	17,752,820	1,016,438	5.7

Extracted from Table 1.6, "The People of Victoria: Statistics from the 2001 Census" (2003), pp. 25-27, jointly published by Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Aboriginal Affairs and Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, Department for Victorian Communities.

As shown in Table 2, during the same period there was a 75.5% increase in the number of Buddhists in Victoria. It grew from 62 898 in 1996 to 111 664 in 2001.

Table 2 Religious affiliation of Victorians: 2001 and 1996 census

Religion	2001 Census	% of populatio n	1996 Census	Change 1996-2001	% Change 1996-2001
Buddhism	111,664	2.4	62,898	48,766	77.5
Christianity (total)	3,011,321	64.6	2,989,797	21,524	0.7
Christian, n.f.d.	52,757	1.1	38,883	13,874	35.7
Apostolic Church, so described	605	0.0	886	-281	-31.7
Anglican	716,768	15.4	731,336	-14,568	-2.0
Baptist	67,372	1.4	63,291	4,081	6.4
Brethren	3,770	0.1	4,315	-545	-12.6
Catholic (total)	1,321,177	28.3	1,274,579	46,598	3.7
Western Catholic	1,315,329	28.2	1,270,274	45,055	3.5
Jehovah's Witnesses	14,237	0.3	14,576	-339	-2.3
Lutheran	41,902	0.9	43,103	-1,201	-2.8
Oriental Christians (total)	8,942	0.2	7,343	1,599	21.8
Orthodox (total)	218,285	4.7	205,826	12,459	6.1
Salvation Army	15,531	0.3	16,465	-934	-5.7
Seventh-day Adventist	8,341	0.2	7,982	359	4.5
Uniting Church	304,193	6.5	329,298	-25,105	-7.6
Pentecostal (total)	36,538	0.8	32,690	3,848	11.8
Hinduism	24,356	0.5	16,726	7,630	45.6
Islam	92,804	2.0	67,123	25,681	38.3
Judaism	39,190	0.8	37,294	1,896	5.1
Other Religions:					
Australian Aboriginal Traditional Religions	159	0.0	162	-3	-1.9
Baha'i	1,825	0.0	1,474	351	23.8
Druse	794	0.0	582	212	36.4
Sikhism	4,601	0.1	2,991	1,610	53.8

Religion	2001 Census	% of population	1996 Census	Change 1996-2001	% Change 1996-2001
Spiritualism	2,233	0.0	2,038	195	9.5
Theism, n.e.c.	582	0.0	427	155	36.3
Zoroastrianism	450	0.0	347	103	29.7
No Religion:					
No Religion, n.f.d.	791,935	17.0	816,839	-24,904	-3.0
Religious Belief, n.f.d.	61,134	1.3	8,697	52,437	602.9
Inadequately Described	33,039	0.7	2,718	30,321	1015.6
Not Stated	461,984	9.9	392,136	69,848	17.8
Total	4,660,991	100.0	4,414,194	246,797	5.6

Extracted from Table 2-9, "The People of Victoria: Statistics from the 2001 Census" (2003), pp.81-83, jointly published by Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Aboriginal Affairs and Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, Department for Victorian Communities.

Table 3 illustrates that although the Buddhist population in Victoria is small in comparison with the major Christian denominations, compared to the other religious minorities Buddhists comprise a high percentage, now ranking as the second major religion in Australia after Christianity.

Table 3 Top 30 Religions in Victoria: 2001 and 1996 census

Rank in 2001	Religion	2001 Census		1996 Census ^(a)		-5
		Persons	% of total	Persons	% of total	% change
1	Western Catholic	1,304,543	28.3	1,262,077	29.0	3.4
2	Anglican	705,110	15.3	716,356	16.5	-1.6
3	Uniting Church	296,773	6.4	319,901	7.3	-7.2
4	Greek Orthodox	158,882	3.4	156,108	3.6	1.8
5	Presbyterian	152,152	3.3	168,718	3.9	-9.8
6	Buddhism	111,498	2.4	62,784	1.4	77.6
7	Islam	92,742	2.0	67,047	1.5	38.3
8	Christian, not further defined	67,255	1.5	39,886	0.9	68.6
9	Baptist	66,421	1.4	63,285	1.5	5.0
10	Lutheran	41,531	0.9	43,099	1.0	-3.6

Rank in 2001	Religion	Persons	% of total	Persons	% of total	% change
11	Judaism	38,374	0.8	35,963	0.8	6.7
12	Hinduism	24,328	0.5	16,708	0.4	45.6
13	Macedonian Orthodox	23,704	0.5	23,526	0.5	0.8
14	Churches of Christ (Conference)	16,338	0.4	20,887	0.5	-21.8
15	Salvation Army	15,332	0.3	16,186	0.4	-5.3
16	Jehovah's Witnesses	14,159	0.3	14,427	0.3	-1.9
17	Pentecostal, not further defined	14,012	0.3	17,986	0.4	-22.1
18	Serbian Orthodox	13,615	0.3	10,027	0.2	35.8
19	Orthodox, not further defined	13,149	0.3	10,268	0.2	28.1
20	Church of Jesus Christ of LDS (Mormons)	8,577	0.2	7,525	0.2	14.0
21	Seventh-day Adventist	8,319	0.2	7,907	0.2	5.2
22	Other Protestant, not further defined	5,255	0.1	6,320	0.1	-16.9
23	Russian Orthodox	5,043	0.1	3,746	0.1	34.6
24	Coptic Orthodox Church	4,965	0.1	3,969	0.1	25.1
25	Sikhism	4,614	0.1	2,989	0.1	54.4
26	Assemblies of God	4,144	0.1	9,742	0.2	-57.5
27	Brethren	3,737	0.1	4,312	0.1	-13.3
28	Reformed	2,852	0.1	3,082	0.1	-7.5
29	Born Again Christian	2,479	0.1	-	-	-
30	Maronite Catholic	2,426	0.1	-	-	-
	Other religions	40,315	0.9	26,330	0.6	53.1
	No religion ^(b)	798,393	17.3	815,014	18.7	-2.0
	Inadequately described ^(c)	93,773	2.0	11,278	0.3	731.5
	Not stated	457,286	9.9	386,673	8.9	18.3
	Total religion (excl. overseas visitors)	4,612,096	100.0	4,354,126	100.0	
	Overseas visitors	32,853		19,394		
	Total	4,644,949		4,373,520		

(a) Data for the 1996 Census are extracted from Basic Community Profiles and from Special Tables.

(b) Includes 'Agnosticism', 'Atheism', 'Humanism' and 'Rationalism'.

(c) Includes 'Religious belief not further defined'.

Source: "State Overview: 2001 and 1996 census" (2002) p. 1, jointly published by the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, Department for Victorian Communities.

Furthermore, a comparison of the religious affiliation of Australians and Victorians in Tables 1 and 2 reveals that Buddhism was one of the fastest growing non-Christian religions in the period 1996 to 2001 in both Victoria and Australia.

In addition to the significant growth in the number of Buddhists, there has also been a parallel increase in the number of Buddhist organisations in Victoria. According to the list compiled by the Buddhist Council of Victoria in 2001, there were 96 Buddhist centres in Victoria compared to approximately 45 groups in 1991. Another characteristic of Buddhism in Victoria is the presence of very many different Buddhist traditions representing a diverse range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Table 4 illustrates the diversity of traditions and ethnic affiliations of Buddhists in Victoria.

Table 4 Buddhist Organisations in Victoria in 2001

Tradition	Ethnic affiliation	No. of organisations
Mahayana		36
	Chinese/Taiwanese	12
	Japanese	4
	Korean	2
	Vietnamese	17
Theravada		29
	Burmese	3
	Cambodian	3
	Khmer	1
	Lao	3
	Thai	3
	Sri Lankan	8
	Vipassana	2
	Other Theravada	6
Vajrayana		21
	Gelug	12
	Kagyü	2
	Nyingma	5
	Sakya	2
Unaffiliated		11
	Buddhist Council of Victoria	
	Buddhist Discussion Group (Upway) and Ch'an Academy	
	Buddhist Meditation Group-Warrnambool	
	Buddhist Peace Fellowship	
	Centre for Timeless Wisdom	
	Chuan Hui	
	Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils	
	Geelong Buddhist Group	

Tradition	Ethnic affiliation	No. of organisations
	La Trobe University Buddhist Society	
	Melbourne University Buddhist Study Group	
	Monash University Buddhist Society	
Total		96

Extracted from Victorian Buddhist Centres 2001, compiled by the Buddhist Council of Victoria.

Table 4 shows that Buddhist groups in Victoria vary enormously in their ethnic composition. Table 5 illustrates the ethnic diversity of Buddhists in Victoria in more detail:

Table 5 Birthplace by Religion in Victoria: 2001 census

	Buddhism	Christianity	Hinduism	Islam	Judaism	Aust. Aboriginal Religions	Other Religion	No Religion	Inadequately described	Not stated	Total
Afghanistan	3	7	0	3,153	0	0	30	17	0	36	3,246
Argentina	5	2,725	0	4	71	0	40	373	20	128	3,366
Austria	26	3,891	5	28	303	0	63	671	19	346	5,352
Bangladesh	5	124	73	1,145	0	0	4	17	4	43	1,415
Bosnia	4	3,776	0	3,837	0	0	40	714	31	154	8,556
Cambodia	6,945	877	0	21	0	0	88	658	25	389	9,003
Chile	9	5,596	3	9	15	0	54	631	36	306	6,659
China	6,948	5,779	4	126	67	0	2,154	18,658	72	2,978	36,786
Cook Islands	0	1,175	0	3	0	0	20	57	21	72	1,348
Croatia	7	17,954	5	116	7	3	50	492	25	324	18,983
Cyprus	3	6,111	0	2,344	4	0	30	169	11	213	8,885
Czech Republic	0	1,001	0	0	38	0	39	439	6	143	1,666
East Timor	1,404	2,564	0	13	0	0	138	643	44	208	5,014
Egypt	12	9,734	5	1,057	164	0	46	242	23	313	11,596
El Salvador	3	2,690	0	5	3	0	32	172	16	142	3,063
Ethiopia	4	1,056	0	811	3	0	3	32	10	51	1,970
Fiji	25	2,092	3,431	897	3	0	147	238	46	248	7,127

	Buddhism	Christianity	Hinduism	Islam	Judaism	Aust. Aboriginal Religions	Other Religion	No Religion	Inadequately described	Not stated	Total
France	59	2,488	15	26	214	0	74	780	29	307	3,992
Germany	130	20,634	30	266	815	0	537	4,482	157	2,176	29,227
Greece	46	55,491	3	335	8	0	101	587	53	1,142	57,766
Hong Kong	2,010	5,334	18	25	9	0	574	6,895	49	1,091	16,005
Hungary	14	5,295	0	5	541	0	64	552	39	454	6,964
India	105	15,575	9,624	755	92	0	3,074	703	85	703	30,716
Indonesia	1,670	6,338	194	1,710	13	0	90	528	23	437	11,003
Iran	4	527	4	1,211	10	0	1,034	201	12	179	3,182
Iraq	3	4,121	3	1,737	25	0	19	37	48	102	6,095
Ireland	30	9,953	14	11	19	0	95	894	64	603	11,683
Israel	9	352	0	29	1,901	0	48	192	19	189	2,739
Italy	63	86,928	0	61	61	0	187	1,472	76	1,938	90,786
Korea, South	307	2,368	0	0	4	0	56	654	10	128	3,527
Laos	1,590	154	0	0	0	0	65	143	10	62	2,024
Latvia	3	1,786	0	0	107	0	23	142	9	77	2,147
Lebanon	3	6,700	0	6,316	13	0	435	130	70	501	14,168
Macedonia	6	16,904	0	2,131	5	0	20	142	79	272	19,559
Malaysia	6,796	9,855	621	662	14	0	998	4,033	122	1,646	24,747
Malta	11	21,521	0	8	3	0	52	351	14	496	22,456
Mauritius	17	7,580	189	92	3	0	26	175	43	154	8,279
Netherlands	67	15,789	14	27	75	0	607	5,688	115	1,920	24,302
New Zealand	728	30,955	234	352	307	3	1,487	15,285	867	5,245	55,463
Pakistan	0	511	17	2,150	0	0	36	49	3	43	2,809
Papua New Guinea	22	1,466	3	8	0	0	51	446	34	162	2,192
Philippines	138	21,363	6	31	10	0	91	293	64	476	22,472

	Buddhism	Christianity	Hinduism	Islam	Judaism	Aust. Aboriginal Religions	Other Religion	No Religion	Inadequately described	Not stated	Total
Poland	33	15,089	5	7	2,831	0	153	1,159	75	1,062	20,414
Portugal	17	2,419	3	0	3	0	14	129	9	77	2,671
Romania	10	4,027	3	15	287	0	62	235	31	327	4,997
Russian Federation	10	2,233	3	19	1,859	0	164	1,177	43	386	5,894
Samoa	3	2,139	0	4	0	0	40	45	64	90	2,385
Singapore	982	3,562	306	564	28	0	369	1,322	41	441	7,615
Slovenia	4	2,558	0	26	3	0	14	96	6	54	2,761
Somalia	0	5	0	2,253	0	0	0	6	0	46	2,310
Spain	10	2,475	3	3	3	0	28	269	5	132	2,928
Sri Lanka	7,303	14,486	3,270	695	0	0	96	393	48	363	26,654
Sudan	0	691	3	257	0	0	0	4	5	28	988
Syria	0	1,046	0	588	5	0	26	30	5	78	1,778
Taiwan	1,930	721	0	3	0	0	116	1,334	18	244	4,366
Thailand	4,186	611	18	48	0	0	66	313	23	221	5,486
Turkey	9	1,303	0	12,367	22	0	89	803	231	396	15,220
Ukraine	5	2,928	3	6	1,434	0	95	1,021	39	247	5,778
Uruguay	7	1,244	0	0	9	0	20	266	7	85	1,638
Viet Nam	33,145	13,959	5	88	7	0	984	6,315	83	2,078	56,664
Yugoslavia	13	16,523	0	1,033	29	0	143	1,126	131	702	19,700

Extracted from ABS 2001, Customised Tabulation from Census, 2002.

A distinction may be drawn between two groups within the Buddhist population: the first group, converts to Buddhism, are those who are not born into Buddhist families and have embraced it as adults. Following similar research, throughout the book this group will be referred to as Anglo-Australian Buddhists. The second group within Australian Buddhism are ethnic Buddhists, who are generally of Asian origin and are born into Buddhist families. Throughout the study the ethnic Buddhists will be referred to according to their ethnicity: for example, Cambodians instead of Cambodian Australians. Ethnic Buddhists comprise the majority of Buddhists in Victoria, and Australia-wide. Furthermore, much of the growth of Buddhism in Australia is due to Asian immigration, and only a small percentage of this

increase has been due to Anglo-Australians taking up Buddhism as adults. Figure 1 offers a comparison of the birthplace of Buddhists in Victoria:

Table 6 Birthplace of Selected Religious Groups in Victoria: 2001 census

Birthplace	Persons	% of Religion
Vietnam	33,145	29.7
Australia	27,979	25.1
Sri Lanka	7,303	6.5
China	6,948	6.2
Cambodia	6,945	6.2
Malaysia	9,796	6.1
Thailand	4,189	3.7
Hong Kong	2,010	1.8
Taiwan	1,930	1.7
Indonesia	1,670	1.5
Other	12,763	11.4
Total	111,675	100

Extracted from Table 2.10, "The People of Victoria: Statistics from the 2001 Census" (2003), p. 85, jointly published by Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Aboriginal Affairs and Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, Department for Victorian Communities.

In Table 6 Buddhists in Victoria are categorised according to their birthplace; it shows that 25% of Victorian Buddhists were born in Australia. Table 6 by itself, however, does not reflect the ethnic composition of Victorian Buddhists, since it does not distinguish between Australian born Buddhists who were born into Buddhist families and those who became Buddhists as adults.

The traditions with primarily Anglo-Australian adherents are the Vajrayana groups. Following the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the repression of Buddhism in 1959, many Buddhist monasteries were destroyed and large numbers of nuns and monks were forced to flee Tibet; some of these Lamas came to Australia, the first arriving in 1974. This was followed by the opening of many Tibetan Buddhist centres in Australia. By 1980, some claimed that Melbourne had more Tibetan Buddhists per head of the population than any other city in the Western world.³

The preceding demographic data provides a general profile of Buddhists in Victoria. However, it leaves out crucial aspects of Victorian Buddhism with respect to the ways in which Buddhist organisations contribute to their religious communities as well as the broader Victorian society. Therefore, the demographic characteristics of Buddhism in Victoria will be

used as a backdrop for a detailed case study of 16 representative Buddhist centres in Victoria, which offers an account of their history, lineage, organisation and activities.

Chapter four

A profile of 16 Buddhist organisations in Victoria

The following case studies trace the development of 16 Buddhist organisations. These are representative of the ethnic Buddhist traditions from the three major schools in Buddhism in Victoria. Each case study is structured around key issues relating to the group's history and lineage, organisational structure and activities. The outline of the group's history will give details of how it was formed and describe the landmarks in its development. The discussion of organisational structure deals with hierarchy within each community and issues such as decision making and the election of leaders. Special attention is paid to establishing the origins of the Buddhist organisations by describing their lineage. This is in order to establish the authenticity of the lineages represented by the Buddhist organisations in this study, and hence to counter the charge of self-declared Buddhist teachers, and the related claim that Buddhism in the west is a watered-down version of Asian Buddhism.¹ Each case study also incorporates a detailed description of the activities offered by the groups. The groups in this study were engaged in a wide array of religious, cultural and community related activities. These activities will be described in detail in order to illustrate the nature of the interaction between these Buddhist groups and their religious communities, as well as the impact of their activities on the broader Victorian society.

The case studies are based on qualitative data gathered by the author in interviews with abbots, abbesses and community representatives from each of the groups, material obtained from the groups' websites and other relevant literature. Throughout each case study references will be made to these interviews through direct quotations of the statements made by the abbots and abbesses and representatives of the centres. The organisations are divided into three categories on the basis of the tradition they belong to: namely, Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana.

Mahayana Buddhist centres

Fo Guang Shan

History and lineage

The Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order was founded by Ven. Master Hsing Yun, a distinguished *Ch'an* master and the 48th Patriarch of the *Linji* school of *Ch'an*. Ven. Master Hsing Yun was born in the Jiagsu Province in China in 1927. In 1949, after the revolution in China, Ven. Master Hsing Yun went to Taiwan, where he undertook the revitalisation of Chinese Buddhism by integrating Buddhist wisdom and compassion, which he termed Humanistic Buddhism. Humanistic Buddhism integrates the teachings of Buddhism into everyday life by emphasising daily life as a spiritual practice. According to the teachings of Ven. Master Hsing Yun, 'With an emphasis on not needing to "go some place else" to find enlightenment, we can realize our true nature in the here and now'. In order to achieve this goal one has to cultivate the fourfold characteristics of altruism, joyfulness, timeliness and the universality of wanting to save all sentient beings. These qualities embody the six Buddhist *paramitas* of generosity, morality, patience, constant progress, concentration and wisdom.²

The Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order was founded in Taiwan in 1967. Today, Fo Guang Shan is the largest Buddhist order in Taiwan, where it has over a hundred branch temples. It also has over 200 temples and two thousand monks and nuns world-wide. The Fo Guang Shan order emphasises education and service, and has funded four public universities, secondary schools, a satellite television station, libraries, art galleries and five publishing houses, as well as nursing homes, an orphanage and a free mobile health clinic. Ven. Master Hsing Yun is a strong advocate of equality among all people and believes that monks and nuns should be equal. Consequently the Fo Guang Shan order has a large number of female monastics, and Ven. Master Hsing Yun has held full ordination ceremonies for women of the Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana traditions. Ven. Master Hsing Yun also advocates the equality of all religions and has been active in promoting inter-faith dialogue between Buddhist and other religious groups through organising annual conferences. Ven. Master Hsing Yun has been recognised internationally for his commitment to providing high quality monastic and secular education as well as his social welfare achievements, and in Australia Fo Guang Shan was granted NGO status in 2004.³

The Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order is comprised of a lay and a monastic component; both are guided by Ven. Master Hsing Yun and the collaboration between the two is necessary for the functioning of Fo Guang Shan. In Victoria the lay wing of Fo Guang Shan, the International Buddhist College of Victoria (IBCV), was established in 1991; the sangha wing of Fo Guang Shan in Victoria, Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA), was formed in 1992. The

Victorian branch of Fo Guang Shan incorporates both the International Buddhist College of Victoria and Buddha's Light International Association. Fo Guang Shan is located in Yarraville, an inner western suburb of Melbourne. The site, which was originally a Catholic girls' school, was renovated and enlarged and the centre opened in 1995. It includes a large shrine room which can hold up to 200 people, an informal meditation room, meeting rooms, offices, a school and a large dining hall and function room. In addition to the centre in Yarraville, there are two other branches of Fo Guang Shan, one in the Melbourne CBD and one in Box Hill.

Organisation

Fo Guang Shan centres are run by a rotating roster of abbots and abbesses. In Australia there are fifty monks and nuns who move between different centres where they remain for three years at a time. At any time there are five or six resident monks or nuns at a centre. Transition between different centres is intended to broaden the knowledge and experience of the sangha and it is followed by a period of further study in Taiwan. This process is repeated throughout their monastic career.

