UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Meditation in Monastic Life*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/151303/

Version: Accepted Version

Book Section:

Starkey, C orcid.org/0000-0002-7807-6617 (2019) Meditation in Monastic Life. In: Farias, M, Brazier, D and Lalljee, M, (eds.) The Oxford Handbook of Meditation. Oxford Handbooks Online . Oxford University Press . ISBN 9780198808640

https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198808640.013.32

© 2019, Oxford University Press. This is an author produced version of a book chapter published in The Oxford Handbook of Meditation. Uploaded in accordance with the publisher's self-archiving policy.

Reuse
Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown
If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

White Rose
university consortium
Universities of Leeds, Sheffield & York

eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/

Meditation in Contemporary Monastic Life

Caroline Starkey

Abstract

This chapter examines the multiple roles that meditation plays in the lives of contemporary Buddhist monastics. Specifically, and drawing on rich ethnographic data, it focuses on the experiences of women who have taken Buddhist ordination within six different Buddhist groups and lineages in the British Isles. This chapter provides a brief history of the "lived" experience of meditation among emerging and established Buddhist monastic groups in Britain and an analysis of the role, function, and value of meditation practices, particularly among women. It makes comparisons between women of different Buddhist traditions in their approach to meditation and considers the implications of this for understanding the function of meditation in the Buddhist monastic tradition. Underpinning this approach is a challenge to assumptions about the individualistic nature of meditation in the contemporary West, emphasizing its communal role among monastic women in Britain.

Keywords

meditation, monasticism, gender, Buddhism, Great Britain

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK and the Spalding Trust.

Introduction

The image of the solitary Buddhist monk with his shaven head and saffron robes, deep in silent meditation, has come to represent the epitome of otherworldly concentration. There is an almost timeless quality to this image, at least in the Western imagination, and a sense that through meditation and monastic vows the Buddhist monk and his spiritual practice are completely set apart from the mundane, the temporal, and the communal. However, as Eifring (2015, p. 3) states, "even when seeking to reach a dimension beyond all phenomena, [meditation] is clearly situated within the social, cultural, and historical context in which it is practiced."

In this chapter, I take this proposition seriously and examine closely the role of meditation in one particular social and cultural context: that of contemporary British Buddhism. More specifically, I focus my analysis on the diverse experiences of convert monastic women. This heterogeneous group has received relatively little academic attention, despite Buddhism's recent growth in popularity in Britain and the steady increase in numbers of people wanting to make formal commitments to Buddhist practices and monastic communities.

According to the 2011 census, there are 238,626 Buddhists in England and Wales, an increase of 100,000 from the previous census in 2001 (O.N.S, 2012). Approximately 35 percent of these are from White British backgrounds and it is likely that these are converts or from convert families. Data about monastic Buddhist women is not collected in such a systematic way, however I estimate that there are likely to be around 500 monastic women connected formally or informally to various Buddhist groups in Britain. There are currently more male than female monastics on the basis that there are a greater number of monastic communities in Britain that cater to men. While the numbers of Buddhist monastics in the British context are still relatively small, attention to their experiences can help us think carefully about the ways in which meditation (both in idea and practice) has crossed geographic and temporal boundaries and is shaped by the particular local contexts and individual communities within which it is translated and adapted.

To explore this, I draw on detailed ethnographic research conducted between 2010 and 2014 with seventeen Buddhist convert monastic women in the British context who were connected to six different Buddhist traditions and schools (Tibetan Karma Kagyu, Nyingma, Gelug, Pure Land, Theravāda, and Sōtō Zen). This research forms part of a forthcoming monograph (Starkey, 2020) exploring the experiences of women (both monastic and non-monastic) in contemporary British Buddhism. The meaning of the term “monastic” and the adoption of particular religious practices and lifestyle restrictions differs between the Buddhist groups in this study and I discuss these differences further as the chapter progresses. It is important to note that not all of the groups considered here follow the traditional Buddhist monastic code known as the *vinaya*, as specific adaptations to monastic regulations have occurred as Buddhism migrated across Asia and, later, to the West (see Holt, 1995). For the purposes of this chapter, I have classified someone as a monastic if they have made a specific and (typically) institutionally sanctioned commitment to Buddhist practice that is likely to involve some form of renunciation (for example, of work, money, family, food, and associated changes to physical appearance such as robes or tonsure); if they also refer to themselves as “monastic,” “monk,” or “nun”; and if this was envisaged at the time to be a life-long commitment (see also Starkey, 2014). For some scholars and practitioners, the categories “monastic” or “ordained” should be reserved for those who had taken full *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhunī* ordination; however this does not reflect how the terms are used in a UK context and correspondingly, I adopt a more inclusive definition here (Salgado, 2004).

All of the women discussed in this chapter were British nationals or had spent a significant amount of time connected to British Buddhist monastic communities. They lived in temples and monasteries, small Buddhist centers or communities, or independently across the British Isles. Each had converted to Buddhism in adulthood, the majority while they were living in Britain. Their experiences of meditation will be explored using two principal foci. The first is an analysis of the ways that meditation functions in women’s early connections with Buddhism and their later desire to make formal, monastic commitments. The second is a critical discussion about the way in which meditation is woven into their daily lives. Through both lenses, I conduct a close analysis of original interview data and ethnographic observation and, at key points, compare and contrast these experiences with those of renunciant Buddhist women outside Britain. In doing this, I draw attention to the impact of temporal and geographic location in shaping monastic engagement with Buddhist meditation practices.

Providing descriptive detail about specific meditation practices or rituals is not the primary aim of this chapter, nor will I conduct a comprehensive overview of the histories of meditation and Buddhist monasticism in different countries. One could turn to Cook (2010) as an excellent example of an anthropological analysis of meditation in contemporary Thai monastic life, for example, or to scholarship that investigates meditation within early Buddhist texts such as that provided by Shaw (2006). What I explore (after providing a contextual overview) is the multi-faceted role that meditation plays in the lives of contemporary Buddhist monastic women and, in doing so, enable a more holistic picture of its value in a lived sense. Specifically, I argue that even though private silent meditation practice is often lauded as the sine qua non of contemporary Western Buddhism (Coleman, 2001, pp. 197–199) meditation should not be seen as something entirely set apart from communal daily living or other ritual and devotional practices, nor should its collective role in bringing and binding Buddhist groups together be underestimated.

Meditation and Buddhist (Monastic) Life

The renunciant monastic tradition that is now associated with many forms of contemporary Buddhism was initiated by the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama (ca. sixth century BCE). It is said that following his enlightenment at the age of thirty-five, the Buddha offered his initial teachings to five former ascetic men who, with modest ritual initiation, became his first official renunciant followers (Gethin, 1998, p. 87; Prebish, 2007, p. 653). This community of male renunciants or monks (*bhikkhu*) grew and, sometime later, an order of female renunciants or nuns (*bhikkhunī*) was also established (for a detailed history, see Wijayaratna, 1990, 2010). For the early *saṅgha* (Buddhist community), relinquishing marriage and sexual relationships, ceasing working for money, being reliant on alms donated by lay supporters, and participating in a mendicant lifestyle owning few possessions is represented as an ideal way of life (Tsomo, 1999, p. 5). Although, as Silber (1981) highlights, the initial model for monastic Buddhist life was that of the "wandering mendicant" (only resting in one place during the annual rains retreat, or *vassa*), this changed later as more stable monastic communities developed.

The Buddha did not construct all the rules and regulations for his new followers in one sitting. The practices that were adopted by the *saṅgha* developed in response to problems or concerns arising within the early communities (Lopez, 2001, p. 140). Regulations and guidance were initially given orally by the Buddha, and then later compiled into written form (according to Schopen [2004, p. 329], in the first four to five hundred years of the Common Era) within the *Vinaya Piṭaka* scriptures, which include a list of rules (*pāṭimokkha/prātimokṣa*) for monks and nuns to follow (Harvey, 1990, p. 224). After the Buddha's death, and as his teachings spread beyond their Indian homeland, monastic practice changed as different Buddhist schools were established and as local need arose, although the routine of ordination continues to be shaped in various ways by translations of the *vinaya* (Gethin, 1998, p. 88). As Harvey (1990, p. 224) states, *"vinaya"* means "that by which one is led out (from suffering),” and, as I will show, “suffering” remains a significant concept for contemporary Buddhist practitioners in Britain (see also, Starkey, 2020). Following a religious and philosophical path which recognizes the universality of suffering, dissatisfaction, or stress (*dukkha/duḥkha*) leading toward its cessation is the purpose of Buddhist spiritual life and is central to the Four Noble Truths as expounded by the Buddha. According to Conze (1982, p. 20), “the purpose of the *vinaya* rules was to provide the ideal conditions for meditation and renunciation.” Although achieving Buddhism’s soteriological goals as a lay person is certainly possible, for many Buddhist traditions the monastic way of life is seen as more conducive to spiritual attainment (Cantwell & Kawanami, 2002, p. 45). This is principally because monasticism is deemed to enable more time to focus on the *Buddha-dhamma* (the teachings of the Buddha), away from the daily distraction of marriage, work, and children, including more regular and intense periods of meditation. The Buddha’s advice on meditation contained within the Pali texts is directed at monks, despite evidence that the laity were also engaged in practice (Shaw, 2006, p. 12).