The current abbess of the Yarraville centre is Ven. Miao Yung who has had this role since 2004. As the spiritual leader of the centre, Ven. Yung offers religious and spiritual guidance to the community and in this task she is assisted by 4 other nuns. Of the 4 nuns, one is responsible for the Box Hill branch of Fo Guang Shan, one for the Art Gallery branch, one is a supporting nun and one assists Ven. Yung in the running of the Yarraville centre. Fo Guang Shan centres have a democratic constitution, and are led by an executive committee elected by the members of the organisation which currently number around 1000. The centre has an ethnically diverse constituency which includes members from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Anglo-Australians. Overseas students from a diverse background are also strongly represented in the centre.

Activities

BLIA is committed to providing a range of religious, educational, cultural and community services to Victorians of all religious backgrounds. Religious practice is the primary focus of the centre. The broad objective of the religious program is, 'creating an awareness of the quality of mind needed to promote harmony in the individual and in society'.⁴ The religious activities offered by Fo Guang Shan include weekly meditation classes and Dharma teachings in all three Fo Guang Shan centres in Melbourne, weekly chanting of *sutras*, a Buddhist literature discussion group, *Puja* services and special events such as the annual Buddha's Birthday festival. Retreats offered at the centre consist of three and five day retreats, which take place during the long school holidays. There is a seven day recitation of the *Amitabha's* name retreat. One day retreats, which include the *Quan Yin* compassion ceremony, are offered

once a month.⁵ The centre also promotes the Buddhist values of loving kindness and compassion by advocating vegetarianism and engagement in social justice-related activities. Examples of these include running courses on vegetarian cooking and giving feedback to the parliamentary debate on government legislation concerning religious tolerance. The centre provides funeral services and Buddhist wedding ceremonies which are held at the centre for both Chinese and non-Chinese. The monks and nuns also offer blessing ceremonies after the birth of babies, and when a new house or business is purchased.

The major annual festival at Fo Guang Shan is the Buddha's Birthday celebration, the most important day in the Chinese Buddhist Calendar. This occasion is celebrated over two days at a prominent location in Melbourne; in recent years the venue has been Federation Square. Buddhist centres from all traditions are invited to attend the celebration and in 2005 the ritual service was performed by monks from both Mahayana and Theravadin traditions. In addition to having religious significance, the occasion is also used to promote multiculturalism. Fo Guang Shan has invited a wide range of groups to give cultural performances at the celebration, from the Victorian Police Band to ethnic community groups. Community organisations, such as gambling education groups are offered tables free of charge, to promote their activities.

Fo Guang Shan is committed to providing education, not just in Buddhism but in all areas of humanities. The educational courses offered at the centre include an intensive Chinese language and culture program. The course, which is registered with the Department of Education, is run by trained and experienced Chinese teachers and caters for grade one to VCE level students. Although not a religious education class, the course promotes Buddhist values such as tolerance and respect for others. The staff from the centre attend primary and secondary schools and give talks on Buddhism. The centre is a supporter of the Buddhist Education for Victorian Schools Project run by the Buddhist Council of Victoria. The centre offers classes on calligraphy, vegetarian cooking, yoga, arts and craft, folk dance, painting and runs a Buddhist singing group. Classes are offered to members as well as to the general public. The education program at Fo Guang Shan incorporates a young adult division that is tailored to suit the needs of those under 35 years of age. The primary purpose of this division is to achieve personal development through an understanding of Buddhist values. The young adult division is also active in supporting overseas students in Australia; the centre is particularly well known to many Asian students before they arrive in the country. Other educational services offered at the centre include a community education program and information sessions by Centrelink staff, as well as seminars by professionals such as accountants and lawyers. All talks are given in Mandarin, with English translations.

Fo Guang Shan offers a range of welfare activities; it supports the sick and the dying by visiting hospitals, hospices and any sick members at their homes. The centre also hosts a cancer support group. In addition, monks and nuns from the centre, accompanied by lay members, regularly visit nursing homes. The centre offers a prison chaplaincy service and has offered counselling, conducted meditation classes and distributed free Buddhist literature at the Melbourne Women's Prison at Deer Park. Fo Guang Shan works closely with community groups such as the Footscray Drug Addiction Action Group in the area of gambling education and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. The centre targets young people, and teenagers in particular, who have drug and alcohol related problems, and is planning to expand its youth

support program by offering more counselling and social activities for teenagers.⁶ The centre is actively engaged in fund raising for the poor and the needy in the community and supports the Lord Mayor Charity Fund, the Salvation Army and the Red Cross. It also helps the victims of disasters around the world, with relief for major global disasters such as the recent Asian Tsunami sent to the Fo Guang Shan's headquarters in Taiwan, from where it is directed to the areas where they are most needed. Recent examples of this include the building of a school in Banda Aceh after the Asian tsunami.

Fo Guang Shan emphasises the importance of the environment for all sentient beings, and contributes to Clean Up Australia day and participates in the Community Tree Planting Day. The centre also contributes to cultural cohesion by promoting tolerance and mutual respect. It has been a regular participant in activities such as the Moomba parade, the National Day parade and Victorian Centenary activities.

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Quang Duc Temple

History, lineage and organisation

Vietnamese Australians are the largest single ethnic Buddhist group in Australia. According to the 2001 census there are a total of 154 833 Vietnam-born people in Australia, 56 664 or 36.6% of whom live in Victoria. The majority (33 145) of the Vietnam-born in Victoria are Buddhists, and the 17 Vietnamese Buddhist temples in Melbourne out-number those of any other single Buddhist group. This study looked at two Vietnamese temples in Melbourne: Quang Duc Temple and Quang Minh Temple. These will be described in the next two case studies.⁷

Quang Duc Temple is a major Vietnamese Buddhist Centre for the northern and western regions of Melbourne. The temple is named after Most Ven. Thich Quang Duc, a Vietnamese monk, who in 1963 self-immolated while sitting in the lotus position as a protest against the oppression of Buddhist priests and the Buddhist community by the Diem government in South Vietnam.

Quang Duc Temple incorporates Quang Duc Monastery as well as Quang Duc Buddhist Welfare Association of Victoria. Ven. Thich Tam Phuong is the Abbot of the Quang Duc Monastery as well as a director of the non-profit Quang Duc Buddhist Welfare Association of Victoria. Ven. Thich Tam Phuong was ordained in 1983 in A Quang Temple in Saigon, Vietnam. Ven. Thich Nguyen Tang is the Vice-Abbot of Quang Duc Temple; he was ordained in 1988 in Phuoc Hung Temple in Dong Thap Province, Vietnam. Ven. Thich Nguyen Tang arrived in Australia in 1989 and was the first Buddhist monk to be granted permanent residency in Australia based on a religious visa application. In addition to the abbot and the Vice-Abbot there are two nuns residing at the temple. The temple is managed by a committee of 10 who are elected by the abbot. Quang Duc Temple has 1000 members who receive the temple's newsletter, which is published once every three months in English and Vietnamese. The members of the temple are mainly Vietnamese except for a small minority of around 20 Anglo-Australians. The first Anglo-Australians to come to the temple were local retirees who would come in every day to help; later they began to attend the meditation classes at the centre and to study Buddhism. Other Anglo-Australians at the temple have heard about the temple through the Moreland City Council, which provides information about the temple in their information booklet as well as on their website. The temple belongs to the *Lam Te* lineage of Vietnamese Buddhism.

Quang Duc Temple was established in 1990 as an initiative of the local Vietnamese community who wanted to have a temple in the area. The community members set up a small three bedroom house in the northern suburb of Broadmeadows, and asked Ven. Thich Tam Phuong to take residence as the abbot. The house was used for worship, religious education and many other Buddhist activities. Over time the temple community grew, and it became evident that to meet the needs of its members as well as the Vietnamese Buddhist community

of the northern region a larger place was needed. In May 1997 the centre purchased a former primary school, in the suburb of Fawkner, from the Victorian Education Department, on an area of nearly two acres. This was one of the approximately 200 primary Schools in Victoria which were sold due to cut backs in education funding. The temple also received approval from the local Moreland City Council to set up a Buddhist Welfare Centre as part of the complex.⁸ By 2001 plans were made for the construction of a large two story building. The first level is a multi-purpose community hall, the second level is a large Buddha Hall which is solely dedicated to religious practices such as meditation and chanting. The structure of the building reflects the dual focus of the Quang Duc Temple on the preservation of Vietnamese traditions and culture as well as strictly religious concerns. The foundation stone for the building was laid in 2001 and the construction was completed and the building opened at the end of 2003.

Activities

Since its inception in 1990 the main objective of the temple has been to serve the local Vietnamese communities living in the northern region through the provision of a range of activities and services. The religious activities at Quang Duc Temple include weekly classes in Buddhist education, daily recitation of *sutras*, Buddhist Youth groups (which, as in Vietnam are modelled on the scouts) and Buddhist family groups. Regular prayer services are held, which include prayer for peace and happiness to promote quality of life for all sentient beings. Morning tea and discussion groups are held every weekend. The temple runs meditation classes for beginners and advance students; these are very popular and attended by the Vietnamese members and the Anglo-Australians. Three retreats are held at the centre annually in July, April (during Easter holidays) and in December; the latter is a very popular retreat and rotates between Vietnamese temples around Australia. In 2005 it was held in Queensland, and was attended by 300 people. Other religious activities offered by the temple include marriage celebrations, special prayers for weddings, funerals and memorial services, and activities and entertainment for the aged members. The bulk of these activities take place on weekends, when over 200 people attend the centre.

The centre also offers a range of cultural activities which include Bo De Vietnamese Language School, children's cultural classes designed to help them retain their Vietnamese Buddhist tradition and culture, and Kong Fu classes, which are very popular and attended by around 50 on weekends. The temple also hosts a vegetarian lunch once every three months; this is both a social gathering and a fundraising event. Ven. Thich Nguyen Yang emphasised the importance of fostering the Vietnamese culture and language among the young Australian-Vietnamese members:

The second generation of Vietnamese in Australia have lost their way, they have lost their culture, they lost their land. 20% of young Vietnamese people are put in jail; this is a very high level. So, as Buddhists we would like to do something for the Vietnamese young generation. We can give them their culture and their language and this is important, because within the families there is a lack of communication between the parents and the children. The parents are busy all the time and don't have time to talk to their children. The children

speak English 24 hours a day and the parents speak Vietnamese so they can't communicate [...] the temple is bringing the families back together, parents and children attend the temple together, children do activities and study and parents have other activities like working in the garden and the kitchen, or pray in the Buddha Hall for the deceased. These activities are followed by Dharma talks and a free vegetarian lunch, which gives everyone more opportunity to socialise.

The major events celebrated at the centre include the New Year Celebration (*Tet*), the Buddha's Birthday and the Parents' Day.

The temple is active in the area of welfare and community service. It is involved in the prison chaplaincy program and visits Vietnamese and other Buddhist inmates once a month. The centre also makes monthly visits to Footscray Hospital, Sunshine Hospital, St. Vincent's Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital to offer prayer. The temple offers monthly tours of the temple to primary schools in the area, which includes an introductory talk on Buddhism and Vietnamese culture.

Quang Duc Temple offers a one-to-one counselling service to help community members with family problems, social problems and, in particular, gambling related problems. It offers temporary accommodation and a referral service to those in the Vietnamese community affected by domestic violence, gambling and substance abuse. Some of these services are provided in partnership with agencies such as the Vietnamese Women's Association, the Community Health Centre in Footscray and Centrelink. The temple has sought the help of various government agencies to enhance welfare services to the Vietnamese community. For instance, employing gambling and financial counsellors, expanding the temporary accommodation available for homeless people (which is at present limited to three rooms), employing paid staff to coordinate the growing number of families and individuals who need emergency assistance at the temple, and the construction of facilities designated for welfare services and counselling.

Quang Duc Temple also runs Work for the Dole projects through CVGT Employment and Training Specialists. The projects which have helped the participants in gaining a variety of useful skills include the construction of a garden at the centre and work on a new building at the centre currently under construction.⁹

The temple runs an informal overseas aid program. Ven. Thich Nguyen Tang, together with other members of the temple, have travelled to Vietnam to deliver food to the poor and the needy. According to Ven. Thich Nguyen Tang the welfare activities of the Quang Duc Temple are a new phenomenon, and involve a shift from the traditional responsibilities and concerns of Buddhist temples in Vietnam, which are more narrowly defined and largely limited to meeting the religious demands and needs of the community.

The temple has close association with other Buddhist centres in Melbourne. The local Sri Lankan Buddhist community uses the facilities at Quang Duc Temple to hold children's language and Dharma classes. The temple also takes part in the activities of the Tibetan Buddhist Society, where Ven. Thich Nguyen Tang has spoken about the Vietnamese Buddhist tradition. The temple works closely with Quang Minh Vietnamese Buddhist temple in planning and coordinating activities for the Vietnamese community.

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Quang Minh Temple

History and lineage

Quang Minh Temple was established by the Most Ven. Thich Phuoc Hue in 1986 in Sunshine in western Melbourne. Since it was established Quang Minh Temple has had a number of different abbots; the present abbot, Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan, was appointed in 1997. Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan became a novice in Vietnam. After arriving in Australia in 1981, he went to Sydney and trained at Phuoc Hue Monastery with the Most Ven. Thich Phuoc Hue for the next fifteen years. In 1990 Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan was sent to France, where he received his full ordination Precepts in Lyon.

The current site is situated 12 km west of Melbourne CBD in the suburb of Braybrook, and was acquired in the early 1990s. The main hall and some of the temporary buildings were built in 1994. In the past ten years the temple has been offering a wide spectrum of activities and is now planning the construction of a larger centre which will replace the temporary buildings. Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan views this delay in the completion of the temple as a useful gap:

This has enabled us to define what activities we like to hold and the directions that we are heading. We started a lot of activities, some we have discontinued and now we are at a stage where we have defined the kind of things we want to do, and are ready to make a big building. We can put everything together in the new building.

In the next five years Quang Minh Temple will be spending approximately six million dollars on the construction of new buildings which include a meditation hall, a new shrine, meditation huts, additional training facilities, a library, language class rooms and computer labs. The expansion is guided by the temple's general objective which is, 'to encourage people to live in peace and harmony by providing essential Cultural, Social and Educational services to the wider community in Melbourne, Victoria'.¹⁰ I asked Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan to elaborate on these goals, and to relate them to his vision for the future of the Quang Minh Temple. According to Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan:

The property is 3.7 hectare so there is a lot of potential for moving in a number of directions. The question is what is sustainable and what is not sustainable. What is important but needs a lot of support to sustain, and what can sustain itself. What will work in the first generation and not in the second generation. What will work and what will not work [...] What we have found is that most of the religious centres are under-utilised during day time. So if it can be used to benefit the wider community it has to be structured in a way that it can function more efficiently, like a school where during the day it is used by students and in the evening and weekends some other community groups will use it; only then the big structure can sustain itself. If we just construct a grand religious building then we are just wasting the community's resources, and if it is just there and the community only comes in once a week it is a waste, so that is the number one consideration in the big picture. Number two, whatever we plan to do

must be useful in terms of alleviating people's suffering and bringing happiness and protecting people. Everything has to have a purpose; if it is not useful then people will soon forget about it. Also now in Australia we have to do networking with other groups; Buddhist groups, non-Buddhists groups, local community groups and the wider society to help fund one another. Only then can we be effective, because often there are not enough resources for all groups to do what they want to do, so this is the big picture in constructing the new building.

The Quang Minh Temple belongs to the *Thien Thai* lineage of Vietnamese Buddhism which dates back to the sixth patriarch of Zen Buddhism. According to Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan, Quang Minh, like most Vietnamese temples in Australia, does not strictly adhere to the teaching and practices of a single lineage:

In Australia multiculturalism applies not just to the Australian society but also to the Buddhist community and the Vietnamese Buddhist community in particular. We come from different areas of Vietnam and follow different lineages of Buddhism, and a lot of diversity is present within the congregation. So, although the centre belongs to the *Thien Thai* lineage, the congregation practice a number of different practices belonging to different traditions: some do Pure Land, others Zen, others Vajrayana. The present congregation in Vietnam would have belonged to different temples. So the lineage applies to the monastic, but at the congregation level the monks have to cater for people from other traditions. This applies across the board to other Vietnamese temples in Melbourne where the public practice at temples belongs to the Pure Land traditions. This is mainly because its primary practice is relatively simple at the surface level, and consists of the recitation of the *Amitabha* Buddha name and seeking rebirth in the pure land; therefore it can be easily learnt by the lay people and is therefore very accessible.

Organisation

The arrival of Vietnamese monks in Australia which began in the 1970's was highlighted by the arrival of the Most Ven. Thich Phuoc Hue in 1981. Subsequently the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation of Australia was formed with associated branch temples in all states of Australia except Tasmania.¹¹ Quang Minh Temple is a centre for the Vietnamese Buddhist community connected to the Phuoc Hue Monastery in Sydney, and follows the guidance of the Most Ven. Thich Phuoc Hue and the office of the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation of Victoria.

While Quang Minh Temple has over 10 000 members who are on the temple's mailing list and receive its newsletter, there are no formal membership requirements such as joining fees. The temple follows the Vietnamese Buddhist tradition where the Dharma is presented to people as a "noble knowledge", and not something that can be bought or sold. The temple relies on voluntary donations from members to operate. This is how Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan described the system, 'this is just a tradition; whatever we need, we make an announcement and there is always someone who comes forward to make the purchase, and we feel comfortable operating on this system'.

The organisation of Quang Minh Temple reflects that of Buddhist temples in Vietnam and

consists of two separate structures: a monastic structure which is the governing body, and a congregation structure which administers the temple. The monastic structure is exactly as you would find it in Vietnam and represents the situation in Vietnamese Buddhism since the modernisation of the 1950s. The hierarchy on the monastic side includes the Most Venerable, the Senior Venerable, the Venerable and the Novice monks and nuns. One's position within the hierarchy is partly determined by how long one has been in the monastic order, and partly based on one's "personal merit". The number of monks at the Quang Minh Temple ranges from two to fifteen; at the moment, in addition to the abbot, there are five monks and four novices living at Quang Minh Temple.

The congregation structure of Quang Minh Temple resembles that of most organisations. The temple is administered by a management committee of four: the president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary. These are elected by the congregation and the Most Ven. Thich Phuoc Hue. Previously, the Most Ven. Thich Phuoc Hue held the position of the president in the management committee; he later resigned, but he still maintains a highly respected position within the congregation structure, even though he does not have an official or formalised role. The committee functions under the Incorporations Act as a company and the four members act as the directors of the Quang Minh Company who manage the property, the construction of the new building and the management of the government funds. Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan is a member of the management committee and oversees the running of the projects. In addition to the committee, there are also a number of sub-committees; these are separate entities having their own funds and separate bank accounts.

In recent years the government has been funding some of the programs that are run at the temple. The management of these funds, and the high standards of auditing required in dealing with public funds, has profoundly changed the hierarchy within the congregation structure; for example, challenging the traditional model of hierarchy which gives primacy to the opinions of the elderly. According to Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan:

Working with the government funding involves a lot of regulations and requires a high degree of professionalism which cannot necessarily be supplied by the elderly. Within the congregation there is considerable conflict and democratic principles are ever present. We are planning to create a democratic chamber which strongly debates issues but this is a long term development, at present we follow the traditional pattern of Vietnamese culture which is elderly centred.

Activities

Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan, who received a Centenary Medal in 2003 for his contribution to the community through religious services, guides the Quang Minh Temple in the provision of a range activities. These consist of religious activities, educational services, cultural activities and community services to Buddhists as well as the wider community.

Religious activities at Quang Minh Temple include daily chanting on weekdays, Sunday morning services, Dharma classes, Buddhist Scripture studies, introductory relaxation and

meditation classes, short weekend retreats and month-long retreats. The centre also offers a course in Buddhist studies in 3 levels totalling 10 years in duration. The temple has organised annual pilgrimages to China and India to visit significant Buddhist sites. The library at Quang Minh Temple has resources on Buddhism in English and Vietnamese. The temple offers wedding celebrations and funeral and memorial services. The main festivals celebrated at the temple are the Vietnamese New Year (*Tet*) and Spring Festival, *Vesak* and the *Ulambana* all souls festival. These attract up to 10 000 people.

The educational services include Buddhist youth groups, sporting activities, English language classes for adult Vietnamese, Vietnamese language classes for children, kindergarten to grade six, computer classes for personal computer users from beginner to advanced level. The temple runs a Culture Club which offers Vietnamese traditional martial arts, dragon and lion dance, drum clubs, music and painting classes. It organises traditional costume competitions for children, as well as a Full Moon festival to celebrate Children's Day; this culminates in a lantern procession at night.¹²

Welfare services offered at the Quang Minh Temple include a community kitchen which provides free lunches to local high school students from low-income families, chaplaincy services, Meals on Wheels (which is run in partnership with the Maribyrnong City Council), and free internet access and training. The temple is also an agent for the Victorian Emergency Food Relief Program. Through the emergency food distribution service, the temple has developed a program of cultural and service exchange with the aboriginal community. Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan described the relationship in the following terms:

When we started to work with the aborigines we discovered that we have a lot in common, for instance the concept of earth, about caring for the land; the aborigines have a concept of earth spirit that we need to respect and we have the same in the Vietnamese culture. The aborigines that are involved with the Quang Minh are the local ones, the Koori Nation, who run very good services for people with alcohol dependency which is a problem that they have, and we also have this problem in the Vietnamese community. They bring these services to the centre and we learn from them, and this is an example of how they provide support for us, and we show respect to their culture and provide emergency food relief to their members when they are short of food.