The purpose of meditation in Buddhism is exemplified in the Buddha’s experiences under the Bodhi tree, where he vowed not to relinquish his meditative state until he understood the true nature of reality, despite being tormented by Māra, the personification of death (Harvey, 1990, pp. 20–21). Throughout one night, the Buddha was said to have been able to recollect his past lives and understand the ways to end suffering and rebirth through his attainment of various meditative states (Harvey, 1990, pp. 21–22). Although the word “meditation” in English has no direct Buddhist equivalent, and Shaw (2006, p. 3) suggests that the Pali *bhāvanā* (which she translates as “production or cultivation”) is the most appropriate comparable term, the practice of focused awareness and absorption (*samadhi*) is a central facet of a Buddhist way of life, in conjunction with wisdom or insight (*paññā*) and ethics (*sīla*) (Shaw, 2006, p. 3). Although its individual impact can be difficult to articulate, arguably the overall purpose of Buddhist meditation is to objectively recognize the vacillations of our own minds and temperaments in order to enable a "transformative waking up" to the true nature of reality and existence (Harvey, 2013, p. 318). Buddhist meditation practice is commonly divided into calm (*samatha/śamatha*) and insight (*vipassanā/vipaśyanā*) (Shaw, 2006, p. 18). In practice one encounters many different techniques and approaches, which are variously adopted by different monastic (and lay) practitioners across Buddhist communities. These include seated meditation focusing on the breath or other objects of attention such as *koan*s (thought-provoking statements) or images of enlightened beings, the development of loving-kindness (*mettā*), walking meditation, and practices such as prostrations, chanting mantras, and *pūjā* (ritual devotion), and writing or copying Buddhist scriptures and texts. Observances such as chanting or prostrations might not always be considered "meditation." However, as I show in this chapter, rigid distinctions between "meditation" and "devotional practice" are blurred by my participants, as are the divisions between silent seated meditation and paying close and careful attention to tasks in daily life, such as cleaning, washing, or cooking. What I aim to do here is to question the assumed boundaries of "meditation" and how this relates to contemporary Buddhist monastics in their everyday lives.

In terms of Buddhism in Britain (and the West more broadly), silent meditation is generally considered to be a (if not *the*) central practice, especially among convert Buddhists (Bluck, 2006, p. 192; McMahan, 2008, p. 183). Although writing over two decades ago, Bell (1991, p. 155) argues that meditation "defines a person as a Buddhist in Britain" and both she and Waterhouse (1997, p. 54) highlight that an interest in learning to meditate (as a form of self-improvement) attracts British people to Buddhism. The emphasis on meditation among convert Buddhists is deemed by Bell (2000) to be given greater priority in British Buddhism than the practice of *dāna* or *puñña* (merit making), although this may be changing. A wide range of meditation techniques are regularly taught at British Buddhist centers and groups, typically on a donation basis, and include weekly classes and longer residential and non-residential retreats. On any one given evening, Buddhist meditation groups (either as introductory classes or gatherings for more experienced meditators) are meeting all across the country in dedicated Buddhist temples and centers, hired spaces, and private homes, and the number of groups continues to grow (Starkey & Tomalin, 2016).

While a key feature of British Buddhism is the dominant role given to lay Buddhists, Bluck (2006, p. 182) found that in terms of meditation, the practices that have now become established on British shores strongly mirror the approaches of "parent traditions" (often based outside the UK) with little formal adaptation, including for those groups who predominantly engage converts or members of convert families. Yet Buddhism in Britain encompasses more than just the groups catering for "White British converts," even though academic attention has typically focused on these Buddhist groups and experiences (Bluck, 2006, p. 16). More recent work, such as Thanissaro (2014), Smith, Munt, and Yip (2016), Starkey and Tomalin (2016), and Page and Yip (2017) have given more attention to "heritage" experiences of Buddhism in the British context, although it is clear that more work is necessary to fully understand the diverse ways in which Buddhism generally, and meditation specifically, is practiced in Britain.

Buddhist Monasticism in Britain

Although monastic practice is certainly not as dominant either numerically or culturally as lay Buddhist practice in Britain, the endeavor to establish sustainable monastic communities is a key part of British Buddhist history. There were notable early attempts to bring Buddhist monasticism to Britain, for example by Ananda Metteyya (born Henry Alan Bennett), who was ordained in Burma in 1902, returning to Britain as a monk in 1908 but who eventually disrobed following difficulties maintaining the monastic lifestyle in the British climate (Batchelor, 1994, p. 40). There were also British and Irish nationals who took Buddhist monastic ordination outside of the United Kingdom, for example U Dhammaloka (Turner, Cox, & Bocking, 2010). Slightly later, in 1926, the London Buddhist *vihara* was opened as "the first missionary *vihara* to be founded outside the Asian continent" by Anagarika Dharmapala, and this housed a small group of Sinhalese monks until the Second World War, but was later re-opened in 1955 in Knightsbridge (Scott, 1981).

It was, however, post-1950s, following wide-scale social changes in religious affiliation and increased interest in global travel and alternative spiritual forms (particularly those from the East) that more successful Buddhist monastic communities began to appear, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s (Bluck, 2006, pp. 11–12). Alongside a pattern of visiting monastics and lay teachers from different Buddhist traditions and countries, prominent examples of monastery establishment include Samye Ling in Scotland, the first Tibetan Buddhist center in the West, founded by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Akong Tulku Rinpoche, and Throssel Hole, the Northumberland Sōtō Zen monastery established by Reverend Master Jiyu Kennett (born Peggy Kennett) in 1972. The first Thai temple, also supporting a small group of Thai missionary monks, Wat Buddhapadipa, was established in 1966, moving to their current premises in Wimbledon in 1976. In addition, the English Sangha Trust (EST), who had been struggling for some time to launch a sustainable Theravāda *sangha* in Britain, invited American monk Ajahn Sumedho, ordained in Thailand in the lineage of Ajahn Chah, to live at the Hampstead Buddhist *vihara* in 1977 with three other *bhikkhus* (Batchelor, 1994, p. 42). In 1979, the EST bought a larger property in Sussex, which became Cittaviveka monastery and, in the early 1980s, purchased another property in Hertfordshire—a former school and summer camp—which became Amaravati monastery: two examples of the successful transplantation of Buddhist monasticism outside Asia. Buddhist monastic communities in

Britain are now found connected to purpose-built temples, in adapted listed buildings in both urban and rural locations, and in small semi-detached houses, typically in suburban areas. In a recent study, funded by Historic England, Tomalin and Starkey (2016) identified that in England alone, there are approximately ninety different Buddhist buildings that are public-facing and provide accommodation for monastics, and this number does not include monks and nuns living alone in private houses nor those monks visiting different venues across the United Kingdom on a temporary basis to give teachings. Taken together, this is evidence of a small, yet thriving monastic element to British Buddhist practice (see also, Starkey & Tomalin, 2016).

Women have played an important, although certainly less charted, role in the development of British Buddhist monastic communities. From high-profile figures founding monastic orders (such as the aforementioned Jiyu Kennett), to pioneers of innovative renunciant practice such as the Thai Forest Sangha *sīladharā* (Angell, 2006), to less publicly prominent, although no less significant, female monastics, women have helped to build and maintain Buddhism in Britain (Starkey,2020).There is diversity in monastic practice, living situation, and approach adopted by Buddhist women in Britain, and this partly is reflective of the differences between different traditions, including in their attitude to female ordination. Not all Buddhist groups authorize women to take an equivalent monastic ordination to men, although the reasons for this are beyond the scope of this chapter to explore (see, for example, Mohr & Tsedroen, 2010; Tsomo, 1988). The women who were part of my research had each taken a varied number of vows or precepts to guide their daily lives, ranging from five to over three hundred. These vows typically incorporate the “Five Precepts,” which are held in common with many lay Buddhists across the world: not to kill, steal, talk falsely, take intoxicating substances, or practice sexual misconduct. Monastic vows characteristically regulate the intricacies of daily life in great detail, including structuring the time of day one might eat a meal, what is worn and owned, proper deportment in public and private, and the ways that one must behave toward other monastics and the laity. Those connected to Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions also take variations on *bodhisattva* vows, which prioritize the liberation of all sentient beings on the route to enlightenment. For some of the women (for example, those in the Tibetan traditions), the vows that they had taken mirrored exactly the vows taken by nuns outside of the United Kingdom in the same tradition. However, others (for example, those associated with the Pureland Amida Trust, or the Sōtō Zen Order of Buddhist Contemplatives) take precepts written and adapted specifically for a UK or Western context, albeit based closely on Buddhist monastic vows of their respective schools. Although comparing monastic vows and the ways that they are currently implemented across the Buddhist world would be an extensive exercise, beyond the scope of this chapter, what is most helpful for our purposes here is to examine the different ways in which monastic daily living might differ for women across the Buddhist schools and groups in Britain, a theme that will be revisited as this chapter progresses.

Of the seventeen monastic women interviewed, eight lived in communal monastic settings and nine lived independently or as the sole monastic connected to a lay Buddhist community.. In some monastic settings, men and women live together in the same buildings (for example, Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in Northumberland), but in others (such as Samye Ling in Eskdalemuir, Scotland), male and female monastics live in adjacent properties. Of those women living independently, three lived with partners and families and had to hold down jobs and maintain familial responsibilities alongside their monastic vows, including, for some, looking after their children (see also, Starkey, 2014). However, it is important to note here that being able to take monastic ordination and still maintain a direct responsibility for children or live with a partner is unusual and only occurred among certain Tibetan practitioners in this context. All of the monastic women I interviewed wore monastic robes of different colors and types, and many shaved their heads to reflect the commitments they had made on ordination, including celibacy. Those in the Forest Sangha relinquished money and the ownership of property, but again this was not a practice adopted by every Buddhist monastic across the board. This begins to highlight the significant diversity of lifestyle between monastic Buddhist women in the British context, and as I will later discuss, these differences have an impact on women's relationships to, and practice of, meditation.