The recent influx of government funding has added further support to both the cultural and welfare programs offered by the temple. For instance, as a part of their Youth Support Service the Quang Minh Temple received \$77 000 in Federal Government funding. In conjunction with Odyssey House the temple runs an active intervention and case management program for young Vietnamese aged 10-15 years and their families. The program, which is located at the Quang Minh Temple, is aimed at developing an alcohol and drug early intervention strategy within the Vietnamese community in the western region of Melbourne by identifying and minimising the risk factors, and providing a safe environment for young people where positive activities and connections are offered. The temple has been working in partnership with the Western Region Health Centre in caring for the needs of the elderly in the community and has been delivering services for the elderly at the temple. The temple's congregation has also revegetated the land surrounding the temple with locally endemic species through the Clean and Green Maribyrnong Project, and participated in the Clean Up Australia Day.

There are both ideological and historical precedents in the Mahayana tradition for the welfare

activities run at Quang Minh Temple. Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan described the connection:

Since we are a Mahayana group it is easy to justify welfare activities as serving the sentient beings, and in this case the community as a way to Buddhahood. So, having a Centrelink officer coming here may not seem to have anything to do with Buddhism, but if it is for the welfare and well being of someone it is justified from a Mahayana point of view.

Quang Minh Temple has taken an active role in fostering stronger understanding and relationships between Buddhist groups from different traditions and ethnicities. The temple has been organising an annual bus pilgrimage since the late 1980s in the weeks leading up to the Buddha's Birthday celebrations. The Bus Pilgrimage follows the Vietnamese tradition where the new year celebrations are bound with religious activities such as visiting temples, so that merit may be gained and passed on to the deceased relatives. During the bus pilgrimage several hundred participants visit around twelve Buddhist centres around Melbourne, offering prayer and donations and listening to talks about different Buddhist traditions. Quang Minh Temple has also taken an active role in promoting Buddhist scholarship in Australia through organising conferences. Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan was the chair of the organising committee of the Australian Buddhist General Conference, titled "Engaging Buddhism in Australia", in 2004. During the three day conference members of the Quang Minh Temple provided food and refreshments to all conference participants and meals to those staying at the temple and Student Village. The conference was described as, 'an important milestone in Buddhist history because this is the very first time that Buddhists from all traditions and from all states of Australia and other parts of the world have met together to celebrate working together harmoniously in engaging Buddhism in Australia'.¹³

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Melbourne Zen Group

Lineage

The Melbourne Zen Group (MZG) is an off-shoot of Diamond Sangha, a western lay Zen Buddhist lineage which is based on traditional Japanese Zen Buddhist practice and incorporates elements of the *Soto* and *Rinzai* schools of Zen. The Diamond Sangha started at a centre established by Aitken Roshi in Hawaii in 1959. Aitken Roshi commenced Zen practice with Nyogen Senzaki and later on with Yasutani Roshi. In 1974 Aitken Roshi received Dharma transmission from Yamada Roshi, the chief successor to Yasutani Roshi, thus being authorised to teach independently. An important aspect of Aitken Roshi's teachings, which has been perpetuated in the Diamond Sangha centres around the world, is his emphasis on lay practice as the form of practice most appropriate to the west, where there is insufficient support for monasteries. An extension of this has been the emphasis placed on the training of lay teachers in the Diamond Sangha centres world-wide.¹⁴

History and organisation

Robert Aitken Roshi has been described as the person who, 'stands out clearly in the transmission of an authentic Zen lineage to Australia'.¹⁵ He visited Australia annually and gave retreats in Sydney between 1979 and 1988. Some of those who attended the Sydney retreats came from Melbourne, and several attempts were made to start a Zen group in Melbourne with very little success. In January 1985, Geoff Dawson, then an apprentice teacher in the Diamond Sangha who was based in Sydney, gave a talk at the annual Buddhist Summer School in Melbourne. After the talk he compiled a list of those who were interested in Zen practice; later Sue Frankel, who attended the Buddhist Summer School, contacted the people on the list and a meeting was organised at the premises of the Buddhist Society of Victoria in Richmond. Those present at this meeting were Sue Frankel, Gilly Rimmer, Libby Smith, Mal Backus, Michael Backerra and Indra Berzins. The group continued to meet regularly for meditation and in May 1985 the group established itself as the Melbourne Zen Group. Geoff Dawson was the catalyst in the formation and continuation of the Melbourne Zen Group. He took the role of an informal mentor and, when in Melbourne, he joined the group for meditation and offered advice on different aspects of Zen practice and rituals, according to the Diamond Sangha model. In addition to Geoff Dawson's input, members who had spent time in Hawaii studying with Aitken Roshi brought back extensive notes on details of chants, readings and guidelines on running a meditation retreat; these notes became the blueprint for the Melbourne Zen Group's practice. The Melbourne Zen Group continued to hold weekly meditation practice at the Buddhist Society of Victoria and at the Kagyu E-Vam Institute in Carlton. In the late 1980s the group stopped meeting at the Buddhist Society of Victoria and later Phil Pegler, one of the original members of the group, built a meditation

hall in his house in Alphington, which was used by the group for weekly meditation, as well as monthly day-long retreats and Full Moon meditations, until 1998. During this period the group continued its regular weekly meditation sessions at the Kagyu E-Vam Institute. From 1999 the group has been holding meditation sessions and monthly day-retreats at the Kagyu E-Vam Institute and the Clifton Hill Zendo.

From the time of its inception through to the late 1990s the Melbourne Zen Group's membership continued to increase and by the mid 1990s the group had around 60 members. Consequently, from the early 1990s the group was in a position to invite Diamond Sangha teachers, from overseas and interstate, to give retreats in Victoria. Over the years the Melbourne Zen Group has invited a number of teachers to visit Melbourne and to give retreats: these include Pat Hawk, an American-based Zen teacher, and Augusto Alcalde, a then Diamond Sangha teacher from Argentina. Geoff Dawson, Subhana Barzaghi, Ross Bolleter and Susan Murphy are Australian teachers who have been invited to teach at the Melbourne Zen Group. In 1996 the Melbourne Zen Group asked Subhana Barzaghi Roshi to be the group's teacher, a role which she has shared with Susan Murphy Roshi since 1998, both teachers reside in Sydney. The teachers' presence within the group is limited to retreats and at other times the communication between the group members and the teachers takes place through a designated teacher-liaison person and the Melbourne Zen Group's management committee. The roles and responsibilities of the teachers within the Melbourne Zen Group has been redefined in recent years. Kirk Fisher, a practice facilitator in the Melbourne Zen Group, defines the role of the teachers within the group in the following terms:

Our teachers give over responsibility for the day-to-day running of the sangha outside of "*sesshin*".¹⁶ Subhana has said that she likes to see herself as a guest in the sangha, where she may also have something to say about our rituals and be an advisory figure for our development. She supervises the work of the practice facilitators as well. During *sesshin* she is the person who is running the *sesshin*. She is responsible for that. But for a lot of areas in the sangha it is up to us to be our own group, or there is a dialogue between us. Both Susan and Subhana meet with the Managing Committee and practice facilitators when they come here. They read the minutes of the committee meetings and so on.¹⁷

Like all Diamond Sangha groups affiliated with Aitken Roshi, the Melbourne Zen Group follows a democratic structure based on consensus style of decision making. This reflects Aitken Roshi's rejection of the, ' "exaltation of the teacher" as "the way of the cult" [who] thus calls for an unequivocal "anarchism in organisation" '.¹⁸ This approach characterises the way in which the group has defined the role of its teachers. According to Lesley Hanks, who represented the Melbourne Zen Group in this case study:

We generally discuss the teachers' requirements and the teachers both have said that they respect the group's autonomy. The members of the group have different ideas; some members believe that we should accept everything the teachers say, other members feel that we should discuss what the teachers demand, and sometimes we accept their requirements, other times we make up our own mind about their suggestion. So, if the recommendation is based on insufficient information then we don't act on it.

Following a suggestion by Subhana Barzaghi Roshi the Melbourne Zen Group introduced the role of practice facilitator to the group; this includes organising monthly talks, answering

questions about practice and carrying out orientation for the new members. The practice facilitators may be nominated either by the group's two teachers or the group (as represented by the management committee), and approved by the other party. In addition to the teachers and the practice facilitators, the Melbourne Zen Group has a management committee which is elected at the group's Annual General Meeting by the members. The membership is primarily comprised of Anglo-Australians and the group has thirty one registered members, although a much larger number participate in the orientation and meditation classes.

Activities

Meditation is the primary focus of the Melbourne Zen Group activities. Its weekly activities consist of two meditation sessions followed by chanting *sutras*. There are monthly Dharma discussion groups, one-day meditation retreats (*Zazenkai*), and extended meditation practice on or close to the Full Moon each month. There are two retreats a year, which are between five and seven days long. The Melbourne Zen Group has had an ongoing relationship with the Clifton Hill Zendo in Melbourne, as well as other Diamond Sangha centres in Australia and overseas and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. The group also publishes a monthly newsletter, "*Vast and Ordinary News*" and has a small library of Buddhist books, magazines and recorded talks given by teachers during retreats; these resources are available for loan to members.

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The Seon Centre

History and lineage

Ven. Chi Kwang Sunim is the abbess of the Seon Centre situated at Kinglake, 65 kilometers north of Melbourne. She was a student of Phra Khantipalo for several years and also a founding member of Wat Buddhadharma Monastery in New South Wales, and the Buddhist Library in Sydney, before taking up ordination in the Korean Buddhist tradition. Ven. Chi Kwang's interest in the Korean Zen tradition began when she read "*Nine Mountains*", a book about Song Kwang Sa Monastery, where some of the greatest Korean Buddhist teachers have taught through history. She found it 'a very down to earth tradition'. She was also impressed by the high status of nuns in Korean monasteries where she found, 'a highly developed nun's tradition where they are well educated and well respected'. Shortly after reading "*Nine Mountains*", Ven. Chi Kwang attended a retreat in Melbourne given by a New Zealand monk from Song Kwang Sa Monastery. He encouraged Ven. Chi Kwang to write to the monastery and apply for permission to go there. Ven. Chi Kwang contacted the monastery and received a positive reply. She arrived in Korea in 1979 and entered the *Chogyu* order. This is the largest monastic order in Korea and has a community of approximately 15 000 monks and 15 000 nuns. Following the highly structured training program of the *Chogyu* order, Ven. Chi Kwang became a novice for one year before taking her first level of ordination. After a further five years of training Ven. Chi Kwang decided to become a meditation nun and continued her studies with the great Zen teacher Kusan Sunim; she remained with him until his death in 1983.

From the early 1980s Ven. Chi Kwang received an increasing number of invitations to travel to Japan, Australia and the United States to give retreats and to attend conferences. Her return to Australia was first instigated at a conference in Sydney. In 1998 members of a Korean lay Buddhist group, *Yondung Hoa* (the Lotus Lantern) invited her to come to Melbourne. Members of this group found a 108 acre property near Daylesford and asked Ven. Chi Kwang to set it up as a Korean Buddhist centre. After consultation with her teacher, Myong Sog Sunim, Ven. Chi Kwang decided to return to Australia. Within a short time the required funds were raised and the property near Daylesford was purchased in 1998. While the house on the property was being renovated, Ven. Chi Kwang moved to a house in the nearby town of Hepburn Springs. A small group of students grew around Ven. Chi Kwang, who was offering regular meditation classes. The plans to develop the Buddhist centre faced mounting difficulties posed by local council requirements and regulations, which eventually made the development of the centre impossible, and in 2002 the Daylesford property was sold. Soon after this Ven. Chi Kwang with the help of the Korean community in Melbourne, found and purchased a 30 acre property in Emerald, in Melbourne's outer east. Despite earlier assurances of the council's approval of the plan to build a Buddhist centre on the property, changes to the council's regulations meant that permission to have a house of worship built on the premises was denied, and the project came to a halt. The property in Emerald was sold in 2003 and Ven. Chi Kwang relocated to the current premises on a 40 acre property in Kinglake.

Ven. Chi Kwang describes the Seon Centre as a "hermitage" set up for those who are drawn to Zen:

Some Zen groups like to draw on a lot of people by doing lots of orientation and lots of retreats and by advertising these activities very widely. I don't approach it like this. I feel if people have an interest in Buddhism they will come back. So, I am playing it by ear; those who want to come, will come. My students are widespread and creating a body of students can take a very long time. I advertise my activities through word of mouth, not formally advertising things. The number of people attending retreats range from 27 to 38 and these are people who know nothing or little about Buddhism, and out of all these who come there are about half dozen only who are jelling as future Buddhists and only half of these may in the future become my students.

Ven. Chi Kwang's method of delivering the Dharma is inspired by the teachings of Chinul, a founding teacher of Song Kwang Sa order to which Ven. Chi Kwang belongs. Chinul revived Buddhism in Korea through creating the Chong Hye community, which emphasises the cultivation of wisdom and calm by following a five-fold method involving the study of Buddhism, the practice of meditation, keeping *vinaya*, or the monastic rules, monastic education and finally the ability to disseminate to and interact with lay people. This five-fold formula forms the basis of Korean Buddhism today and also informs Ven. Chi Kwang's future plans for the Seon Centre. Long-term plans for the Seon Centre include offering a three-month long retreat on an annual basis for around 10 people. The program will involve work, chanting, a study program, meditation, artistic work or nature-related activities and social awareness activities which could involve going outside the retreat: for instance, to visit aged-care facilities. Currently Ven. Chi Kwang is only offering shorter week-long retreats. Impediments to having longer retreats include local council regulations and the cost of liability insurance, which is around \$3 000 per year and is prohibitive for a small group such as the Seon Centre. Another long-term plan at the centre is the training of lay teachers, which involves taking lay robes, Precepts and social responsibility. According to Ven. Chi Kwang, 'this has come out of Korea and been further developed in Asia and the United States and I want this to happen in Australia. So developing like a monastic but with lay dimensions such as having jobs and family'.

Activities

In addition to the development of the Seon Centre and her overseas commitments, Ven. Chi Kwang has also been travelling widely to offer study groups and classes on chanting and the formal meal rituals to her students. Since her return to Melbourne in 1998, Ven. Chi Kwang has had a relationship of mutual support with the Bob Gye Sa Korean Buddhist Society and has been actively supporting the nuns at the society. She also has some involvement in the activities of the Korean Buddhist community in Sydney. Ven Chi Kwang has been a speaker at conferences in Australia and overseas, in the Buddhist Summer School in Melbourne, at meetings of the Rotary Club, and has also given introductory talks on Buddhism at schools. She is involved with the Buddhist Council of Victoria's prison chaplaincy program, visiting the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (Deer Park), and has been supporting the Buddhist education

program, which is an initiative of the Buddhist Council of Victoria, by offering advice, donations and educational material. Ven. Chi Kwang has been taking a very active role in inter-faith dialogues, has offered Zen and art workshops and conducted annual retreats in Santa Sophia Monastery for the past four years. The retreats have been attended by around 15 Christian monks and nuns. She takes an active role in the activities of the broader Buddhist community in Victoria and Australia through her involvement with the Buddhist Council of Victoria, the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils; she is also the vice-chair of the Australian Sangha Council. Ven. Chi Kwang has represented Australian Buddhist Nuns in a number of functions, the latest of which was her attendance in St. Peter's Cathedral for a service for Pope John Paul II.

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Theravadin Buddhist centres

Buddhist Society of Victoria

History

The Buddhist Society of Victoria (BSV) was formed on the 18th of April 1953 by Leonard Bullen, Sydney Hill, Leslie Oates and Len Henderson. The society held its first public meeting on the 17th October 1953 in a small meeting room in the Savoy Building in Russel Street, Melbourne. This was followed by regular meetings which over the years attracted more and more people. From April 1954 onwards the Buddhist Society of Victoria began to invite Buddhist teachers to visit and give lectures on Buddhism. The first was the visit of Ven. U Thittila, a Buddhist monk from Burma, who visited Melbourne in 1954. Over the years a large number of Theravadin monks and nuns have been invited by the Buddhist Society of Victoria to offer Dharma talks and meditation. The increase in the number of activities offered by the society and the growing number of people attending the activities required larger premises, and the society bought a house in Richmond in 1975. The premises of the Buddhist Society of Victoria have been used by Buddhist groups from different traditions on a one off as well as on a regular basis for a variety of activities. Since December 1993 the Buddhist Society of Victoria has been located in their current location in the inner eastern suburb of Malvern.

The Buddhist Society of Victoria is a centre for the learning and practice of the Buddha's teachings. Special emphasis is given to the Theravada tradition and the resident monks and nuns are all Theravadin. At the same time, the society encourages an attitude of tolerance towards all Buddhist schools.

Organisation and membership

The Buddhist Society of Victoria is run by a management committee of nine who are elected in March each year by the members of the society. There are also a number of sub-committees which handle special tasks.

Instead of a resident abbot the Buddhist Society of Victoria has visiting teachers, mostly monks and occasionally nuns, who stay at the centre for a period ranging from days to a few months, and occasionally up to three years. The visiting sangha are accommodated in a separate house next to the centre. They are not involved in the running of the Buddhist Society

of Victoria and although some take part in committee meetings, their role at the centre consists of offering religious activities such as Dharma and meditation classes and retreats.

A unique characteristic of the Buddhist Society of Victoria is its multi-ethnic membership, which is composed of Anglo-Australians, Sri Lankans, Chinese, Burmese, Thais and Nepalese. Although the founding members were Anglo-Australians, very soon after its inception the Buddhist Society of Victoria began to attract members of the diverse ethnic Buddhist groups in Melbourne. In 1956 the society invited an American monk, Phra Sumangalo; this visit brought together members of the Burmese, Sri Lankan and Thai community who lived in Melbourne and led to the formation of the Buddhist Association of Victoria. This group held meetings and continued to bring together Asian and Australian Buddhists. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the society attracted Sri Lankan students who came to Australia under the Colombo Plan to undertake tertiary studies. They were "overjoyed" to find a Buddhist society in Melbourne, and were active participants at the Buddhist Society of Victoria. This ethnically diverse membership continues to the present day; currently Anglo-Australians account for around 50% of the members and the other 50% are ethnic Buddhists. The ethnically diverse membership at the Buddhist Society of Victoria has led to a more dynamic environment and at the same time posed a number of challenges relating to issues such as the ordination of nuns, and their role and status within the Buddhist Society of Victoria. According to Elizabeth Bell, who represented the Buddhist Society of Victoria in this study, 'the Buddhist Society of Victoria is not an ultra conservative society but a very mixed society'. Consequently, there is a disparity of views between those who have been brought up as Buddhists from childhood, who usually feel more comfortable following tradition, and those who do not adhere as closely to the traditions.

Currently the Buddhist Society of Victoria has 273 registered members, although the activities offered at the centre attract twice this number.

Activities

The Buddhist Society of Victoria has played a key role in establishing Buddhism in Victoria at a time when organised Buddhism was just beginning to take root in Australia. Indeed it was named the Buddhist Society of Victoria because at the time of its inauguration it was the only Buddhist society in Victoria. For the first few years after its inception, the society attracted very few members and offered a limited range of activities. Nonetheless, it fulfilled an important role by creating an awareness of the presence of Buddhism in Victoria among the hitherto isolated individual Buddhists. This is how Elizabeth Bell described her experience of being a Buddhist in Melbourne in the early 1950s, 'Before the society was founded, those of us in Victoria who were interested in Buddhism were, on the whole, isolated students with little contact -except by way of correspondence- with others of similar interests'. Writing of her experience after she attended a talk organised by the Buddhist Society of Victoria, Elizabeth Bell says, 'I looked at the people in the hall which was full. So, there were others in Melbourne who were interested in Buddhism'. The society successfully created a network among Buddhists in Melbourne; this was achieved in a number of ways. Len Bullen ran an

information centre which gave information on Buddhism to those who were interested; the society ran an increasingly varied program of talks, meditation, retreats and study groups. In June 1969 the society hosted the first Buddhist Symposium to be held in Australia in Warburton, Victoria. These symposiums continued for a number of years. The Buddhist Society of Victoria held its first retreat in 1972 in Mt Macedon, led by Ven. Somoloka.

More than 40 years after its inception the Buddhist Society of Victoria continues to take an active role in promoting Buddhism. The society offers weekly programs, special events, courses, workshops, retreats and talks. On weekends the centre offers meditation, chanting and Dharma talk; this is followed by a shared community lunch. Other activities at the centre include courses on Buddhist meditation, from beginner to advanced levels, introductory courses on Buddhism, chants (mostly in *Pali*), and the recitation of Precepts and *sutras*. There is also an ongoing group that studies the *Pali* canon. Children's classes are offered on Sundays during the school term. The society also offers three residential meditation retreats annually, which are attended by around sixty people. There are also one-day retreats which are held at the premises of the centre; these occur at least three or four times a year depending on the availability of teachers. Special events celebrated at the Buddhist Society of Victoria include *Vesak*, the Rains Retreat, when the society formally invites a monk to spend the Rains Retreat at the centre, and *Katina* celebration at the end of the Rains Retreat, when the community makes offerings of new robes and personal items to the resident monks. The society has an extensive collection of books from all Buddhist traditions which may be read by all inside the library. Borrowing books from the library is reserved to the society's members. All activities offered at the centre are available to the public for free; the residential retreats are an exception where minimal fees to cover the cost of food and accommodation are charged.

The Buddhist Society of Victoria has also played an important role in promoting the formation of the Buddhist Council of Victoria. The Buddhist Society of Victoria hosted the initial meetings to discuss the formation of the Buddhist Council of Victoria as well as the council's first Annual General Meeting. The Buddhist Society of Victoria invites school groups who regularly visit the centre to hear introductory talks on Buddhism and Buddhist meditation. It also offers a hospital chaplaincy program, and over the years has made donations to support orphanages in Bangladesh, contributed to the Tibetan Relief Fund and also offered ongoing aid to the victims of disasters around the world, such as the recent Asian Tsunami.