Meditation and the Attraction of Buddhism

For the majority of women involved in my research, meditation was in some way formative both in their initial introduction to Buddhism and in their later decision to follow a monastic or renunciant path. It is meditation that attracted many of them to Buddhist groups and teachers initially, and it is shared meditation practice that continues to connect them over decades. None of the women had Buddhist family backgrounds, and each of them made their commitment to Buddhism in adulthood, most in their twenties or thirties. In fact, perhaps unusually in the arguably post-Christian context of contemporary Britain, the majority had strongly Christian backgrounds (Gilbert, 1980). For most, this was either within the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Church. Although for a small number this engagement was nominal, many narrated a powerful sense of religious dedication and commitment even from a young age. This may be a partial explanation as to why they eventually made the commitment to live as full time *religieuses*.

For a few women, the desire to learn how to meditate precipitated a concerted search, mostly in their local area, for a Buddhist group or teacher. In some cases, this was because they had experienced anxiety or depression and they felt that meditation would be one way to assist them to cope with this. This motivation is a reflection of the fact that in the past twenty years, meditation, particularly in secular, but also in Buddhist forms, has come to public prominence in Britain as a way to improve mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Cook, 2016). This has had an impact on British Buddhist groups, giving them increasing prominence in the public sphere, arguably improving their legitimacy and acceptability in the eyes of the wider non-Buddhist public and the state. Although this has yet to be understood fully, this move has increased the traffic to certain British Buddhist centers. Those women who became involved with Buddhist groups after the millennium were more likely to have been attracted to Buddhism as a result of hearing about the efficacy of meditation in the promotion of health and well-being. They were attracted to the perceived therapeutic benefits of meditation, particularly as emphasized in *samatha* practices and those that focus on the breath, as these are seen as having a noticeable impact on levels of anxiety, depression, and general well-being. However, those connecting with Buddhism in the decades before the millennium described a more ineffable feeling of being compelled to try new spiritual practices because of a perceived past-life connection or some more transcendent feeling of being drawn to iconography or ideas with a cosmological and soteriological slant, for example about *karma, nirvana,* or *bodhicitta* (compassion for all sentient beings). With the growing prominence of mindfulness and the popular association between meditation and positive mental well-being, it is perhaps not surprising that a therapeutic interest in meditation is increasingly shaping the initial trajectory of British monastic women's early engagements with Buddhism, and this is likely to continue.

Yet a deliberate and conscientious search for meditation instruction wasn't the most common introductory trajectory found among the women in this study (see also, Starkey, 2020). In the majority of cases, women learnt about Buddhist practices and teachings in more accidental ways—either being introduced to teachers and groups through friends or partners, coming across Buddhist temples while traveling outside of the United Kingdom, or hearing

Buddhist monastic teachers speak and wanting to find out more. Meditation does feature in this more organic connection to Buddhism as, after these initial introductions, it is the experience of meditation practice that is described as particularly captivating. Meditation instruction is equally available for lay men and women in Britain, and none of the monastic women indicated any early difficulty accessing particular teachings on the grounds of their gender, or any overt assumptions made about their abilities to practice meditation as lay women. For one Theravāda nun, the techniques that she was introduced to were "immediately accessible" and this was mirrored by a Sōtō Zen female monk ("monk" is the title given to both male and female monastics in this particular tradition). She said: "the meditation just made total sense to me . . . [I had] found the most meaningful thing in my life". One Tibetan Gelug nun, who had only visited a Buddhist monastery when she fell ill while travelling around Asia, described how she went along to a meditation session, which "blew me away," and her continued practice in just one week "started to open up channels and thoughts and feelings that I didn't know existed." It was as a direct result of this experience that she made a formal commitment to Buddhism as a lay practitioner, and began a thirty-year journey that would later see her ordain as a nun and participate in a number of long meditation retreats, sometimes for extended periods in complete solitude. For others, meditation might not have been the first thing they were attracted to, but they describe a slowly deepening affiliation with the practice over a number of years, narrating this more along the lines of a "gradual growing of my practice and engagement with it." In each of these journeys, however, it is meditation that is a common thread.