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Cambodian Buddhist Association of Victoria

History and lineage

According to the 2001 census there are 22 979 Cambodia-born people living in Australia, 39.2% or 9 003 of whom live in Victoria. The largest number of Cambodia-born people in Melbourne live in the Local Government Areas of Greater Dandenong (4 295 or 47.7%), Kensington (1 030 or 11.4%) and Whitehorse (570 or 6.3%). The Number of Cambodians living in Victoria who practice Buddhism is 6 945 or 77.2% of the total population.¹⁹ The Cambodian Buddhist Association of Victoria is the largest of the four Cambodian Buddhist centres in Melbourne. The association was established in 1985 at a house in Noble Park which was bought by the community. From 1985 to 1988 the association was led by a number of different resident monks. In 1988 the community invited Ven. Phrea Sudhep Nan, to become the chief monk and the head of the association. Ven. Phrea Sudhep Nan, who is a native of the Kompong Chhnang province in Cambodia, was ordained in Vat Chres, Cambodia, in 1972 and arrived in Australia in 1988. Following his acceptance of the position the association was incorporated in January 1988. A rapid increase in the groups' membership soon followed and necessitated the purchase of a larger venue. Following discussions with the group it was decided to build a large temple. Funding for the project was raised from within the community and a four acre property was bought in 1992; construction commenced in 1993, and the temple was opened in 1995.

The temple has a large hall located towards the back of the property. This is the main gathering hall, where various religious and cultural events are held. There is a kitchen and a soccer field at the back of the main hall. Across the yard there is a *sima*, or shrine room, which is built in the traditional Cambodian style. The *sima* is used for meditation and is an important part of the temple, where religious ceremonies such as the ordination of monks takes place. Close to the front entrance of the temple there is a brick house which was part of the original property; this is used by the community to accommodate nuns and other visitors to the centre. Adjacent to this is a large new two storey monks' residence. There is a community roster to care for the daily needs of the monks such as offering food.

The increase in the number of members not only led to the construction of the temple, but also to an increase in the number of monks who reside at the centre. In 1989 Ven. Sovann Srey joined the association. Ven. Sovann Srey, who is a native of the Kompong Speu province of Cambodia, was ordained in Thailand in 1980 and arrived in Australia in 1989. He is a senior monk at the temple and the president of the Cambodian Buddhist Monks Council of Australia and New Zealand. Since 1999, Ven. Sam Ol has also been a resident monk at the centre. He was born in the Pursat province of Cambodia and was ordained in Vat Preah Malou, Cambodia, in 1971. He has been living in Australia since 1997.

The Cambodian Buddhist Association of Victoria has been taking a progressive approach to the practice of Buddhism in the Cambodian tradition. This is in part maintained through the

continuous exchange of monks with Buddhist monasteries in Cambodia, which provides stimulation and insight within the centre and helps it avoid stagnation. As a part of this exchange program there are currently three visiting monks at the centre. Thay Horn, a community representative, explained the role of these exchanges:

We sponsor Buddhist monks from Cambodia who stay for over two months; this will help them understand how we practice in Australia. Also we like to learn from them about what is happening in Cambodia and especially as they modernise and encounter new problems which did not exist when we lived there.

Difficulties in maintaining this program of exchange have been posed by a lack of understanding on the part of the Department of Immigration and the Australian Embassy staff in Cambodia as far as the sponsoring of the monks is concerned.

Organisation

The association is run by two executive committees. The temple committee is a religious body, and deals with the religious needs of the community. Ven. Phrea Sudhep Nan and Ven. Sovann Srey are the chief executives of the temple committee. There is also a second committee which deals with practical tasks and is elected by members of the association. More specific areas of activity are relegated to eight sub-committees; these include sports, fundraising, cultural activities and aged care services. The members of the association can become formally involved in the running of these committees and there are around 100 members who offer varying degrees of service to these committees. The two executive committees work side by side and have joint monthly meetings. The association has around 300 financial members all of whom are Cambodian Australians.

Activities

The association runs a number of religious, cultural and welfare activities. These include weekly Dharma classes, classes on Buddhist philosophy and psychology and two meditation retreats every year. Members also regularly attend the centre to take part in daily chanting and prayer services or to talk to the abbot and the monks, and get advice regarding a range of issues, both religious and personal. In addition to the formal religious activities, the centre offers blessing ceremonies at weddings, after the birth of a new child, when a new house or business is purchased, and also conducts funerals. The main festivals celebrated at the centre are the Rains Retreat, *Katina* robe offerings at the end of the Rains Retreat, the New Year celebration and the festival of All Souls (*Pcum Ben*). These festivals are attended by several thousand people.

The centre is also a place where members celebrate and maintain their common cultural

heritage. The centre fosters a range of cultural activities, and has been running the Khmer Cultural Resource Centre which offers Khmer cultural programs to the community, such as educational programs at local schools. There are regular sporting activities at the centre, and it operates youth groups as well as a group for elderly members. A recent addition to the centre has been a multi-purpose facility which houses the Khmer Language School which has been very active. It was started in 2005, and has 120 students and five teachers. It is accredited by the Victorian Ministry of Education and is also a member of the Ethnic Schools Association of Victoria. In addition to regular language classes, the centre also runs workshops for teachers to share ideas about innovative teaching methods and related subjects. The facilities at the Khmer Language School include a library and resource centre which is open to public, and which contains a wide range of material on the Khmer language and Buddhism in Khmer and in English.²⁰ The important role of the association in the area of community support and development has been recognised by the State Government. The centre recently received a \$30 000 grant to carry out a feasibility study to determine the areas of need within the community, and propose more effective ways of meeting those needs.

The association offers a prison chaplaincy service to visit and counsel inmates. It has participated in the inter-faith network and contributed to charitable causes. The association also actively supports the Buddhist education program in primary schools which was initiated by the Buddhist Council of Victoria.

The centre has some exchanges with the aboriginal community: after the completion of the temple, to honour the aboriginal owners of the land on which the temple is built, it was decided to construct a hut at one corner of the property where during every major festival and ceremony offerings of fruit and incense are made to the traditional owners of the land. Making offerings to the ancestors is a traditional practice in Cambodian Buddhism. This respectful practice was later acknowledged: representatives from the association were invited to an award ceremony in Healesville which was also attended by aboriginal elders. At this ceremony the centre was presented with a rock decorated with traditional aboriginal fingerprint paintings. This rock adorns the altar in the community house at the centre.

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Dhamma Sukha Meditation Centre Inc.

History

According to the 2001 census there are 10 973 Burmese-born residents in Australia, and 1 191 of them live in Victoria. Dhamma Sukha is one of the two Burmese centres in Melbourne which cater for the Burmese Buddhist community, which account for 30.0% of the total Burma-born people in Victoria. The centre is located in the Local Government Area of Greater Dandenong, which has the highest concentration of Burmese-born in Melbourne (153 or 12.9%).²¹

Dhamma Sukha is one of the more recent Buddhist centres in Melbourne and was established in 2004. The abbot of the centre is Ven. Ashin Pandita Sayadaw. Ven. Sayadaw was ordained in Burma in 1984 by the world renowned Buddhist teacher Master Sayadaw U Pandita, and studied with him until 1998. Ven. Sayadaw visited Melbourne for the first time in 2004 to teach the children's program at Pandita Ram Melbourne Meditation Centre. The program was well received by the children as well as the parents. Soonlee Fu, the current president of Dhamma Sukha's management committee, described the response of the community in the following way:

The parents were very impressed by his method of delivering the Dharma and teaching meditation to the children; the parents were worried about the adverse effects of the culture on their children, who could lose their identity and lose their morality, and were keen to expose the children to Buddhist practice and beliefs.

After Ven. Sayadaw's return to Burma, interested community members held informal discussions and decided to formally apply to Ven Sayadaw to lead the community as a spiritual guide. Consequently, a group who represented the community went to Burma and invited him to come and take up the position of spiritual leader of the group. Because of his existing teaching commitments in Buddhist centres overseas, Ven. Sayadaw was only able to come to Melbourne for a short visit. During this visit he stayed at a house rented by a core group of around thirty people, mostly Burmese and some Malaysians, where he offered classes to adults and children. During this visit Ven. Sayadaw was impressed by the enthusiasm of both the adults and the children who participated in his classes and accepted the position of spiritual leader of the community. The idea of formally starting a centre was initiated soon after, and an inaugural meeting was held where a committee was elected to oversee the establishment of the centre. The community, with some financial help from Malaysian centres where Ven. Sayadaw taught, raised the funds to purchase the current venue. The centre was formally opened in November 2004.

The current premises of Dhamma Sukha were formerly owned by a local Vietnamese

Buddhist centre and as such it is well suited to the current needs of the community. After taking possession, the house was renovated and improved through the voluntary labour of community members. A large collection of photos on the dining room wall at the centre show members at work during various stages of the renovation, demonstrating the enormous work that was put in by the volunteers. Soonlee Fu described the dedication of the community during the renovation of the centre, 'they were here straight after work without their dinner and stayed till midnight and came back again the next day and did the same thing; and this went on for quite some time'. Currently the centre contains a large shrine room which can seat around thirty people and is used for meditation and retreats; its large alter is decorated in the traditional Burmese style and most of the devotional objects were shipped in from Burma. The main building includes an office, communal areas consisting of a large kitchen and dining room, and accommodation for Ven. Sayadaw. There are plans to extend the facilities at the centre; the committee is currently in the process of getting permits from the local council and raising the necessary funds to build a dormitory and amenities block, which will enable the centre to offer long-term residential retreats and courses.

Organisation

Ven. Sayadaw is the spiritual head of the Dhamma Sukha Centre and gives advice at all levels on issues relating to the running of the centre. The management committee consists of 16 members and is responsible for the day-to-day running and administration of the centre. The management committee is elected by the centre's members. The centre has around 50 members who receive the centre's newsletter, which is published in English and Burmese once every three months. The centre relies on the members' contributions to function and in particular for the daily offerings of meal to Ven. Sayadaw. The majority of members are Burmese with the exception of a few Malaysians and Anglo-Australians. The membership has become more ethnically diverse since some who attended Ven. Sayadaw's regular teachings at the Buddhist Society of Victoria have joined the centre.

Activities

The centre runs a program of regular activities which includes meditation sessions twice a week, as well as weekly Dharma classes and discussion groups. There is a one-day silent retreat on Sundays, which involves walking and sitting meditation and talks by Ven. Sayadaw. All these activities are freely available to the public. A core focus of the centre is on children and their education in Buddhist values and beliefs. The children's classes have been very well received by the community and the children in particular. Ven. Sayadaw incorporates stories about the Buddha's life, picture books and comics to impart an understanding of Buddhist values, beliefs and history to the children from eight years old to teenagers. As an extension of the children's education program, the centre is planning to arrange school visits for Ven. Sayadaw. In addition to the strictly religious activities, the centre supports the Burmese

community in a number of ways. These include giving blessings at weddings and attending funeral services. Ven. Sayadaw also offers guidance and gives advice to members who approach him with personal or family problems. The advice may be sought informally, for example when members come to bring Ven. Sayadaw his daily meal, they may seek help and advice; or they may approach Ven. Sayadaw formally through prior appointment. Ven. Sayadaw's approach differs from conventional counselling in that he helps individuals to redefine and solve their problems from within a Buddhist perspective:

It is important to see that their suffering is caused by the state of their mind and to teach them how to meditate and concentrate their minds; and through mindfulness and cultivation of morality they will reduce their suffering. So we teach them to solve their problems by taking care of their minds. [...] I see my role as being available to the members all day long to offer Buddha's teachings, spiritual advice, meditation and moral preservation.

Ven. Sayadaw's vision for Dhamma Sukha Centre is to establish it as a fully fledged meditation centre in the Mahasi tradition of Burmese Buddhism, by offering long meditation retreats. Another future plan for the centre is the running of the novitiate program for boys and girls who wish to take short-term ordination (for instance during the school holidays). The training of the boys (*samanera*) and girls (*Sikkhavati*) includes a shaving ceremony, ordination ceremony and the handing of the robes. The novitiate follow a daily routine which includes chanting, Dharma study and meditation. At the end of the training period the participants take oral and written exams. This program is based on the Novitiate for *samanera/sikkhavati* program of the Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre (MBMC). MBMC was founded in 1982 by Ven. Phra Khru Dhammabarnchanvud (Luang Por) and follows the *Vipassana* method of meditation laid down by Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw Aggamahapandita of the Mahasi Meditation Centre in Burma. Ven. Sayadaw has been the chief resident monk and the spiritual adviser of the MBMC novitiate program, and regularly visits the centre. Ven. Sayadaw describes the program in Malaysia in the following terms:

The program is organised with the objective of giving participants an insight into the life of a Buddhist monk in the Theravada Tradition and to instil an awareness that a life of abstinence and mindful observance of the Precepts will lead to happiness. It is also our aspiration and hope that after the successful completion of our program, *samaneras* and *sikkhavatis* would return to join us as members of the sangha to propagate the Buddha Dhamma.

Special events celebrated at the centre include *Vesak* and the Water Festival, which is the Burmese traditional way of celebrating *Vesak*, and the *Katina* robe offerings at the end of the Rains Retreat.

Ven. Sayadaw emphasises the primary focus of the centre as the teaching of Buddhist meditation and morality based on the Five Precepts and the Noble Eightfold Path. Cultural activities and community welfare programs are therefore considered secondary. Ven Sayadaw acknowledges the importance of welfare programs which alleviate suffering, however he emphasises that learning about the underlying causes of suffering and the path to overcoming suffering is the primary focus in Buddhist practice, 'we should study ourselves first and then we can help others'. Although the centre does not run a formal welfare program, it encourages compassion, taking care of those who suffer and offering help where help is needed. This approach is the motive behind the children's program which is a primary focus of the centre.

According to Soonlee Fu, 'the best time to teach Dharma is when they are children and the children's programs are intended to safeguard against problems that often occur in later years'. The centre does not promote the Burmese culture in any formal way. The preservation of the Burmese culture is secondary to the main aim of the centre, which is to teach the Dharma. For instance, although the children's classes are taught in both Burmese and English, the content of the course is based on the fundamentals of Buddhism and Buddhist morality.

In addition to the regular activities offered by the centre, Ven. Sayadaw also takes an active role in the broader Buddhist teaching and meditation in Melbourne. Ven. Sayadaw taught at the annual Buddhist Summer School in 2004 and 2005. The centre also has a relationship with the Buddhist Society of Victoria, where Ven. Sayadaw has been offering regular Dharma talks and meditation classes. Furthermore, the centre is a member of the Buddhist Council of Victoria and maintains a loose association with other Buddhist groups in Melbourne, participating in the activities of the Buddhist centres in the area.

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North Victorian Buddhist Association (Dahum Niketanaya)

History and lineage

According to the 2001 census, 53 460 Sri Lanka-born people live in Australia, 25 654 or 49.9% of whom live in Victoria. The biggest concentration of Sri Lanka-born people in Melbourne, 3 988, live in the Local Government Area of Greater Dandenong; this is followed by 3 493 in the Local Government Area of Casey and 3 406 in the Local Government Area of Monash. The North Victorian Buddhist Association (NVBA) is one of the six Sri Lankan Buddhist centres in Victoria which together cater for the 7 303 Sri Lankan Buddhist who live in Victoria.²²

The abbot of the North Victorian Buddhist Association is Ven. Thero Santhindriya Kotte. He had his first ordination in Sri Lanka in 1965 at the age of fourteen. In 1975 he took his higher ordination at the International Vipassana Meditation Centre of Kanduboda in Sri Lanka with the Most Ven. Sumathipala Maha Thero, from the lineage of Maha Sai Sayadaw of Burma. He remained at the International Vipassana Meditation Centre for a further two years, where he continued to study with Most Ven. Sumathipala Maha Thero.

Ven. Thero Santhindriya Kotte first visited Melbourne in 1991 after receiving an invitation from a group of Sri Lankans who had a small temple in Richmond. In 1994 he and Ven. Pemasiri, another Sri Lankan monk, were invited again by the same group of individuals to come to Melbourne to lead the Rains Retreat. It was during this second visit to Melbourne that members of the Sri Lankan community in the northern suburbs decided to establish a Buddhist centre in the area and requested Ven. Thero Santhindriya Kotte to remain at the centre and lead the community. He agreed, and after a security bond was paid by the community he was granted temporary residency.

Following the approval of the visa application, a two bedroom house in Glenroy was rented and furnished through donations by the community members. Ven. Thero Santhindriya Kotte and Ven. Pemasiri, moved to the house in late 1994. On the day of their arrival at the house in Glenroy, the group announced this event on a Sri Lankan radio station in Melbourne and a general invitation was issued to the Sri Lankan community. The visitors to the centre were offered breakfast and lunch and in the afternoon Ven. Thero Santhindriya Kotte offered a class for the children followed by a Dharma talk and meditation and prayer for adults. Within a few months the centre attracted a large community and the membership grew from just a few to over a hundred. The members were Sri Lankans who lived in the northern suburbs of Melbourne and Geelong. By the end of the Rains Retreat the house at Glenroy was too small and the community held the end of the Rains Retreat festival at the local community centre.

At the end of the Rains Retreat the group requested Ven. Thero Santhindriya Kotte to help them establish a centre and remain in Australia as the abbot of the centre. He granted their request and the North Victorian Buddhist Association was formally established and a committee elected.

In 1996 following complaints by the neighbours about the noise and the traffic in the street, the group bought a larger house in the northern suburb of Broadmeadows. The relatively affordable price of housing in the area attracted an increasing number of Sri Lankans. Consequently the group very soon outgrew the house and the centre was enlarged by building a shrine room in the backyard; the group also purchased the adjoining house where they held classes. However, once again following complaints by neighbours about the noise, the council advised the group to look for a larger property where the group could continue to conduct activities without disturbing the peace of the neighbourhood. In 1998 the group purchased a 33 acre property in Yuroke, approximately 14 kilometres north-west of Melbourne. The original house on the land was converted into the monks' residence and funds were raised to construct additional buildings, which include a shrine room, class rooms, kitchen and amenities, with plans to add an extra kitchen and a retreat hall at a later time as funds become available. The initial construction was completed and the centre was opened in the year 2000.

Organisation

Ven. Thero Santhindriya Kotte is the spiritual leader of the North Victorian Buddhist Association and all the major decisions rest with him. He is assisted by three resident monks who are currently staying at the temple on temporary religious worker visas. The day to day affairs of the centre are managed by a committee of ten who are elected by the members at the annual general meeting. There are several sub-committees which deal with specific tasks. The temple relies on the voluntary contributions of the community for its maintenance, as well as the up-keep of the monks. The association has around 120 financial members, and several hundred casual members. With the exception of a few Chinese and Anglo-Australians, the members are Sri Lankans.

Activities

Since its inception in 1994, the North Victorian Buddhist Association has been actively meeting the religious and cultural needs of its community. The community have the opportunity to participate in meditation, prayer and chanting offered at the centre on a daily basis. There are weekly Dharma discussion classes and Precepts classes, as well as language and cultural classes for children. Once a month the centre offers a day-long meditation retreat. The centre plays an important role in the daily life of its community. The members regularly visit the temple to receive blessings and to pray, particularly in times of sickness, before the birth of a child and before travel. The monks at the centre also offer advice and guidance

relating to a range of issues, both religious and personal, to the members. The main religious festivals at the centre include *Vesak* celebration and *Katina* robe offerings.

Mala, one of the founding members of the association, emphasised the role of the association as both a religious and a cultural resource to the community:

Buddhism is very important for us and the parents want their children to retain their religion and the culture and language of Sri Lanka, and this is the reason we run classes for children. The weekly classes for adults and children gets the whole family involved in religious activities. So, instead of parents dropping their children here and leaving, we get them to come and do activities by offering adult classes at the same time that children take their classes. We try to maintain the temple like a traditional temple in Sri Lanka. For example we get the children to offer incense and flowers to the Lord Buddha on Sundays and to also play the drums, which is how it is traditionally done in Sri Lanka.

In addition to the activities that are offered to the members, the North Victorian Buddhist Association also collaborates with different Buddhist centres on a range of activities and there are plans to formalise this by creating a Sangha Association. This will be an Australia-wide association which is comprised of monks and nuns from both Theravada and Mahayana traditions. The aim of the Sangha Association is to provide support and help for the Australian sangha in a number of areas such as help with legal issues, visa applications and health-related issues. Another objective of the Sangha Association is to establish an education centre for the training of monks and nuns from Australia and overseas, as well as to offer ordination to those who wish to become a monk or nun in both Mahayana and Theravada traditions. The Sangha Association has been holding meetings in different states around Australia; the first two were held in Melbourne and in Sydney in 2005. The Sangha Association is currently in the process of drawing a constitution which will be discussed in their third meeting in Queensland. Furthermore, the North Victorian Buddhist Association is also involved in a number of community programs. Ven. Thero Santhindriya Kotte is involved in the prison chaplaincy program which is organised by the Buddhist Council of Victoria. He also makes monthly visits to the Royal Children's Hospital. Ven. Thero Santhindriya Kotte visits the local primary schools and offers introductory talks on Buddhism, and regularly invites groups of school children to visit the centre.

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Wat Dhammarangsee Mahamakut Foundation Inc.