This common thread endures when we investigate women's motivations to follow a monastic path. Wanting more time and space to focus on meditation was cited as a reason to consider monasticism in a significant number of cases. A Thai Forest Sangha *sīladharā* explained that, although she had "put a lot of energy into . . . attending meditation groups" as a lay person, the pull of monastic renunciant life was the ability to “make a whole-hearted commitment to one thing,” namely meditation and Buddhist practice. One nun in the Tibetan Karma Kagyu school felt that in lay life she wasn’t able to “come to grips with practice,” only “dipping here, dipping there.” Through making a monastic commitment, the theory was that she would be able to focus more successfully. As I will discuss in the next section, this isn’t always the experience in practice in the modern world, particularly in a cultural context where Buddhist monasticism has only a very recent history and is not promoted by the state. However, the impression of monastic life that women typically hold is one that is pared back, streamlined, and ultimately dedicated to a thorough investigation of the Buddha’s teaching through meditation. This perception of renunciant life was also highlighted in an earlier study of the Thai Forest Sangha in Britain in the 1980s (Goswell, 1988) and remains significant now and across Buddhist traditions (Starkey, 2020). This also reflects similar motivations for monastic ordination given in first-person accounts by other Western Buddhist nuns in the United States and Europe (for example, Chodron, 1999; Tsedroen, 1988).

The connection between motivations for renunciation and meditation are not always presented as so sharply defined in scholarship on Buddhist women in Asian contexts. In her study of a Northern Thai monastery, Cook (2010, p. 67) identifies that for both men and women there were a range of motivations for renunciation, which included a desire to focus on meditation practice but also those which appear somewhat more social in nature, such as furthering educational aspirations and upholding promises made to family members during times of ill-health. In a study of Taiwanese Buddhist nuns, Crane (2004) also calls attention to social as well as spiritual motivations for renunciation, as ordination was seen as a way to avoid unwanted marriage, a concern also raised in Gutschow’s (2004, p. 136) study of Zangskari nuns.

These types of social motivation are never mentioned in the narratives of Western Buddhist nuns in Britain, who give clear priority to the focus on spiritual practice, including meditation, as their rationale for ordination. This is certainly not because they are somehow inherently more spiritually orientated than monastics in other contexts. It is more likely to reflect their different social and economic status prior to ordination, the social circumstances of the countries within which they live, and the culturally conditioned ways in which they are expected to narrate their religious journeys. In Britain, monastic women, particularly in “convert” focused groups, are likely to be middle class, highly educated, and economically self-sufficient, turning to Buddhism after successful careers and, quite often, marriages and parenthood. There is, arguably, less stigma associated with being unmarried in contemporary Britain and less pressure on young women to conform to particular ways of being and living than in the settings described by Crane (2004) or Gutschow (2004). There is little need to turn to Buddhist ordination to avoid marriage in the British context; indeed, becoming a Buddhist nun is a far more unusual choice than remaining single. Furthermore, with the typical emphasis given by British convert Buddhist communities on the importance of individual meditation practice and personal experience of the Buddha’s teachings (Waterhouse, 1999), it is likely that these types of experiences will be prioritized in the narration of one’s spiritual journey, as this is what is deemed socially desirable. This is not to say that individual life histories are somehow fabricated in retrospect, only that certain aspects may be given greater emphasis and furnished with particular language that is more acceptable to the social group in question (Beckford, 1978).

What both Kawanami (2013) and Cheng (2007) note, and I echo with comparative evidence from Britain, is the need to avoid homogenizing the experiences and rationales for renunciation given by Buddhist nuns, either in cross-cultural comparison or within one cultural and geographic location. Each of the aforementioned studies of renunciant women outside the West clearly indicate that spiritual motivations for ordination were present, if not predominant, in women’s narratives, including the desire to give more attention to meditation and other Buddhist practices. These are intertwined with motivations that seem more mundane. Furthermore, while individual meditation practice features strongly in the narratives of many British Buddhist women, not all of these women begin their engagement with Buddhism or decide to ask for monastic ordination as a result of interest in silent meditation. There were those who were involved in groups with strong meditation traditions but who honestly explained that they had never been particularly interested in meditation, preferring either study or devotional practices. There were also those who were committed to Buddhist traditions that did not prioritize silent meditation as the primary practice, for example two nuns affiliated with a Pure Land group. These women describe being attracted to chanting practices and forms of ethical engagement in social welfare projects. While silent meditation has a dominant place in the narrative life histories of British Buddhist convert monastic women, it is not the only practice that is worthy of scholarly attention. Beyond a focus on personal and individual practice, a strong theme throughout many of the British monastic women’s narratives is the desire to connect with, build, and be part of Buddhist *communities*. Among British Buddhist communities, meditation is practiced both alone and with other people (and this pattern mirrors many Buddhist communities outside the UK). The communal role that meditation plays in the development and maintenance of British Buddhist monasticism will be discussed in the next section.

Meditation at the Kitchen Sink

While recognizing the potential variety in monastic experience and motivation is vital, it is striking that among Buddhist monastic women in the British context, all had a silent meditation practice. This may not have been a sole priority (for example, amongst the Pure Land monastics) but it remained a feature of their lives, and an important part of what they taught to others. Experience of meditation and also the ability to teach accessibly is accorded a particular status in British Buddhism. As Waterhouse (1999) discovered, authentic and direct knowledge of Buddhist practices are at least equal to the authority of lineage in this context. Although the Western image of Buddhism may well be intrinsically tied up with silent meditation perhaps as a reflection of modernist tendencies, not all Buddhist monastics across the globe prioritize it in the same way (McMahan, 2008, p. 183). As Crosby (2014, p. 147) notes, while Western monastics are more likely to regularly meditate, among mainstream Theravāda communities meditation is seen as "more often a specialist vocation or undertaken for a special period," although certain groups and individuals prioritize meditation more strongly than others. It is necessary to allow space to consider the varied role that meditation might play in the daily lives of Buddhist monastics, even in the British context where silent meditation may well be held in common across most Buddhist groups.

In practical terms, meditation provides a routine for the monastic day, both for those living in a communal environment and those living alone. This is not to say that meditation is always practiced communally for monastics living in monasteries and, indeed, practicing meditation alone is also a feature of monastery life. However, having one, two, or more set times for practice that may be taken alone or in a communal meditation hall provides helpful daily structure, particularly when one first takes vows, but also beyond this. For British Buddhist monastic women, meditation is seen as an important tool with which one might investigate and realize the Buddha's teachings, particularly around suffering and the way to end suffering—the cornerstone of the *dhamma*. This prominence given to narratives of suffering and the work to end it is present in ethnographies of Buddhist female renunciants outside of the West, for example in Tibet (Havnevik, 1989), Myanmar (Kawanami, 2013) and

Sri Lanka (Salgado, 2013). This is perhaps no surprise, given that an understanding of suffering and stress (*dukkha*) is the foundation of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths and the motivation for monastic life more generally. Yet, as one Sōtō Zen female monk explains, it is important not to over-romanticize the experience of meditation:

> When you meditate you begin to see how you are and frequently it's not pretty . . . You are not meditating to find peace and to be calm and all of that, you are sitting down and saying I'm willing to see all the icky stuff, basically, because you have to go through that before you are going to get anywhere . . . it can be quite painful.

As a result of this, what is important is the availability of a teacher or guide. For some, having teachers living in Britain was vital and why they chose to associate with a particular Buddhist group. For those with principal teachers based outside of Britain, in India or Myanmar for example, it was sometimes difficult to receive the level of support and guidance in meditation they needed on a regular basis. For example, one might have a particular (negative or positive) experience during a meditation session and want to talk about it, or want some additional support with learning different techniques. If the principal teacher is based outside of the United Kingdom, it can be difficult to secure time with them on a one-to-one basis in order to have a productive discussion about spiritual practice. Some women from this study, particularly those in Tibetan traditions who did not live in monasteries, might only see their principal teacher annually (for some, even less than this), which does not necessarily provide an adequate support or mentoring. This is not solely an issue for contemporary Buddhists, as Shaw (2006:10) identifies the significance of a teacher as meditation guide in the early Pali literature. It is, however, a feature of life in British Buddhist communities where teachers, home monasteries, and communities of practice may be located in other countries. Therefore, when teachers visit Britain to give meditation instruction or *dhamma* talks, these are significant events in the annual calendar both for monastic and lay practitioners.

The daily routine of monastic life, and the place for focused meditation periods within it, differs across Buddhist traditions. It is tempting to want to envision a typical day for a Buddhist nun in Britain and then to try to compare this across different Buddhist contexts, highlighting the points of similarity and difference. However, this runs the risk of being overly reductive of very heterogeneous lives and experiences. It is less problematic, perhaps, to consider the daily lives of female monastics in established monasteries as opposed to those living alone or in smaller groups. Certainly, in the British context, this difference affects women's engagement with Buddhist teachings and practices, including meditation. In most British Buddhist monasteries, the typical picture is two to three communal meditation periods per day, at least in the early morning and evening, although in certain traditions, following the novitiate period these can sometimes be optional or undertaken alone. These regularly scheduled periods can include walking and sitting meditation, chanting *pūjā*, and ceremonial ritual activity. There are changes to this broad schedule at different times, for example, for some Theravāda monastics on *uposatha* (lunar observance days) the evening meditation period, including both silent meditation and chanting *pūjā*, is extended to midnight to mark particular dedication to the *dhamma*. For many Buddhist monastics, including in Britain, there are times in the year that are more intensely focused on meditation and contemplative practice, for example during the *vassa* (rains retreat) or winter retreats where, typically, monastics will remain in one place with perhaps more limited administrative duties. As a result, the structure provided by meditation in most British Buddhist monasteries isn't entirely static and changes over the course of the annual calendar. In addition, some groups have a particular emphasis on meditation and long retreats, such as the Tibetan Karma Kagyu school, which offers the option to be cloistered for three to four years, with intense schedules for meditation and ritual practice. However, this is far from the majority approach in contemporary Britain and, of the women I interviewed, only two of them had undertaken extended retreats of over six months, and only one of these had taken a four-year retreat. For most, more secluded retreat periods might last for two to three months, or sometimes less. Secluded or solitary retreat isn't always part of Buddhist monastic life, and some participants narrated their monastic schedule through their engagement in community welfare projects and charitable social work.