History and lineage

Wat Dhammarangsee was the first Buddhist temple to be established in Melbourne, and is one of four Thai Buddhist centres in Victoria. According to the 2001 census, of the 23 600 Thai-born people in Australia, 5 487 or 23.3% live in Victoria. Most of the Thai-born people in Victoria live in the Local Government Area of Greater Dandenong (637 or 11.6%), Melbourne City (400 or 7.3%) and Boroondara (389 or 7.1%).²³

The origins of Wat Dhammarangsee date back to 1982 when Theravadin Buddhists of Thai, Lao, Cambodian, Sri Lankan, Indian and Anglo-Australian origins formed the Buddhist Foundation of Victoria. In June 1984 the group took a six month lease on a house in the eastern Melbourne suburb of Forest Hill and invited Ven. Chaokhun Suviriyon and Ven. Phra Yoi Pussiyon to spend the Rains Retreat at this house. The community supported the monks during this time and the monks served the community by offering a variety religious activities. At the end of the six months it became evident that there was strong community support for the continued stay of the two monks, who were asked to extend their stay for another six months; Ven. Chaokhun Suviriyon was asked to take up the position of abbot at the centre. At the end of this period Ven. Chaokhun Suviriyon was asked to remain at the centre indefinitely, and he accepted this proposition. In June 1985 the Buddhist Foundation of Victoria and the committee of monks' residence merged, and in January 1986 the name Wat Dhammarangsee was given to the centre and the group decided to purchase a permanent place. The groups' original plan to establish a large centre in the country was later changed and they decided to buy a smaller place in the suburbs. This not only seemed a more practical option in terms of cost, but it was also agreed that members preferred a place at a convenient distance for regular gatherings and meetings. After a period of fundraising the group purchased a house as the residence for the abbot, and in 1993 the centre also purchased the adjacent house. In 1996 the two properties were put under one title and given the current name, Wat Dhammarangsee Mahamakut Foundation Incorporated. A large multi-purpose hall was constructed and opened in 1998.

The current abbot of Wat Dhammarangsee is Ven. Phra Khru Vinaithorn Tanee. He was ordained in 1992 in Wat Phrasimahathat Buddhist temple in Bangkok and as a part of his training he did further study in the area of missionary work. In 1999 he was invited by the previous abbot of Wat Dhammarangsee, Ven. Phra Khru Yoi, to stay at the centre as a resident monk; in 2001 he became the abbot. Wat Dhammarangsee is affiliated with the Wat Phrasimahathat Buddhist order in Thailand, which covers around 50% of the running costs of Wat Dhammarangsee, as well as sending monks for short visits and long-term residency at Wat Dhammarangsee. The current abbot and the previous two abbots of Wat Dhammarangsee, were all ordained and completed their training at Wat Phrasimahathat Monastery in Bangkok.

Organisation

Ven. Phra Khru Vinaithorn Tanee oversees the running of the temple and organises its activities. Resident monks at the centre work under direction from the abbot. Currently there are four resident monks at the centre. Because of visa restrictions, the resident monks can generally stay for a maximum of two years; in special circumstances it is possible for them to apply for an extension to their visas. In addition to the sangha the centre also has a management committee of five. The abbot is the president of the committee, and the other members are elected by the members of the lay-community. The centre has around 400 members; the majority are Thai, with Laotians and Anglo-Australians constituting a small minority. Typically the Anglo-Australian Buddhists attend the meditation classes that are regularly offered at the centre, while the Thais and the Laotians participate in a broader range of activities, and support the monks by daily offering of food. Wat Dhammarangsee successfully bridges both cultures, addressing the needs of all its members.

Activities

Wat Dhammarangsee offers a wide range of religious, cultural and community support activities. The religious activities of the centre, daily chanting in *Pali* and meditation in the morning and evening, are both open to the public free of charge. On weekends the abbot offers a Dharma talk. There are two one-day retreats every year in April around the time of the Thai New Year, and before the end of the Rains Retreat in October. The retreats are usually attended by around 70 people. The short duration of the retreats is due to the lack of sufficient accommodation and other amenities, which makes it impossible for the centre to hold overnight retreats. The centre also has a collection of books on Buddhism, mainly in Thai and a few in English. The library is open to the public. There is also a major community festival at the centre each month. These festivals include *Visak Puja* day, the anniversary of Wat Dhammarangsee, the Rains Retreat Day, the Queen's Birthday, Ancestor Day (*sart*), the end of Rains Retreat celebration, the Thai food fair and the King's Birthday.

Since the year 2000 Wat Dhammarangsee has been offering the Sanam Luang Dhamma study course. The course, which was instigated by Ven. Phra Khru Vinaithorn Tanee, is taught in both English and Thai every Sunday afternoon at the centre and may also be undertaken by correspondence. The course runs for three years and the participants are required to sit an exam at the end of each year. The centre has also used some of the materials from the program as the basis for preparing a course on Buddhism at VCE level, which will be offered to high school students who are doing Asian Studies as an elective. According to Ken Chan, a community representative:

This course is a real contribution of our temple. In Thailand this course is only available to the monks, and all monks have to do this course. Here we are very lucky to be able to do what

is really a part of the monks' education. When some students had to do the exam in English we had to write to Thailand to ask permission if the exam can be done in English and they granted the permission.

The course is also a significant community activity and at the end of the three years as many as 32 monks from Canberra, Sydney and Adelaide, as well as the home temple in Thailand, are invited to join in the end-of-the-course celebration.

Wat Dhammarangsee runs programs for children from 5 years old to teenagers. These include weekend Thai language classes and Thai cultural activities where children learn things such as folk dance. Three times a year children have the opportunity to perform in the community festivals at the centre. Each year the centre invites six schools to visit the temple where they are offered a Dharma talk and given the opportunity to try short meditation sessions. The centre also supports the community by conducting funeral and memorial services, and offering birthday and wedding blessings. The sangha at the centre offer counselling and advice to community members who are facing difficulties. With regards to serious issues such as drug or gambling problems, the centre refers individuals to the appropriate agencies. The centre is also a resource for newly arrived Thai migrants, who often visit the temple as soon as they arrive in Melbourne, seeking advice and information.

Wat Dhammarangsee has been actively maintaining a traditional approach to the practice of Buddhism. For instance, the sangha at the centre have upheld the traditional practice of begging for alms. On several weekends throughout the year *uposatha* ceremony, the taking of the Eight Precepts, is held at the centre. On these occasions the participants stay at the centre overnight in order to offer traditional alms to the sangha on the following morning. Furthermore, community members who live in close proximity to the centre often notify the monks, who then go out to receive alms from these members. Nid Dickinson, who represented Wat Dhammarangsee in this study, explained that begging alms with prior arrangement is necessary:

The monks went out to beg for alms a few times at the start but each time they got back without food. The begging is done in the traditional way in that the monks practice walking meditation and go bare feet even in cold whether when they go begging. A lot of temples in Melbourne don't do this, however our abbot insists on doing what Buddha did 2500 years ago, and following the tradition which is for the monk to go and beg for food, not the food coming to the monk. However we always have a roster with people on stand-by in case the monk does not get the food. Since they only have one meal a day, we don't want them to miss out on this one meal.

The practice of begging for alms is an example of the temple's traditional approach to Buddhist practice. According to Nid Dickinson, 'Our practice is absolutely the same as in Thailand. We follow the abbot and the abbot follows the Buddha and we never change anything; this is a very strict Theravadin temple and we don't try to change things. Except minor things, like if you cannot sit cross legged you can sit on a chair'. The main focus of Wat Dhammarangsee is the practice of meditation and an in-depth study of the Buddha's teachings, following the traditional Theravadin path where only minimum changes have been included.

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Wat Mai Buddhavongs

History, lineage and organisation

According to the 2001 census there are 9 562 Laos-born people living in Australia, 2 024 of whom live in Victoria. The number of Laos-born Buddhists in Victoria is 1 590. The Lao-born population in Melbourne is 1 904; the area with the largest concentration is the Local Government Area of Brimbank (298 or 14.7%) followed by Whitehorse (195 or 9.6%) and Greater Dandenong (183 or 9.0%).²⁴ Located in the Local Government Area of Brimbank, Wat Mai Buddhavongs is one of the three Laotian Buddhist centres in Victoria. It is also the most recently established; the other centres were established over twenty years ago and have a much larger membership.

Wat Mai Buddhavongs was established in July 2002. Manivanh Chanla, a founding member of the group, described the events that led to the formation of the centre. For several weeks in 2001 Manivanh Chanla had to travel several hours everyday from St. Albans to Mitcham, to practice the funeral rites of a member of the Lao-Australian society. According to Manivanh Chanla, 'in the Lao tradition we rely a lot on the monks, especially when someone is sick or dying, and therefore it is very important that we have a temple close to where we live. The other two Lao temples in Springvale and Mitcham are too far'. Following this, she discussed the possibility of having a Lao temple in closer proximity to the northern suburbs to cater for the large Laotian community in the area. This initially received negative responses; some thought the current temples in Melbourne were adequate, or that it would be too difficult to start a new temple. Others liked the idea, but did not have the resources to help start the new centre. Furthermore, Manivanh Chanla had to challenge patriarchal views within the group which, because of her gender, resisted her role as the initiator of a major project such as this. However, the support of a few like-minded individuals within the community kept the idea alive, and discussions continued within the community for nearly ten months.

A turning point in the process of establishing the temple was when Manivanh Chanla found out about the Buddhist Council of Victoria and contacted the council to obtain information about starting a centre. She was advised to contact Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan from the Quang Minh Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Braybrook. The meeting was a positive one; Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan gave useful advice and encouragement, and shared his experience as the abbot of Quang Minh Temple. Manivanh Chanla described the outcome of the meeting in the following way, 'Ven. Phuoc Tan gave me the strength to fight; after that I spoke to a group of four or five people and asked them to invite community members to a general meeting to discuss this idea'. Another key event in the formation of Wat Mai Buddhavongs was the successful attempt to gather the Laotian community in the northern suburbs together to celebrate the New Year Festival in April 2002. The event was attended by a large number of the Laotians, and enabled the community to have a concrete experience of their common heritage as Australian-Lao Buddhists. The event required a great deal of organising, and as it

was a religious celebration a monk had to be present. The organisers invited a Theravadin monk for the occasion. Some of the Laotians living in the area contributed by lending religious accessories and items such as bowls, chairs and mats. The festival also proved a successful fundraising event, with the organisers raising \$1500. Encouraged by the presence of the community and their financial support, more meetings were organised and there was increased enthusiasm about starting a centre. This was followed by more fundraising events, with Laotians in the area hosting alms-giving ceremonies in their homes; the money that was raised was donated towards the cost of establishing a centre. These initial attempts raised enough funds to rent a house in St Albans, which was furnished through community donations. The next step in setting up the centre was to find a resident monk who would act as the religious leader of the community. Finding a Theravadin monk proved to be a difficult task. The group contacted Buddhist temples in Thailand, Laos, New Zealand and the United States with no success. Finally, Wat Prayortkeo, a Laotian temple in Sydney, was able to help by sending Ven. Khamphanh Phanthamoutto, the current abbot. Subsequently, the first committee was elected late in 2002, and the centre was established and incorporated in the same year.

Ven. Khamphanh Phanthamoutto was ordained in 1982 in Lueng Prabang in northern Laos, and was a resident monk in Wat Prayortkeo in Sydney prior to coming to Wat Mai Buddhavongs. Wat Prayortkeo in Sydney and Wat Mai Buddhavongs belong to the same lineage of Laotian Buddhism and have a close working relationship. Wat Prayortkeo has been assisting the establishment of Wat Mai Buddhavongs through offering financial help as well as sending monks to visit and live at the centre. In addition to the abbot, both resident monks in Wat Mai Buddhavongs come from Wat Prayortkeo. Wat Mai Buddhavongs has also sponsored monks from overseas to visit, and stay at the centre for up to two years. The abbot and the resident monks at the centre are responsible for the religious activities. The centre is administered by a management committee of twenty who are elected by the community every two years. The management committee is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre and activities such as fund raising and sponsorship of overseas monks. The centre has around 400 members who contribute in a variety of ways ranging from cleaning, making repairs, paying the bills and the daily offerings of food to the abbot and the monks.

After its inauguration, the centre remained at the rented house in St Albans for eight months. However, following complaints by the neighbours to the landlord about noise, the centre relocated to their current premises in St Albans, which is owned by one of the community members. The house has three bedrooms, a shrine room, an office, a kitchen and enough space to accommodate the abbot and the resident monks. The house is too small for most community events; currently these events take place at local community centres. The centre is also restricted to having only two resident monks, which is inadequate in meeting the needs of the growing community at Wat Mai Buddhavongs. In order to overcome these problems and avoid further complaints by neighbours, the community decided to purchase a property which would offer them privacy and adequate space. According to Manivanh Chanla, after discussions about the present needs of the community as well as future directions, the community arrived at the following long-term vision:

We first considered to buy a house of our own in the area, but then we thought that we will face the same problem with the neighbours again and we need a place which offers us privacy. I contacted the council, the bank and the accountants to discuss future directions for

the group, and then we decided that what they wanted was not just a temple but a place for the Lao people of Victoria, because we don't have a community place to go to, we don't have a place of our own. We want a place for the lay people, a place for the children, the youth and the elderly where we can meet and learn about not just Buddhism but our culture and language; also a place where parents can meet and where we can offer different activities [...] so instead of going to the casino you go to the temple; we try to bring people to the temple to do the good thing, not the bad thing.

In September 2003 the group purchased a 21 acre property in Rock Bank, approximately 28 kilometres west of Melbourne CBD, where the group intends to set up the first traditional Lao temple to be built in Melbourne. The plans for the new centre include a double story monks' residence, a hall for religious functions and community activities, a shrine room (*sim*) and a stupa. The construction is due to begin in 2005, pending the local council's approval. The first project will be the building of the monks' residence, which will accommodate up to seven monks and includes a large area on the ground floor which can be used by the lay community. The ground floor will also include accommodation for nuns. This will be mainly for women who take up temporary ordination during the Rains Retreat. The hall which will be large enough to accommodate 150 people will be constructed next, followed by the shrine room and the stupa. The establishment of the new centre will lead to an expansion of the religious and cultural activities that are offered at the centre so that, 'the temple will be a fully functioning temple like those in Laos'. For example, the *sim* (shrine room) at the new centre will enable the ordination of monks and nuns, which traditionally has to take place in a *sim*. The New Year celebration is another example; according to Manivanh Chanla, 'In Laos, New Year celebration happens over three days and three nights; currently we can't do this but once we have our own temple we can do this in the traditional way'.

The establishment of the new centre has been encouraged by Ven. Khamphanh Phanthamoutto who believes that the new centre will play an important role for the:

preservation of our culture and customs, for worship and practice of Buddhism and also a place of gathering of many children and their children. We will truly have a permanent and traditional Buddhist temple of our tradition in Melbourne, as other states already have their own permanent ones [...] The temple is not just a centre for our religious ceremonies and education, but also for our community services such as cultural functions (*Songkan* - Lao New Year, *Loykathong*, etc), sports and youth activities, support for the elderly citizens, [a] teaching centre for Lao language and our beautiful culture and tradition [so that the] heritage of Lao community will be passed on to our children and their children, and many generations after.²⁵

The group relies on members' donation of labour and money to support the building of the new centre. Regular working bees are held to maintain the land and members have already donated building materials. The group is active in fundraising and holds monthly fundraising events. The youth group at the centre has also made financial contributions towards the construction of the new centre. The group is also hoping to receive financial assistance from the government towards the building of the hall in the new centre which will be made available to the general public as well as for the Lao community.

Activities

Wat Mai Buddhavongs actively supports the varied needs of the Laotian community in the northern suburbs, and contributes to the well being of its members through a range of services and facilities. Wat Mai Buddhavongs recognises that many Lao cultural practices merge with Buddhism, such that it is impossible to separate the two. Therefore, the centre not only promotes Buddhism but it also aims at preserving the Lao art, culture and language.

The religious activities which take place at the centre on a daily basis are morning and evening meditation and prayer service; the lay community regularly takes part in the evening service. There are weekly Dharma classes and meditation groups. The centre has run Dharma classes for children intermittently depending on community interest. Four times a month (once every 18 days, on every Half Moon and Full Moon) the community gathers at the temple to make offering of food to the monks; on these occasions the monks offer meditation and a Dharma talk. The centre also runs an annual retreat. In addition, twice during the Rains Retreat, women have the opportunity to be ordained as nuns for a day and receive Dharma instructions. At the end of each year the centre runs a novice program for boys over the age of seven or eight (or when they are independent enough to look after themselves). This is a popular program, and many young boys in the community follow the tradition of becoming monks for a week. However due to limited space at the centre, the numbers are limited to around five participants. During their temporary ordination the novice monks follow a daily schedule of Buddhist study, chants and meditation and go on an excursion to another Buddhist centre, such as the Bodivana Monastery in Warburton, Victoria.

The temple also fosters a number of cultural activities. *Baci* and *Songkan* (or *Pimai Lao*) are the two main Lao festivals that are celebrated at the centre. The celebration incorporates *Lamvong*, a slow circular Folk dance, which is taught at the centre. Another aspects of Laotian cultural that is maintained at the centre is respect for the elderly. According to Manivanh Chanla the elderly are involved in the functioning of the centre at all levels:

They put a lot of time in the running and the maintenance of the temple. They also come to the centre to socialise and to learn new skills; [some of] the elderly get very isolated and they bring food for the monk during the day and then stay all afternoon talking to the monk and other people.

Wat Mai Buddhavongs, with the help of the Department of Human Services and the North-West Migrant Resource Centre, runs the Lao Elders Support Group. The centre also offers community information sessions on different topics, such as health and housing.

This is how Ven. Khamphanh Phanthamoutto describes his role as the abbot, and the role of the resident monks within the community:

The temple supports the community and the community supports the temple too. We teach Dhamma to the community. We support people by teaching them to be good Buddhists. It is our duty to teach Buddhist philosophy to the lay people, who as good Buddhists have to follow the monks' instructions. The second task is to help people when there is a crisis like a death in the family or when people are in hospitals; we go and visit the sick person in the

hospital and take food for them and visit the sick in their houses. We also visit the elderly in the nursing home, and take food for them.

Wat Mai Buddhavongs is involved in the activities of other Buddhist groups in Victoria. The centre actively supports other Lao and Thai temples and organises excursions to Buddhist temples from different Buddhist traditions. During these events the community offers alms to the monks and the nuns. The monks at Wat Mai Buddhavongs join the sangha at a local Sri Lankan Buddhist centre once a month for alms giving. The group has also joined other Buddhist as well as Christian church groups for the Australia Day celebration.

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Vajrayana Buddhist Centres

Atisha Centre

History and lineage

Named after Lama Atisha (982-1053 AD), the person who brought Buddhism from India to Tibet, Atisha Centre is located in a bushland setting only fifteen minutes from Bendigo, and a two-hour drive from Melbourne. Atisha Centre was established in 1981, following the donation in 1980 of 115 acres of land by one of the centre's founding members, Ian Green, and his family. Lama Yeshe, who is one of the most influential figures in transmitting the Gelug school of Vajrayana tradition to Australia, visited the property in 1981 and laid down the master plan for the centre. According to Ian Green, 'He drew this on a bit of dirt, "what we want here, we want a centre here, and have a lay community here and up there will have a monastery and right in the middle will be this great stupa", he said, "big stupa, big library inside" '. Afterwards Lama Yeshe walked to the very spot where the Great Stupa was to be built. Over the past twenty-five years, Lama Yeshe's vision has crystallised into a plan which includes a hospice, a primary school, a nunnery, a hotel, a healing centre, the great stupa, a reception centre, a Buddhist centre and a retreat area; the plan has been approved by the local council. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has paid tribute to Lama Yeshe as someone who, 'had such great scope, great vision, the power to see and have huge plans that would benefit many people'.²⁶ Atisha Centre is an instance of such great vision.

Atisha Centre incorporates three entities: Atisha Centre proper, Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery and The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion. Atisha Centre and the Great Stupa project started almost at the same time. Atisha Centre was established in early 1981, the stupa project began in August the same year following a visit by Lama Yeshe; the projected completion date is 2010. The Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery was established later and has been operating since 1999. Each of these three organisations are separate entities, and have separate areas of responsibility. There is, however, a working relationship between the three centres and they mutually benefit each other. Each organisation will be described separately in the following three sections.

Atisha centre

Atisha centre was established in 1981. The original centre consisted of a single building which is now the nuns' residence. Over time the centre has expanded and it currently consists

of a large *gompa* or shrine room (which is constructed from local clay, and can hold up to 150 people), a library, a bookshop, an office, and a kitchen and dining room. The primary aim of Atisha Centre is, 'to enable an in-depth study of Buddhism', by providing, 'instruction and a conducive environment for meditation, study and retreat'. The activities offered at Atisha Centre include weekly programs, courses, workshops and talks, retreats and special events. On a weekly basis there is meditation, a Dharma talk, a study group, a yoga group and a children's Dharma Club. Courses offered at Atisha Centre include weekend and longer courses, ranging from introduction to basic Buddhist principles, to in-depth studies of texts by great Buddhist teachers; the centre also offers regular retreats. Other regular activities at the centre include a monthly community lunch, with *Pujas* being offered three times a month. Two to three times a year the centre holds Animal Liberation Days, where yabbies that would have been used for bait are released into the dam, this is accompanied by the reciting of mantras, prayers and circumambulation of the stupa. Special events celebrated at the centre include, the *Saka Dawa* Day, White Tara practice and Maitreya prayers for the long life of the Dalai Lama, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Geshe Konchok Tsering, the head teacher at Atisha Centre.²⁷

Atisha Centre is involved in a range of community activities. Ven. David Lungtuk is a member of the chaplaincy group located at La Trobe University. Ven. Lhundrup, one of the resident monks at Atisha Centre, visits Loddon Prison near Castlemaine. Part of Lama Yeshe's plan for Atisha Centre was the development of a hospice and an aged-care facility; members of Atisha Centre are currently involved with Karuna Hospice Bendigo to provide care for those with a serious or life threatening illness, as well as to assist the aged and the frail in the community. Atisha Centre runs an education program, with representatives visiting schools. Schools are also invited to come to the centre to hear talks about comparative religion. Geshe Konchok Tsering is involved in an inter-faith group in Bendigo which meets once a month. The Great Stupa and Atisha Centre have informal involvement with the broader Buddhist community in Victoria, attending the opening of Buddhist temples, and inviting other Buddhist groups to important events at the Centre. Atisha Centre has been organising alms giving days where sangha members from different organisations are invited to Atisha and offered traditional alms.

Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery

The Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery was the first Tibetan Buddhist monastery to be built in Australia. The primary building material for the main buildings at the monastery is rammed earth, which blends in with the bush surroundings. Outside is a stupa, a large fish pond and gardens of native flora which have been mostly germinated in the two greenhouses at the centre. The monastery consists of a communal block that contains the kitchen, dining room, lounge, office, library, two bedrooms, bathrooms and the temporary *gompa*. This will be converted to a lounge room after the construction of the new *gompa*, which will be a separate building. The residential area is comprised of two separate buildings each containing four bedrooms, a toilet and a kitchen/dining room. The plans for future development include the construction of teacher's accommodation and the installation of a prayer wheel at the monastery site.

The Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery project, which was supported by the Federation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), was established by Ven. Thubten Gyatso in 1995. Ven. Tony Beaumont describes Ven. Thubten Gyatso's instrumental role in establishing the monastery:

It is because of Thubten Gyatso (Adrian Feldman) that the monastery came about. It was his incredible guru devotion to Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa, as well as his appreciation of the lamas and the whole Tibetan tradition, that energised him to build the monastery. He gave himself wholeheartedly to the actual building of the monastery -even the actual physical labour- and contributed the money, perseverance and planning. The main part of the building took place in 1995-1997. One of the principal sponsors was Salim Lee, a Chinese architect based in Perth, who put the plans together with Thubten Gyatso and gave donations. It was through their work that the monastery got going.²⁸

The monastery has been operating since 1996. The present director of the Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery is Ven. David Lungtuk. Currently Geshe Konchok Tsering, the spiritual director of Atisha Centre, as well as three monks and a novice monk, reside at the monastery.

The monastery and the Atisha Centre work closely together and support each other in a variety of ways. The monastery provides spiritual support for the Atisha Centre through offering courses in meditation, retreats, discussion groups and *pujas*. The sangha at the monastery also take an active role in supporting the community by helping those with spiritual or personal difficulties. Atisha Centre in turn supports the monastery by contributing to the Sangha Support Fund. This fund is administered by Atisha Centre and is available as a pool of money for providing financial support to the monks and nuns at the monastery; although, to date, most of the monks and nuns at the centre have had their own sponsors. Ven. Tony Beaumont describes the reciprocal relationship between Atisha Centre and the monastery in the following terms:

It seems to be that if the monastic system is to survive in the west - monks and nuns [...] need to be thinking 'what can I give back to others', rather than 'what can I get from others'. People really appreciate this and this is what is most important. We try to do that as much as possible. This is like Dharma in action; you feel good about yourself and you feel good that the monastery is doing something of value. Somehow then, the monastery gets cared for if we care for Atisha Centre as much as we can.²⁹

Currently IMI (International Mahayana Institute) is the organisation within the Federation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Buddhism (FPMT) that is responsible for the ordination and training of monks and nuns. It is hoped that through centres like Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery, sangha can be ordained in Australia.

The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion (Tse-Chen Cho-Kor Ling)

In August 1981, Lama Yeshe chose Atisha Centre as the site for The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion. Lama Zopa Rinpoche chose the great stupa of Gyantse, a famous 15th century

stupa in Tibet, as the model for the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion. The stupa will be about 50 metres square at its base and almost 50 metres high. Externally the Great Stupa will be the same size and design as the Gyantse original; inside it will be very different. It will contain a *gompa* which can hold up to 500 people, with decor that will reflect the style of the traditional large Tibetan *gompas*; there will be also a library, relics room and shrine rooms. Outside there will be a "gateway" stupa, as well as numerous other stupas around the Great Stupa.

The spiritual significance of the Great Stupa lies in its symbolic representation of the fully Enlightened mind and the path to Enlightenment. According to Ian Green:

Stupas come in different shapes and sizes and have many different meanings but the main Buddhist meaning is the Enlightened Mind. We talk of Buddha's holy body, holy speech and holy mind. Speech is represented by the *sutras*, the holy body is represented by the statues of Buddha and the mind is represented by the stupa and its particular structure. Stupas come in different shapes; the Atisha stupa has a mandala shape, and thus it symbolises enlightenment as well as the path to enlightenment, since as you go up each level on the stupa there are different shrine rooms, and as you go up the shrine rooms accommodate higher and higher deities or aspects of the Buddha, which are more and more profound. This is where many holy relics which have been offered to the great stupa will be placed, on the top level of the point of the stupa. This is another aspect of the stupa which is usually a reliquary as well: they are usually built in honour of a particular saint or a teacher.

The construction of the Great Stupa relies on both professional and voluntary labour. It has been designed by a team of architects and engineers to last 1000 years. Therefore certain tasks such as the laying of the concrete foundation were done professionally, and to the highest standards. The Great Stupa project gets financial support from members of the Atisha Centre, as well as members of the Chinese and Vietnamese Buddhist community in Australia. The biggest overseas supporter of the project is in Singapore. Donations are attracted through the centre's newsletter, e-newsletter, website and extensive travel to raise awareness of the enormous scope of the stupa project. According to Ian Green:

Some people think that it will never happen, but bit by bit people believe in it more. When every new step happens they believe in it more. So when the site was cleared I actually had someone from India send me a letter and said "I never thought that this thing would ever happen but now I see it will happen, so here is some money for it".

The stupa project involves handling large funds and in order to ensure a high level of financial accountability the Great Stupa project has a Company Limited by Guarantee structure. The Great Stupa management committee currently has seven directors who are appointed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, these are Ian Green, David Andrews, Salim Lee, Wayne Thomson, Brian Ashen, Eric Clarkson and Garrey Foulkes. Since the year 2000 Ian Green has been exclusively the director of the Great Stupa project. The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion Limited was formed in July 2003 and has overall responsibility for the Great Stupa. These responsibilities includes the design, construction and maintenance of the Great Stupa and the numerous holy objects inside and outside the stupa. The management committee is also responsible for raising the funds required to maintain and holy objects, and to ensure the proper preservation of holy relics, texts and objects.

In order to create a replica of the great stupa of Gyantse, an immense quantity of artwork and holy objects from Tibet and India will be incorporated into the stupa and intricate artwork on the stupa will be done by a Tibetan artist. As such, the construction of the stupa will benefit the preservation of Tibetan culture. However, the preservation of Tibetan culture is not the main focus. According to Ian Green, 'we are not focusing on preserving Tibetan culture but to create Australian Buddhism with a Tibetan flavour in terms of its heritage. But the way we express it and the way it is taught and even some of its symbolism will have an Australian style'. A major difference between the Great Stupa and other stupas is that it will contain relics of many different teachers and many different traditions, including the four different schools of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as different Buddhist traditions such as those of Burma, Malaysia, Thailand and China. Ian Green explained that the aim is to make the Great Stupa relevant to all Buddhists:

We certainly want to inherit the main thrust of Buddha's teachings, but we are also a new country, a multi-cultural society and the form of Buddhism that we have in this country should to a degree reflect that multi-cultural approach [...] There is so much cultural practices tied up in a lot of things, whereas I think what we should be doing is embracing all paths as much as possible.

Future developments

The future developments at Atisha are directed by Lama Yeshe's original vision for Atisha Centre as, 'an integrated Dharma community which would include Atisha Centre for study, meditation and retreat, a monastery for Sangha, a hospice for the aged and terminally ill and a community for lay Buddhists. Central to all these Dharma activities would be a Great Stupa'.³⁰

In order to develop a lay residential community, some of the land in the Atisha Centre has been sub-divided to create 27 residential blocks in two separate areas; these blocks may be bought or leased. The centre is also in the process of buying additional land to create more blocks. The aim of the lay community is to be a community of Buddhists who are supportive of the Federation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition and who are also, 'committed to living by basic Buddhist Precepts in a manner that minimises harm to inter-personal, native fauna and in eco-friendly ways'.³¹ In addition to the lay community, which will be based on Atisha's land, individuals affiliated with the Quang Minh Vietnamese Buddhist temple have purchased land adjacent to Atisha Centre for a separate lay community, the Harmony Village. The Village will have 50 homes, a retirement facility and a Vietnamese Buddhist temple. The group is in the process of getting council approval and is planning to commence building within the next two years. Another ambition at Atisha is to run a primary school, it would cater for the Buddhists living at the Atisha Centre as well as any other interested people. The primary school would be based on the principles of Universal Education and the curriculum would integrate Buddhist principles of responsibility, cause and effect and compassion. According to Ian Green, 'Within a decade around 300 Buddhists will be living on this land, including Atisha monks and nuns, families and residents of the Harmony Village. A number

of people have already moved to Bendigo because of the centre'.

Another development at Atisha is the establishment of Machig Lapdron Nunnery. This project was initiated by Ven. Tardo, 'She saw the need to provide an alternative to Chenrezig Nuns' Community [...] a place of rest and quiet for busy nuns and retirement for older nuns'.³² The project is currently managed by Ven. Chonyi who visits Atisha regularly to oversee the development of the nunnery. The two Bendigo nuns who are currently teaching at Atisha Centre are Ven. Thubten Paldron and Ven. Lozang Tenzin.

Organisation and lineage

Atisha Centre is one of the 26 Buddhist organisations in Australia which are members of the Federation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Buddhism (FPMT). The FPMT is an international organisation based on the Buddhist tradition of Lama Tsong Khapa of Tibet; it was established in 1975 by Lama Yeshe with the objective of, 'the transmission of Mahayana Buddhist tradition and values worldwide through teaching, meditation and community service'. Today Lama Zopa Rinpoche, as Spiritual Director of the FPMT, continues to offer his teachings and guidance to students around the world. The FPMT has over 150 centres world wide including, 'monasteries, nunneries, publishing houses, healing centres, hospices, study groups, prison projects and meditation centres'.³³

The head teacher and the spiritual program director at Atisha is Geshe Konchok Tsering. Geshe Konchok Tsering was born in India in 1963 to Tibetan parents. He became a novice monk at the age of 12, and this was followed by four years of study at Gyuto Tantric Monastery and an additional six years at Sera-Je Monastery in Mysore, India. At the age of 22 he took the vow of an ordained monk and continued to study at Sera-Je for another 16 years. He was awarded the Geshe Degree in 1995. Lama Zopa Rinpoche nominated Geshe Konchok Tsering as the spiritual director of Atisha Centre in May 2003.³⁴ Geshe Konchok is now seen by many as the long-term spiritual guide and teacher for Atisha Centre. Prior to his taking up this position, senior Australian sangha such as Ven. Tony Beaumont and Ven. Thupten Gyatsu, supported by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, offered teachings at the centre. In addition, other teachers visited Atisha Centre and gave teachings; among these were Geshe Doga from Tara Institute, Geshe Tashi Tsering from Chenrezig Institute, and Geshe Sonam from Drol Kar Buddhist Centre in Geelong. Kentsel Rinpoche from Adelaide also visited the centre to confer *Vajrayogini* initiation.

The Atisha Centre, the Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery and the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion project all have separate directors who are appointed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche who makes a selection from a number of names using a divination system based on the candidates who have the closest karmic connection with the position, and who are therefore going to benefit themselves and the centre most. The director of the Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery needs to be a sangha member and is currently Ven. David Lungtuk. The directors of the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion and Atisha Centre may be lay or sangha members. Currently Ian Green is the director of the Great Stupa project and Carl Sillery is the

director of the Atisha Centre. The Atisha Centre, the Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery and the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion also have executive committees which are elected by members of the Atisha Centre. A single executive committee runs both Atisha Centre and the Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery; the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion on the other hand has a separate executive committee.

Currently Atisha Centre has around 60 registered members, and are around 400 people on the local mailing list who receive the centre's newsletter "*Chorten*", which is published bi-monthly. The number of people who come to courses and other activities, and visit the centre, is much larger. For instance, the Open Day held in May 2005 was covered by the local newspaper, which reported that about 1000 people attended the Centre. Most group members are Anglo-Australians, with a few members of Chinese descent.

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Kagyu E-Vam Buddhist Institute

History and lineage

The Kagyu lineage is one of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. It was founded by Mahasiddha Tilopa in the 11th century. The present day Kagyu beliefs and practices are based on the basic teachings of Tilopa, which have been passed from generation to generation.

Traleq Kyabjon Rinpoche is the spiritual director of the Kagyu E-Vam Institute in Melbourne. Traleg Rinpoche was born in east Tibet in 1955. As a child he was regarded as the 9th incarnation of the Siddha Shogam, a twelfth century lama, and enthroned as head of the large Trangu Monastery at the age of two. After the 1959 Chinese take over of Tibet he fled to Bhutan before going to Rumtek, Sikkim, where he continued his Dharma education until he was nine. This was followed by a period of intensive study in Darjeeling until the age of 16, when he went to India to undertake further scholastic and meditative training under various Tibetan Kagyu and Nyingma masters. In India, Traleg Rinpoche studied at the Sanskrit University, Varanasi and the Tibetan Institute of Higher Education. In 1977 he returned to Trangu Monastery where he remained as the head until 1980. In 1980 he decided to disrobe, and shortly after this a group of Australians who had met Traleg Rinpoche in India invited him to come to Melbourne and offer teachings of the Kagyu tradition. He accepted the invitation, arrived in Australia in 1980 and began to offer teachings shortly after. The classes were originally attended by a core group of 4-5 people and were held in the house of one of the group members. As the word spread the classes became more popular and before long Traleg Rinpoche was offering classes on Tibetan Buddhism and language on Friday nights to a full house. The group was incorporated in 1982, and this was the beginning of the Kagyu E-Vam Institute. The consistent increase in the number of students necessitated a series of moves to ever larger premises. The group first moved to a Victorian mansion in Kew, and later to another rented house in Hawthorn. The group purchased a house in Carlton in 1989, before moving to their current location in North Carlton in 1991. The group also bought a country centre near Healesville, Maitripa Contemplative Centre, which is used for short and long term retreats.

Organisation

Traleq Rinpoche is the spiritual director and president of the Kagyu E-Vam Institute and represents the Karmakajyu sect of the Kagyu tradition. The Kagyu E-Vam Institute is run by a committee of five who are elected by members and endorsed by Traleg Rinpoche; there are also sub-committees which deal with the more specific tasks. The centre has around 200 members who are predominantly Anglo-Australians. The members are entitled to receive a

discount on courses, retreats and conferences offered by the centre, and can borrow books and cassettes from the library. The centre has a bookshop with a wide range of books on Buddhism and the members' discount applies to books and ritual objects purchased at the bookshop.

Activities

The Kagyu E-Vam Institute runs a varied teaching and meditation program, this includes three weekly meditation sessions, which are open to the public free of charge. There are weekly study groups which cover a range of topics related to Buddhism, as well as more specific classes which are offered to the students who have made a commitment to the Kagyu tradition. The centre runs short and long-term retreats at the Maitripa Contemplative Centre. The retreats are led by Traleg Rinpoche, although from time to time other teachers are invited to supervise the retreats. The centre also offers classes for children which cover the basic teachings of Buddhism.

The Kagyu E-Vam Institute also offers ritual activities such as *puja* offerings and chanting, although these are not the primary focus of the centre. This is how Traleg Rinpoche expressed his views on the role of ritual practice at the centre:

We are interested in promoting the Tibetan culture at one level: that is for the sake of Tibet and the Tibetan people, and we are currently organising a conference on this topic.³⁵ We want to present the teachings in a traditional way, which means we have to be genuine and loyal to the lineage and tradition, but on the other hand we don't want to focus too much on the cultural aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, and lose sight of the universal Buddhist elements. That is why we offer free meditations which are very popular and they are open to public. We do this instead of doing *pujas* twice a week, or other cultural or ritual practices. We emphasise the teachings not the ethos of the Tibetan way of life or Tibetan's ways of conducting themselves as Buddhists. We also do some chanting but not a lot, and there is not a lot of emphasis on that either.

The Kagyu E-Vam Institute has been taking a leading role in promoting Buddhist scholarship by holding annual conferences in Melbourne, which have attracted high calibre Buddhist teachers, academics and scholars. In his historical study of Australian Buddhism, Croucher described the Kagyu E-Vam Institute as, 'one of the most progressive centres in Australia. Offering seminars on "East-West psychology" and wider social and ecological issues, it generally attracts teachers, psychologists and those in caring professions'.³⁶ The Kagyu E-Vam Institute instigated the annual Buddhist Summer School in January 1984. Since its inception, the summer school has attracted speakers from a range of Buddhist traditions; teachers such as Phra Khantipalo, Ajahn Jagaro and Sogyal Rinpoche have given classes. The two-day event has been attended by more than 6 000 people to date.

Another significant event staged annually by the Kagyu E-Vam Institute since 1992 is the Buddhism and Psychotherapy conference. The conference runs for five days and has been a forum for dialogue and exchange among local and international speakers who have training in

Buddhism and psychotherapy. The conference has debated and encouraged the application of insights from Buddhism to the practice of psychotherapy. The focus of the centre on these activities to some extent reflects Traleg's Rinpoche's interest in scholarship, which involves extensive studies in the areas of Western philosophy, psychology and world religions. Traleg Rinpoche's books include *The Essence of Buddhism*, *Luminous Bliss: Self Realisation through Meditation*, and *The Benevolent Mind: a manual in mind training*.

Since 1997 the Kagyu E-Vam Institute has produced "*Ordinary Mind: An Australian Buddhist*" which is published quarterly. It is the only national Buddhist magazine in Australia which is, 'non-sectarian and non-denominational [...] covering diverse Buddhist traditions and, intent on retaining a local Australian flavour'.³⁷ The publication of this impressive journal, together with the inclusion of teachers and scholars from different Buddhist traditions in the annual Buddhist Summer School, and the Buddhism and Psychotherapy conference, are significant steps in representing the divergent Buddhist traditions in Australia. They explore areas of overlap between different Buddhist traditions and are therefore a unifying attempt.

Despite its progressive orientation the Kagyu E-Vam Institute has not lost touch with its traditional roots, and its ways of presenting Buddhism is guided by the established methods and structure of the Kagyu tradition. Traleg Rinpoche is critical of attempts to redefine Buddhism to make it fit our own views, and he cautions against hasty attempts to modernise Buddhism. According to Traleg Rinpoche:

We as a Tibetan Buddhist group want to be faithful to our Tibetan Buddhist roots and traditions but at the same time we would like to think of ourselves as progressive and modern in our approach. A lot of our emphasis is on education, and organising conferences and seminars and so on. The other aspect is that we really try to be very open to different kinds of people. Because we are trying to be very broad in how we present Tibetan Buddhism, therefore we attract a broad range of people. We do a lot of different kinds of things, all different kinds of courses and try to be more open and accommodating. We get all sorts of people as a result of that and we would like to continue with this and maintain this open outlook. Our openness is also demonstrated by the kinds of courses that we run; we are probably the only Buddhist centre in Australia that invites teachers from all traditions, both lay and ordained members as well as western academics, to come and teach and talk at our conferences. Because I am not a monk I think I am more accessible and people see me as more like them, not somebody very different.

In addition, the established Kagyu methods also form the basis of hierarchy within the Kagyu E-Vam Institute. This point is expressed by Traleg Rinpoche:

I can't just teach the Dharma completely freely as I see fit, but have to base it on texts and teachings which can be attributed to the Kagyu masters, and the hierarchy comes from this. So we have the heads of the different sects of the Kagyu tradition and I am teaching Buddhism because of my position and training; namely, I was brought up from the age of two in a monastery.

In this way the Kagyu E-Vam Institute has developed a contemporary orientation in presenting the Dharma which is firmly rooted in the established traditions of the Kagyu lineage.

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Tara Institute

History

Tara Institute is named after the female Buddha Tara, who represents the enlightened and liberating activities of all the Buddhas. Tara Institute is the Melbourne centre of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), a worldwide network of Buddhist centres.

The beginning of Tara Institute dates back to 1972, when Nick Ribush and Marie Obst (now Ven. Yeshe Khadro) attended an intensive thirty-day meditation course at Kopan Monastery³⁸ in Nepal, which was taught by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. After returning to Melbourne they continued to practice with others who had done the meditation course at Kopan Monastery. A student from Queensland, Tom Vichta, invited Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche to teach a course in Australia. The lamas agreed, and arrived in Sydney on August 15th 1974. As the first Tibetan lamas to ever set foot in Australia their arrival received extensive media coverage. At this time there were no Tibetan Buddhist centres in Melbourne, so from 1975 onwards a number of people who based their practice on the teachings they had received from Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche began to meet regularly at the Fitzroy home of a student, Inta McKimm. Gradually others joined them, and the groups needed larger premises for their practice. In 1976 one of the students, Uldis Balodis, rented an old hotel in Carlton; this was advertised as a spiritual household. In organisational terms this group was not yet Tara Institute.

In November 1976, after a month-long course at Chenrezig Institute at Queensland, Uldis Balodis asked Lama Yeshe if the Carlton group could start a centre with him as the Spiritual Director. Lama Yeshe agreed, gave the centre the name "Tara House for Wisdom Culture". He appointed Ven. Konchong Dolma (Bonnie Rothenberg) as the Spiritual Program Coordinator. In 1977 the centre moved to a rented house in Kew; in the same year Tara House bought a 44 acre property near Noojee in Victoria, to use as a country retreat, but the project was later abandoned and the property sold.

In Kew the centre grew rapidly. At this time Geshe Loden and Ven. Zasep Tulku accepted positions as teachers in residence and offered regular teachings on Tibetan Buddhism, *thangka* painting and Yoga classes. The group was also in a financial position to renovate and furnish the centre. Adele Hulse, who represented Tara Institute in this study, recalls, 'we made enough money to buy a statue [of Guru Shakyamuni] and some furniture for the library, which are still in Tara Institute'.

By 1980 Geshe Loden and Ven. Zasep Tulku had left the centre and in the same year Geshe Dawo arrived as the resident teacher, and stayed at the centre until 1984. By the time Geshe Dawo returned to India the centre had grown considerably, and there were about one hundred people attending weekly teachings at the centre. In November 1984 Geshe Doga arrived at

Tara House as the resident teacher, together with his translator Ven. Samdup Tsering.

Tara House expanded its activities, attracted more members and at the same time put a great deal of energy into a number of fund raising activities to keep the centre afloat; these ranged from selling flowers, clothing, electronics and used cars to renovating houses. Adele Hulse described the fund raising activities at the centre as, 'very dynamic and heartfelt. People really put themselves out because it was all so grass roots. When you have nothing you work very hard'.

As the number of people attending Tara House increased, the need for a larger centre became more apparent, and in 1981 the group purchased an old mansion in St Kilda. By 1987 the community had outgrown this St Kilda mansion, which according to Adele Hulse, 'was never big enough and didn't have a large room for *Gompa*'. The centre moved to its current location in Brighton in 1987, and in the same year the name of the centre was changed from Tara House for Wisdom Culture to Tara Institute. The current premises, which was formerly a Catholic residential school for girls with disabilities, is a large, heritage building with offices, a bookshop, library, a large *Gompa* that can hold up to 300 people, a large commercial kitchen and dining room, a Children's Club room Geshe Doga's residence and a large residential area which accommodates the community of lay residents at the centre as well as any visitors.

Organisation

The Ven. Lharampa Geshe Lobsang Doga, the resident teacher at Tara Institute, was born in east Tibet in 1935 and was ordained as a novice monk at the age of seven. After ten years of preliminary training he went to Sera-Je Monastery, where he studied under Ven. Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey. After the Chinese invasion in 1959, Geshe Doga left Tibet and spent the next eight years in Buxaduar refugee camp near Siliguri, India. There he continued his study with Ven. Khensur Urgyen Tsetan Rinpoche and later went to Varanasi University to complete his Acharya degree, the highest level of monastic study in Vajrayana tradition. In 1982 he began to teach at Kopan Monastery in Nepal, until in 1984 he was asked by Lama Yeshe to move to Australia; he first went to Atisha Centre in Bendigo. When Geshe Dawo returned to India, Geshe Doga moved to Tara House in St. Kilda and later to Brighton.³⁹

Geshe Doga's role within Tara Institute consists of offering teachings, initiations and advice; he also consults on other aspects of the institute's spiritual program. Geshe Doga provides guidance to the management committee, but he is not involved in the administration of the centre.

The management and administration of the centre is the responsibility of an executive committee, which consists of eight members. The members are nominated by the other committee members, apart from the Director and the Spiritual Program Coordinator. The Director, currently David Andrews, presides over the committee, and is selected by the Spiritual Director of FPMT, Lama Zopa Rinpoche. The Director manages the affairs, activities and day-to-day operation of the organisation, implementing and endorsing policies

and strategies. However, all major decisions are made in consultation with FPMT Central Office in the USA and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. In addition to the resident teacher, the executive committee of management and the director, Tara Institute also has a spiritual program director, currently Ven. Carolyn Lawler. The spiritual program director develops and oversees the programs offered at the centre in conjunction with the advice of the resident Geshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Currently Tara Institute has over 200 members that support the centre and its activities; the activities at the centre are attended by over 400 people every week. The members have borrowing rights from the Tara Institute library, receive the Tara Institute's newsletter and "*Mandala*", the magazine of the Federation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. The members are primarily Anglo-Australians with some Chinese, Malaysians and Vietnamese students.

Activities

Tara Institute offers a range of religious, educational and welfare programs. The religious program at Tara Institute include, Introduction to Buddhist Meditation which aims to improve one's general lifestyle through Buddhist meditation practices. The approach is non-sectarian. This is a popular course which attracts up to 120 people. Geshe Doga has been running ongoing study groups since 1985 which consist of in-depth examinations of the Buddhist teachings. The course, which runs for six weeks, involves four weeks of teachings, one week of discussion and a written exam on the final week; the course is attended by 60-80 people. The institute also offers a Tibetan debate class, a discussion group and a Tibetan language class. A monthly Dharma Club caters for children and involves an introduction to the basic beliefs, rituals, practices and art in Buddhism. Ritual activities at Tara Institute include monthly *Pujas*, which consist of meditation practices to Tara and the Gurus. Major *Pujas* are also offered on the Dalai Lama's birthday, Lama Tsong Khapa Day and the day of celebrating the birth, death and enlightenment of the Buddha (*Vesak*). Uncommon ritual activities are the yearly White Tara Initiation offered by Geshe Doga and the biannual Refuge Ceremony for those who wish to commit to following the Buddhist path by taking lay vows. Tara Institute offers an annual purification retreat to students at Easter. Tara Institute also has a Publishing Group which transcribes and publishes Geshe Doga's teachings; as well as teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche and touring teachers, both Western and Tibetan. The institute has also been active in delivering the Dharma to schools. This is a popular program and in 2005, students from 25 Victorian schools received an introductory talk on Buddhism and some meditation instruction; some schools attend the centre, while others invite members of the Tara Institute to go to them.⁴⁰

Tara Institute has been actively engaging with the broader Buddhist community. There has been a long history of association between the Tara Institute and the Vietnamese Buddhist community in Melbourne. The relationship dates back to the arrival of the Most Ven. Thich Phuoc Hue in Melbourne in July 1980. Lama Yeshe had met the Most Ven. Thich Phuoc Hue at a Vietnamese refugee transit camp in Hong Kong, and had invited him to come and teach at

Tara House. Lama Yeshe then wrote to Tara House which, together with the Indo-China Refugee Association and the Vietnamese community, sponsored the Most Ven. Thich Phuoc Hue to come to Australia. After his arrival, the Most Ven. Thich Phuoc Hue stayed at Tara House for a number of months. During this time members of the Vietnamese community regularly visited Tara House to make offerings. Adele Hulse described this as, 'a very rich time. We celebrated *Vesak* together; I like this, Buddhism coming to the country and communities crossing and sharing'. Since then Tara Institute has been hosting the annual Vietnamese Bus Pilgrims.

Tara Institute has had a long history of involvement in a wide range of welfare and community development projects. These include overseas aid projects, as well as helping the needy living in the immediate vicinity of the centre. The overseas aid programs include water and sanitation projects in Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal. Tara Institute supports the Mitreya Universal Education Project which funds the provision of free and universal education in communities in northern India. Tara Institute and its community also have a link with a local welfare agency, the Brighton Benevolent Society, who help the homeless and destitute. The institute has also made contributions to the Open Family Foundation to support homeless children in Victoria.

Tara Institute runs a Healing Meditation course for people with serious illnesses. Tara Institute is also active in the area of hospice care. Since 1994 Tara Institute has run a program for visiting the sick, frail and elderly in the greater community. To ensure a high quality of service Tara Institute runs a volunteer training program twice a year; volunteers are matched up with people in the community and then visit them, to offer companionship or to help with daily tasks such as shopping or other outings. Given the changing demographics, Tara Institute has identified aged care as an area where services need to be expanded and future plans at the centre include establishing a retirement home.⁴¹

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The Tibetan Buddhist Society

History and lineage

Born in 1924, Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden entered Drombu Thubten Dargyaling Monastery in 1931 at the age of seven where he was ordained by Lab Khenchen Rinpoche. He first studied at Ser-shu before moving to Sera Monastic University in central Tibet in 1941. After the 1959 invasion of Tibet, he went to India and, after completing his basic training did further study at the Sanskrit University at Varanasi and at the Gyumay Tantric College. In 1976 Lama Yeshe invited Geshe Loden to head the teaching program at the Chenrezig Institute in Queensland for three years. At the end of his three years, Geshe Loden went back to India. Meanwhile, a group of students who had attended his course at the Chenrezig Institute continued to meet, and established Buddhist groups first in Sydney and later in Melbourne. Representatives from this group approached Geshe Loden and invited him to return to Australia to become their spiritual leader and guide. Geshe Loden agreed to return to Australia, and the Tibetan Buddhist Society (TBS) was formed to sponsor Geshe Loden's permanent residency. By the time he arrived in Australia in 1980, three Tibetan Buddhist Societies in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne had been established.⁴²

The first meeting of the Melbourne students of Geshe Loden took place in 1979 in Bacchus Marsh. For the next six months while the group tried to find a place, they met and held classes in the house of one of the members, John Edward. The first house rented by the Melbourne group was a four bedroom house in Balaclava, where a core group of three members lived. Toby Gillies gave Dharma classes, which were attracting around thirty people. In 1983 Geshe Loden, who had been staying at different TBS centres around Australia for three months at a time, decided to settle in Melbourne, and the Tibetan Buddhist Society moved to a large house in East Melbourne where eight members lived. Meanwhile the membership of the society had increased, with around 80 people participating in the classes offered at the centre. For a long time the group considered purchasing a property and in December 1988, after a five year search, they purchased their current premises and named it the 'Peaceful Land of Joy' meditation centre. It is located in the outer-northern suburb of Yuroke, a 30 minute drive from Melbourne CBD. The group made changes to the original property; the 20 acre property was divided into three parts, with the centre retaining 10 acres. The remaining 10 acres were divided into two 5 acre lots and were sold to students connected to the centre, who now live there with their families. One of the original three houses, which at the time of purchase was incomplete, has since been redesigned to add more bedrooms; there are now a total of 19 bedrooms which can accommodate up to 28 people. Currently 25 members of the society live at the centre. It also has larger rooms which can be converted into dormitories during retreats, and can accommodate up to 70 people. Another recent addition to the centre has been a community meditation centre with a separate function area at the back. The two facilities accommodate up to 500 people, and the meditation centre was opened in March 2001.

To represent the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, the centre is adorned with traditional devotional objects. These include a life-size statue of the Buddha which was made in India in the traditional way, the face is painted in gold and it contains rolls of mantras and Scriptures, along with certain holy relics. There are also traditional *thangkas*, which were also painted in India.

Organisation

The Tibetan Buddhist Society belongs to the Gelug lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. In Australia it is a national organisation with six centres around the country and a branch in every state. The main centre is in Melbourne where Geshe Loden resides as the abbot, Toby Gillies (Loden Jhampa), who was ordained in 1986, is the resident monk. Geshe Loden is the spiritual leader of the Tibetan Buddhist Society in Australia, and responsibility for all major decisions rest with him. Supporting him is the national executive committee, which has two directors from each state who are elected by Geshe Loden. The branches of the Tibetan Buddhist Society each have their own structure which includes a number of committees which deal with specific tasks such as publicity, finance, maintenance, newsletters and management. Each committee also has a coordinator.

The Tibetan Buddhist Society in Victoria has around 200 registered members. The members have access to the library at the centre, get a discount at the bookshop and receive complimentary invitations to the society's dinners. The membership is predominantly Anglo-Australian. However the influence of the group extends far beyond its membership; the number of people on the mailing list who receive the newsletter is over 4000.

Activities

The Tibetan Buddhist Society has a strong religious focus, and offers a range of activities such as introductory classes on meditation and Buddhism. Ongoing teaching programs at the centre consist of weekly classes on Buddhist philosophy, called the "Path to Enlightenment " course, which is attended by around 15 people. The Graded Path to Enlightenment is the core part of the teaching program in all branches of the Tibetan Buddhist Society, and is described as the 'backbone of the teaching schedule'. The program also includes a variety of initiations, Vajrayana *Pujas* are offered twice a week and attended by approximately 40 people. There are two retreats every year: a general four day retreat at Easter which is attended by around 60 people, and a three-week Vajrayana retreat for students who have had *Yamantaka*, *Vajrayogini* and *Chittamani* initiations. Geshe Loden and Toby Gillies are responsible for the retreats and courses offered at the centre, although some of the introductory classes are taught by lay students.

Toby Gillies summed up the Tibetan Buddhist Society's approach to teaching incisively:

We try to remain as close to the tradition as possible. The texts that Geshe-la has produced form the basis of our teaching program. These are the texts within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition which he thinks are the most useful for western practitioners, for instance the book "The Path to Enlightenment" is a traditional text of Tibetan Buddhism, but he has chosen it because it is suitable for westerners, and his way of teaching it is different from what it would be in the monastery where he trained. For instance, he chooses modern examples to illustrate the teaching but the teachings themselves are completely traditional.

In describing Geshe Loden's vision for the centre, Toby Gillies referred to future plans to train Western Buddhist teachers:

I don't think there is a great deal of difference in the content of teachings in the Gelugpa centres and perhaps not even in the Kagyu centres. What makes this centre unique is the Geshe's presence at the centre; he is the founder, the spiritual leader and the author of the books that we study. He is 82 years old but very fit and puts a lot of energy into the place, and is full of plans for the centre. His plan is to educate people, and his plan is to train a lot of western teachers, and he is expecting that after he is gone there will be western teachers to lead the centre and he is also planning to write more books. Within Tibetan Buddhism there are teachers who teach different aspects of philosophy, and there are other teachers who only teach specific topics or philosophies - for instance, the Path to Enlightenment philosophy, or the Mind Training System. Training teachers who can teach the core subjects relevant for western practitioners, such as Path to Enlightenment, the basic tenets of Buddhism, the Buddha Potential teachings and the highest Yoga Tantra, is something that we can achieve here at this centre. The training will present the most relevant parts of the Geshe training course.

The Tibetan Buddhist Society also runs Tushita Publications, established to, 'preserve the Buddhist teachings as passed by the great lineage masters to Geshe Loden [...] The books are presented from a perspective and style that are clear and accessible to Western readers'.⁴³ In 1992 Geshe Loden decided to publish his teachings on the Graded Path to Enlightenment, and invited Geshe Thubten Lhundrup and Toby Gillies to work with him on this task. Geshe Loden's books in this series include, *The Fundamental Potential for Enlightenment*, *Ocean of Indivisible Method and Wisdom*, *Path to the Union of Clear Light and Illusory Body*, *Great Treasure of the Six Yogas of Naropa*, *Essence of the Path to Enlightenment*, *Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism*, and *Meditations on the Path to Enlightenment*.

The Spring Festival and Exhibition of Buddhism in Tibet is the largest celebration at the centre. It started in 1991 when Buddhists from all traditions were invited to the centre for meditation and prayer for world peace. The event ran over two days, during which thousands of people visited the centre to listen to talks on Buddhist philosophy and practice guided meditation offered by Buddhist teachers from diverse traditions. Since then the Spring Festival has been an annual event at the centre. It is often attended by around forty monks from different Buddhist traditions. The event is publicised widely through radio, *The Age* newspaper and the centre's newsletter, and attracts thousands of visitors. The centre celebrates the Tibetan New Year as well as a combined celebration for *Vesak* and the Dalai Lama's birthday. These are the extent of the centre's interaction with the Tibetan community; other aspects of Tibetan culture are not promoted by the centre in any formal way. The Tibetan Buddhist Society also participates in the annual bus pilgrimage organised by Quang Minh Vietnamese temple when the centre is visited by hundreds of Buddhists from different traditions. The main welfare activity of the Tibetan Buddhist Society is fundraising for major

disasters in Australia and overseas. Local schools visit the centre to hear talks on Buddhism, and representatives of the society give talks at the community centres in the area.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited the Tibetan Buddhist Society's Community Meditation Centre on 23rd May 2002, in acknowledgment of Geshe Loden's achievements since his arrival in Australia.

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Non-affiliated Buddhist centres

Buddhist Council of Victoria

History

The first attempt to form a Buddhist council in Victoria was initiated in 1985 by Gabrielle Laffite, a student of Tibetan Buddhism. He created a radio documentary, "Many Faiths, Many Ways" about religions in Australian society; for the series he interviewed Buddhist groups from across the country and was struck by the low profile of Buddhism in Australia, and its overall lack of representation. In 1985 Gabrielle Laffite invited representatives from 12 Buddhist groups, which included Sri Lankan, Burmese, Thai, Cambodian, Vietnamese and Tibetan groups, to a meeting to discuss the formation of a Buddhist representative body in Victoria. The meeting took place at the Buddhist Society of Victoria, and the participants gave positive feedback on the proposal to form a non-affiliative organisation as a collective voice for the diverse Buddhist groups in Victoria. The representatives of the ethnic Buddhist groups who attended the meeting were, in particular, attracted to the more practical arguments put forward by the advocates for the formation of a representative organisation. For example, at this time the ethnic Buddhist groups in Victoria were experiencing numerous difficulties in dealing with local councils in getting approval for the building of their temples, or renovating existing venues for use as places of worship. Therefore the representatives of the ethnic Buddhist groups were supportive of the idea of pooling energy and knowledge with the Western Buddhists, who were perceived to have the skill to deal with local councils more effectively. The outcome of the initial meeting was the creation of a working party to discuss a constitution for the representative organisation. The working party met several times and the meetings were convened by Gabrielle Laffite. While different models for organising the representative organisations were still being considered, the working party began to receive inquiries from the non-Buddhist community. According to Gabrielle Laffite:

As soon as the word spread that the Buddhist Council of Victoria was forming, and before anyone was ready for it, we were receiving inquiries and calls from hospitals for guidance as to how to deal with patients in culturally and religiously sensitive ways. There was little agreement or knowledge at the time as to how to present a reasonably unified Buddhist perspective on some of these issues.

Before the working party had decided on a constitution, Gabrielle Laffite, who was the driving force behind the idea, left Australia for a year. Despite attempts by others in the group the plan to form a representative organisation lost momentum and it was postponed to a later date.

In 1992 a lack of Buddhist representation at the state level led to a renewal of interest in establishing a representative Buddhist organisation. This is how Brian Ashen, the current

chairperson of the Buddhist Council of Victoria, described the events that led to the formation of the Buddhist Council of Victoria:

When Jeff Kennet became the Premier, a lot of programs were defunded and stopped and there was a big outcry from the Churches and the community organisations for the defunding of hundreds and hundreds of programs. A community summit was called for in 1992 by the Victorian Council of Social Services (VICOS) and religious leaders, and groups from the Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities were asked to attend [...] I saw on the front page of the newspapers a photo of the religious leaders announcing this summit, that was to be held at a certain date, and wondered why the Buddhists were not included. I tracked down the organisers and asked why the Buddhists were not included and they answered they did not know who to go to. So I asked: if I found somebody, can the Buddhists be there. And they said it was o.k. So myself and Henry Dang from the Vietnamese Buddhist community attended, not as delegates but as observers. We also got Master Ven. Phuoc Hue to come from Sydney to attend the photo opportunity at the summit, as a Buddhist face.

After the summit Henry Dang approached Brian Ashen to discuss the possibility of forming a Buddhist council; however due to personal commitments the plans were postponed to a later date. In 1995 Brian Ashen (a student of Tibetan Buddhism and a community development worker) and Robin Rankin (a Tibetan Buddhist and also a Community development worker) met informally, and discussed plans to form a Buddhist council. They contacted three ethnic and three Anglo-Australian Buddhist groups. Representatives from these groups were invited to a dinner and an informal meeting to discuss the formation of a Buddhist representative organisation. The outcome of this meeting was the election of a steering committee to organise an inaugural meeting.

The inaugural meeting of the Buddhist Council of Victoria took place on November the 12th 1995, at the Community Health Centre in South Melbourne. The meeting was attended by representatives from 16 Buddhist groups with a strong representation from the ethnic Buddhist communities, which accounted for half of those present at the meeting. At this meeting Henry Dang and Brian Ashen were nominated as co-conveners of the Buddhist Council of Victoria, Henry Dang representing the traditional face of Asian Buddhism and Brian Ashen as the Western face. Brian Ashen considers the joint representation of ethnic and Western Buddhists as crucial to the eventual success of the council, 'The Buddhist Council of Victoria would not have succeeded otherwise. Having this joint representation of Asian and Western Buddhists enabled us to get the backing of the Vietnamese, as well as the Western groups'. Following the inaugural meeting the council met to discuss a constitution and decided to adopt the constitution of the Buddhist Council of New South Wales with a few modifications (for instance in the way in which the management committee is elected). The management committee of the Buddhist Council of Victoria has nine members. The chair person, the deputy-chair, the secretary and the treasurer are elected by the members present at the Annual General Meeting; the remaining five members are picked out randomly from a bowl which contains the names of all members of the Buddhist Council of Victoria. The advantage of this system is that it prevents factions and stacking of members, and gives the small Buddhist groups an opportunity to be represented on the Buddhist Council of Victoria's management committee.

The Buddhist Council of Victoria's first Annual General Meeting was held in 1996 at the

Buddhist Society of Victoria and Zarna Somia, a student of Tibetan Buddhism, was elected the chairperson. In its ten year history the Buddhist Council of Victoria has had four chairpersons; Zarna Somia, Brian Ashen, Tin Tran who served as the chairperson briefly and was replaced by Michael Wells, who was the acting Chair before Brian Ashen took over the position of chairperson for a second time. Over the course of its history there has been a rapid increase in the number of Buddhists, and Buddhist organisations in Victoria and a corresponding increase in the membership of the Buddhist Council of Victoria; 41 groups are members of the council, with roughly an equal number of ethnic and Western Buddhist groups. Brian Ashen described the all-inclusive approach of the Buddhist Council of Victoria:

When the Buddhist Council of Victoria is invited to government and church functions, we ask both members and non members to attend and to be a part of representation at these functions, so that members of the Buddhist community are introduced to levels of church and government. On occasions, Vietnamese and Sri Lankan monks have been invited to chant *sutras* and say prayers in St. Patrick's Cathedral, or Tibetan nuns to recite Buddhist Scripture in St. Paul's Cathedral; I have recited the Shakyamuni Buddha mantra at a function for the victims of road trauma in the Parliament. The Buddhists now are treated equally with other faiths, which was not always the case; Buddhists used to struggle to get any recognition.

The Buddhist Council of Victoria keeps in contact with Buddhist organisations in Victoria, and sends membership information to all. Membership of the Buddhist Council of Victoria is voluntary and not all Buddhist groups choose to become a member.

The Buddhist Council of Victoria is a member of the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils, which was established in May 2003 and is comprised of the State Buddhist Councils of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, and represent Buddhism at a national level. The Buddhist Council of Victoria also works with international Buddhist bodies such as the Global Buddhist Summit.

Aims and objectives

The Buddhist Council of Victoria helps Buddhists from all traditions to achieve common goals, and to have a visible and active presence in the community through promoting a better understanding of Buddhism within the wider community. The council is both a representative body and a lobbying and liaison organisation that represents the Buddhist community to other religious organisations, community groups and government departments at all different levels; it also functions as a point of contact and referral. Brian Ashen described this aspect of the Buddhist Council of Victoria in the following terms:

One of the tasks of the council is advocacy. We make representations, we act on behalf of the members and act on behalf of Buddhism in Victoria, make government submissions to local, state and federal government, represent the Buddhist community at functions at government and church levels, represent our members in the World Conference of Religions for Peace, and are present on the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria. Prior to the formation of the Buddhist Council of Victoria there might have been individual representation from individual

groups, but nothing represented Buddhism in general.

The advocacy function of the Buddhist Council of Victoria has two aspects. On the one hand the council, 'strives to act on behalf of the Buddhist Communities in Victoria'. Examples of this include recent guidelines for operational police, and an information booklet for caring for the dying in a Buddhist context, which has been widely distributed. The advocacy role of the Buddhist Council of Victoria also involves, 'liaising with government and other community organisations to ensure that Buddhism is seen as a part of the Victorian community and is accorded equal respect'. To this end the Buddhist Council of Victoria has been working in conjunction with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, the Victorian Multicultural Commission, the Heads of Faith Forum (Melbourne), the Victorian Council of Social Services, the World Conference of Religions for Peace, Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous affairs⁴⁴

The Buddhist Council of Victoria is a non-affiliative organisation, and represents Buddhist organisations in Victoria in general. The "Aims and Objectives" of the Buddhist Council of Victoria clearly states that, 'The Buddhist Council of Victoria, recognising the richness and variety of Buddhist traditions, acts as a representative body for Buddhist organisations in Victoria. It does not serve to direct in any way the existing Buddhist temples or institutions'. Brian Ashen emphasised this characteristic of the council:

We have to be very careful in how we describe what the Buddhist Council of Victoria does, so that it does not imply that the Buddhist Council of Victoria has control over the groups. The council is a representative body made up of representatives and membership groups [...]The Buddhist Council of Victoria has had working committees, meetings with Buddhist monks from different traditions, and always tries to balance out the groups from the three different Buddhist traditions to make sure they are equally represented in functions and meetings, because that will give the true picture of representation. So when there is a working party, people from all three traditions are included and the same applies to lay and sangha members; the Buddhist Council of Victoria tries to include both.

Furthermore, the Buddhist Council of Victoria has been instrumental in achieving greater dialogue among the diverse Buddhist organisations which make up the Victorian Buddhist community. Although there may be irreconcilable historical and doctrinal differences between these diverse traditions of Buddhism in Victoria, there is also much that may be agreed on. The Buddhist Council of Victoria has been increasingly active and successful in promoting, 'fellowship, co-operation, friendship and goodwill' between Buddhists of different traditions. Brian Ashen cited the following case as an illustration:

The Buddhist Council of Victoria does a lot of work in the interlinking of the Buddhist Council of Victoria members, and there are good examples of the Vietnamese community helping the Sri Lankan temples with loans of money and the donation of statues, and the Buddhist Council of Victoria was instrumental in bringing this about. The Buddhist Council of Victoria organised a working party to put together a Buddhist segment for a police handbook on how to deal with people from different faiths, and there were monks from the Vietnamese and Sri Lankan temples that were present. It was during this meeting that the need for statues were communicated, and the Vietnamese representative offered to help; later this led to further support in getting a bank loan. There have been similar examples of co-operation between Buddhist groups.

Activities

The Buddhist Council of Victoria, through the auspices of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, and the Victorian Education Department, has been working to create a program which would provide parents and children with the choice of Buddhist religious instruction in Victorian primary schools. The purpose of the project is that, 'By making Buddhist teachings available, not only is greater knowledge and acceptance encouraged but also Buddhist children in schools can feel that their religious and cultural backgrounds are being recognised and respected'.⁴⁵ The program reflects the non-sectarian character of the Buddhist Council of Victoria and is based on the classic Buddhist texts such as the *Dhammapada*, the *Jataka* Tales and relevant sutras such as the *Metta* and *Mangala* sutras. The program will emphasise the Buddhist values of harmony, peace and tolerance. It also incorporates the recently developed curriculum resources, such as those from the Buddhist Council of New South Wales and the "Living Buddhism" Series from the U.K. After completing this program, students would be well prepared to undertake studies in secondary schools such as the VCE subject "Religion and Society". The Buddhist Council of Victoria is responsible for the training of volunteer teachers who will deliver the program.⁴⁶

For a number of years, a few Buddhist organisations have individually provided religious support to Buddhist prisoners in Victoria. In late 2002, the Buddhist Council of Victoria entered into discussions with Corrections Victoria over co-ordinating a broader provision of religious support to Buddhists in Victorian prisons. Both the Buddhist Council of Victoria and Corrections Victoria were interested in ensuring that all Buddhist prisoners who wished to access a Buddhist chaplain would be able to do so. Subsequently, a working group was established, and currently the Buddhist Council of Victoria in conjunction with the Department of Justice and the Chaplain Advisory Committee runs a chaplaincy program for over 200 prisoners in Victoria who identify themselves as Buddhists. The chaplains come from different Buddhist traditions in order to meet the needs of the prisoners, and they visit the main prisons in the state, namely, Loddon (Castlemaine), Barwon (near Geelong), Melbourne Assessment Prison and Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (Deer Park), on an ongoing basis to offer pastoral and spiritual care. In addition, one-off and casual visits are made to other prisons as well as offering special services, assistance in the training of prison officers and the distribution of Buddhist literature in the prison libraries.⁴⁷

Ethnic Buddhist organisations are strong supporters of the Buddhist Council of Victoria; they support projects such as education and chaplaincy, and also call on its services regularly. In many cases the Buddhist Council of Victoria is instrumental in the development of new Buddhist centres, since the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs may require a letter of support from the Buddhist Council in order for a visa to be granted for monks and nuns from overseas; recent examples of help with difficulties concerning visa applications include assistance to Bo Gye Sa Buddhist Society and Drol Kar Buddhist Centre.

Another focus of the Buddhist Council of Victoria is to put in place the necessary structures

that will assist the anticipated future growth of Buddhism in Australia, which should reach half a million adherents in the next 10 to 20 years; aged care is one such area of concern. Currently, some ethnic Buddhist organisations are providing programs and activities for the aged and the elderly. However, similar programs and facilities need to be developed for the Western Buddhists; this will become a crucial issue in the next 10 to 20 years. According to Brian Ashen:

The first large number of Western Buddhists came into it 30 years ago, and are now in their 50s and 60s. This raises the question of aged care. There have been examples of people who have been long term members of Buddhist groups who are now in nursing homes and who would like to be in Buddhist residential arrangements.

The Buddhist Council of Victoria is active in a number of other areas. It is committed to inter-faith dialogue. Through its involvement with the World Conference of Religions for Peace, Heads of Faith Forum and the Chaplaincy Advisory Committee in the Department of Justice, it liaises with representatives of other faiths who are also present in these forums. As a consequence, the Buddhist Council of Victoria has developed close ties with the Catholic and the Uniting Church as well as the Jewish and Islamic Councils of Victoria. The Buddhist Council of Victoria has promoted a greater understanding of Buddhism through publishing literature. A recent publication from the council seeks to help Buddhists at the end of their life, and has been distributed to all hospitals, prisons and nursing homes. The Buddhist Council of Victoria will also offer chaplaincy help at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. At present there is no Buddhist marriage ceremony that is a legal form of wedding. The Buddhist Council of Victoria is proposing a Buddhist Marriage Ceremony.

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Chapter five

Future developments

This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of Buddhism in Victoria and the contributions of Victorian Buddhist to the community. The study highlights the characteristics of Buddhism in Victoria, which include its diversity and its emergence as a multicultural phenomenon which incorporates diverse Buddhist traditions and ethnicities. Buddhism is central to the lives of many born into the religion, as well as to many Anglo-Australians who have discovered Buddhism later in life. This diversity has enriched Buddhism in our community through the diffusion of practices from different Buddhist traditions. The practice of Buddhism in an Australian context has also led to a redefinition of some of the traditional responsibilities and concerns of Buddhist temples. Examples of this shift include a greater emphasis on welfare activities.

Another consequence of the diversity of Buddhist traditions in Victoria as demonstrated by the case studies presented here is that the Buddhist centres in Victoria have attracted some of the highest calibre and often internationally recognised Buddhist teachers. The Victorian community is very fortunate in having access to and contributions from these teachers, which is something many Anglo-Australian Buddhists and non-Buddhists in the community are typically not aware of. The presence of the teachers, together with the establishment of Buddhist centres and facilities for training teachers and the ordination of monks and nuns, will lead to the emergence of home grown teachers who speak the same language and who can meet the needs of future generations of Australian Buddhists, from both ethnic and Anglo-Australian origin. This leads to a greater integration of Buddhism into the Australian religious landscape. Buddhism is no longer a curious, Asian religion or an "anachronism in Australian society".

The presence of Buddhism has enriched the culture and religious life of Australia. The contribution of Buddhists to the broader society has many layers, including the promotion of the Buddhist values of tolerance and compassion which significantly contribute to the maintenance of a harmonious multicultural society. A more direct set of contributions made by Victorian Buddhists consists of their engagement in community and welfare programs. The welfare activities of Buddhist groups not only contributes to the well being of their religious community, but also extends beyond their members to the broader society. Often the two are related; for instance, the contribution of the Buddhist groups in the area of migrant settlement and integration has contributed to both Buddhists and the broader Victorian community.

The case studies challenge the perception of Buddhism as an inward looking and contemplative religion. This is only one aspect of Buddhism, and there is also a strong emphasis on practices that benefit all sentient beings. The case studies offered extensive examples to demonstrate that some of the Buddhist centres in Victoria focus exclusively on

meditative practices and Buddhist scholarship, while others incorporate extensive community and welfare related activities into their programs.

It is hoped that this study will bring to the attention of the broader Victorian community the immense contribution Buddhist organisations are making to enrich our culture and society, and encourage a greater acknowledgment and response to the present and future needs of the Victorian Buddhist community which could potentially grow to 750,000 by 2050⁴⁸ Current areas of need relate to the provision of aged-care services, and youth programs such as Buddhist education in primary schools which caters for children from Buddhist families. The case studies also indicate there is a need for a greater understanding of the Buddhist community on the part of local councils and government departments, particularly those concerned with visa and immigration and the planning and zoning of temples and community centres. Addressing these areas of need will be instrumental to the successful transplantation and integration of Buddhism in Australia.

Notes

Chapter One

- 1 Humphreys, 1987:233-234.
- 2 Adam and Hughes, 1996:19; <http://www.buddhanet.net/ftp03.htm>. Information obtained 20th July 2005; Humphreys, 1981:110.
- 3 Adam and Hughes, 1996:14.
- 4 *ibid*,14.
- 5 *ibid*,16.
- 6 Rahula, 1978:xii-xiii.
- 7 Adam and Hughes, 1996:20.
- 8 Humphreys, 1981:45.
- 9 Adam and Hughes, 1996:20.
- 10 Humphreys and Ward, 1995:407.
- 11 Adam and Hughes, 1996:21.
- 12 Humphreys and Ward, 1995:409.
- 13 *ibid*, 409.
- 14 The Rains Retreat is a 3 month period when monks and nuns must remain in their temples or monasteries. The Rains Retreat begins on the first day of the waning moon of the 8th lunar month and dates back to the time of the Buddha when he designated the rainy season as a time when monks must remain within their own monasteries to engage in study and meditation and refrain from outside activities such as travelling and teaching. This rule still applies, and means that monks must remain in residence during these three months. They must spend every night within their own temple and must not travel, except in urgent cases with the abbot's permission and not more than seven days away.
- 15 <http://www.buddhistcouncil.org/index.html>. Information obtained on 10th July 2005.

Chapter Two

- 1 Croucher, 1989; Adam, 1995; Humphreys and Ward, 1995; Adam and Hughes, 1996; Ashen, 2004.
- 2 Spuler, 2000:34.
- 3 Adam and Hughes, 1996: 6-11; Ashen, 2004; Spuler, 2000:34-36.
- 4 Adam and Hughes, 1996:6-7; Humphreys and Ward, 1995:409-410, Spuler, 2000:34.
- 5 Adam and Hughes, 1996:8.
- 6 Croucher, 1989:28.
- 7 Humphreys and Ward, 1995:410.
- 8 Croucher, 1989:90, 93.
- 9 *ibid*, 121.
- 10 *ibid*, 123.

- 11 Croucher, 1989:122.
- 12 Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery will be described in the case study of Atisha Centre.
- 13 Adam and Hughes, 1996:35.
- 14 Cox, 1982; Adam, 1995; Bouma, 1996; Numrich, 1966.
- 15 This process is not unique to Buddhism, for instance Bouma (1992:55) has drawn parallels between the way in which Buddhists use religious communities to establish themselves in Australia and those of earlier Dutch and Greek migrants.
- 16 Bouma, 1992:55.
- 17 Sherwood, 2003; Spuler, 2000.
- 18 Sherwood, 2003:23.
- 19 Bucknell, 2000.
- 20 Sherwood, 2003: 4.
- 21 *ibid*, 4.
- 22 *ibid*, 6-9,96.
- 23 *ibid*, 95.
- 24 Jameson, 2004:1.

Chapter Three

- 1 Humphreys and Ward, 1995:409.
- 2 It is noteworthy that the 1991 census Buddhism was not included as a separate category in the religious questions and this affects the accuracy of the data.
- 3 Croucher, 1989:112; Sherwood, 2003:4.

Chapter Four

- 1 Finney, 1991.
- 2 Hsing Yun, 2000a:4-5; 2000b:33; Sherwood, 2003:164.
- 3 Hsing Yun, 2000a:32; 2000b: 33-34; 2003:46; Sherwood, 2003: 164-166.
- 4 Sherwood, 2003:178.
- 5 *ibid*, 178.
- 6 *ibid*, 179.
- 7 <http://www.mau.vic.gov.au/web8/vomasite.nsf/Frameset/VOMA?OpenDocument>. Information obtained 2nd June 2005.
- 8 <http://www.quangduc.com/TuVienQuangDuc/aboutus2.html>. Information obtained 26th June 2005.
- 9 <http://www.quangduc.com/TuVienQuangDuc/aboutus2.html>. Information obtained 26th June 2005.
- 10 Quang Minh Temple, Information Leaflet.
- 11 Adam and Hughes, 1996:10-11.
- 12 Quang Minh Temple, Information leaflet.
- 13 <http://www.bdcu.org.au/BDDR/bddr14no2/abgcrypt.html>. Information obtained 24th April 2005.
- 14 Croucher, 1989:119.
- 15 *ibid*, 119.
- 16 Zen Buddhist retreat.
- 17 http://www.ordinarymind.net/Focus/focus_oct2002htm. Information obtained 11th June 2005.
- 18 Croucher, 1989: 121.
- 19 <http://www.mau.vic.gov.au/web8/vomasite.nsf/Frameset/VOMA?OpenDocument>. Information

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36 Croucher, 1989:114.

37 Ribush, 2004:8.

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Glossary

Abbreviations: (C) - Chinese; (J) - Japanese; (K) - Korean; (P) - Pali; (S) - Sanskrit; (T) - Tibetan.

Acharya (T): Literally means "master". More specifically it refers to scholarly accomplishments and achievements. When used as part of a formal title it denotes one who is venerated for his or her scholarly understanding and teaching of the Dharma.

Amitabha (P & S): The Buddha viewed as the incarnation of Compassion. An object of worship in the Pure Land Buddhism.

Bodhi tree (P & S): The bo or pipal tree. The tree under which the Buddha was sitting in meditation when he became enlightened.

Buddha: Awakened One, Enlightened One.

Chittamani initiation (T): *Chittamani* Tara, also known as the Green Tara, is one of the female embodiments of compassion and serves to dispel personal and global obstacles. This initiation belongs to the class of the highest yoga Tantras (*anuttaratantra*).

Dharma (S) *Dhamma* (P): The teachings of the Buddha. Universal "law" or "truth".

Geshe(T): A scholastic degree in Tibetan Buddhism roughly equivalent to a doctorate in theology; honorific title for the holder of such a degree.

Gompa(T): Spiritual community; often of celibate monks and nuns living in close proximity, either in individual houses or in communal buildings. Meditation hall and shrine room.

Jataka tales: "Birth Stories" a collection of 550 mythological stories of former lives of the Buddha.

katina: The festival marking the conclusion of the Rains Retreat when the lay community makes various offering to the sangha.

Mahayana (S): The "Greater Vehicle", one of the two main streams of Buddhism, arising several centuries after the Buddha's death.

Maitreya (S) *Metteyya* (P): The name of the Buddha-to-be or next Buddha; a famous *Bodhisattva*.

Nirvana (S) *Nibbana* (P): Absolute truth; blowing out, extinction.

Paramita (P & S): Stages of spiritual perfection achieved by *Bodhisattva* on his or her path to Buddhahood.

Puja (P & S): To Honour. Devotional observances.

Rinpoche (T): An honorific term for a Tibetan lama.

Rinzai (J): The Rinzai sect, one of the two main schools of Zen, it emphasises sudden awakening and koans as the main focus of practice.

Roshi (J): The title used for the Zen teacher.

Saka Dawa Day (T): The most important festival of Tibetan Buddhism, the Saka Dawa Festival commemorates Shakyamuni's Buddhahood and the death of his mortal body.

Sangha (P): The community of Buddhist practitioners.

Shakyamuni: "Sage of the Shakya Clan"; epithet of Siddhartha Gotama the founder of Buddhism. Often used in association with Buddha (Shakyamuni Buddha) in order to distinguish the historical Buddha from other buddhas.

Sesshin (J): To touch, receive, or convey the mind; the Zen retreat, usually seven days long in duration.

Soto (J): The Soto sect, one of the two main schools of Zen that was brought to Japan by Dogen in the thirteenth century, it emphasises *Shikan-taza* or "just sitting" as the main focus of practice.

Sunim (K): The Korean title of address for monks and nuns.

Sutra (S) *Sutta* (P): Buddhist "Scripture"; a discourse attributed to the Buddha or one of his chief disciples.

Tantra (S): A school of Hinduism which influenced certain schools of Mahayana Buddhism. Common to all Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the term "tantra" means mind stream or continuum. It can also be seen as a system wherein the innermost Buddha nature is unified with the view and meditation, which in turn results in the wisdom derived from spiritual practice. The tantric teachings are thus the conventional expressions of the ultimate state.

Thangka (T): A scroll painting framed in silk which fulfils various religious functions. The themes of iconography are fixed by tradition and are based on principles of proportion, detail and expression.

Theravada (P): The "Doctrine of the Elders"; the oldest tradition of Buddhism, based on the Pali canon, which evolved over several centuries after the Buddha's death.

Thubten (T): Buddhism, Buddha's teachings; it is also used as a place name or a name for either males or females.

Tulku (T): An incarnate lama in Tibetan Buddhism believed to be able to determine the course of his rebirths.

Tripitaka (P): 'Three Baskets', the three main canonical divisions of the Buddha's teachings.

Vajrayana (S): The "thunderbolt" or "diamond" vehicle; the tantric or "esoteric" Buddhism of Tibet.

Vajrayogini initiation (T): *Vajrayogini* is an emanation of *Vajravarahi*, the female embodiments of triumph over ignorance. The initiation belongs to the class of the highest yoga tantras (*anuttaratantra*).

Vesak (P): A festival marking the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death.

Vinaya (P & S): The rules of the *sangha*.

Ulambana: Festival of the hungry ghosts in which sutras are recited for the deceased.

Yamantaka initiation (T): *Yamantaka* is the wrathful manifestation of Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom. The initiation belongs to the class of the highest yoga tantras (*anuttaratantra*).

Zazenkai (J): Meditation meeting, a lay Zen group.

Zendo (J): Meditation room and shrine hall.

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