In monastic communities, individuals might have specific administrative roles, such as working in the kitchen, supporting novices, facilitating lay people's retreats, teaching and one-to-one support for lay practitioners and, at times, these administrative and pastoral duties are given priority. One participant described this as trying to find the balance between "meditation and Hotel Management." This is the reality of life in a contemporary monastic community, particularly one in the West that might cater to large numbers of lay visitors on retreat. Living alone, or in a smaller monastic community, also has an impact on the place that meditation has in daily life. As I have discussed, roughly half of the women I spoke to lived alone in their own privately owned or rented homes, or as a monastic in sole charge of a communally owned Buddhist center. This relates both to personal choice, but also to a lack of monastery settings that might cater to women who have taken particular monastic vows in Britain (Starkey, 2014, 2020). While for those living in smaller centers or temples, although being in sole charge of such places has an impact on their responsibilities as a monastic, the daily pattern of meditation and ceremonial periods typically mirrors that of the mother-monastery. However, unlike in some parts of Asia, for example, Western women have been given Buddhist monastic ordination while still holding familial or householder responsibilities such as a need to earn money or look after children, particularly in some Tibetan traditions. While these women do work hard to integrate monastic practices, including meditation, into their daily lives, it isn't always easy and necessitated increased discipline. It may involve getting up very early to complete the required ritual practices prior to going to work, and then staying up late into the night to meditate. This sometimes led to feelings of tension and a personal worry that monastic vows and practices were not being upheld as they might initially have been intended. As one nun described:"To fully devote yourself to full time practice and meditation and all of those things as a monastic, you need to not have to worry about where money is going to come from".

However, both for those women living alone and for those living communally, when examining the ways in which they narrate their relationship with meditation, it is clear that dividing "meditation" and "daily life" is artificial. What is important is the integration of meditation, mindfulness, and concentration into daily tasks and interactions with others. Here, then, it should be difficult to ascertain where meditation stops and daily life begins and vice versa. As one Sōtō Zen female monk illustrates: "Meditation [is] not about going off for an hour a day and sitting on your backside, it [is] . . . how do you operate at the kitchen sink, how do you deal with people?" This also applies to any analysis of the role of devotional or ritual practice. For the monastics in this study, any attempt to draw firm boundaries between meditation and other practices such as chanting or *pūjā* was questioned, for these are all typically viewed as functioning in similar ways: to encourage concentration, to show respect and reverence, and to build and maintain community cohesion.

Beyond the impact on the individual, meditation in this context also works to construct and maintain communities and communal identity. In one Thai monastic setting, Cook (2010, p. 7) argues that meditation helps to nurture a particular type of monastic identity and, as a result, its social nature is significant. McMahan (2008, p. 191) argues that Buddhist practice "including meditation, has always been a communal as well as individual endeavor." In a similar way, these social aspects should not be overlooked in British monastic communities, although the contextual specificities may be different than monasteries in Asia. Due to the growing prominence of meditation in contemporary Britain, offering meditation instruction to the general public helps to support and financially sustain Buddhist monastic communities and individuals, particularly in the situation where monasteries are not directly funded or endorsed by the state, as they may be where Buddhism is the national religious tradition. In terms of the Buddhist monastic groups that were the focus of my research, none of them received direct state funding for religious activities, either from the United Kingdom or elsewhere. However, all of the principal monasteries are either registered as charities and are subsequently regulated by the Charity Commission of England and Wales or are connected closely to charitable trusts designed to provide ongoing support. Therefore they receive certain tax exemptions as a result. The *dāna* or donations provided by lay communities in return for monastic teaching, whether in an evening class or a longer retreat, provides funds to build and maintain Buddhist centers and temples (including supporting necessary renovations on monastic buildings) and gives them a social purpose—to teach others and spread the *dhamma*. Teaching meditation is also a way in which certain Buddhist monasteries uphold their UK charitable status, and thus this enables relationships to be built between Buddhist organizations and the British state, with concomitant responsibilities arising as a result. Furthermore, some Buddhist groups in Britain, including those connected to monastic traditions, have more recently begun to provide ‘secular’ mindfulness meditation (such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) to non-Buddhists, sometimes in conjunction with statutory bodies such as the National Health Service. Whilst they may do this through a separate charitable trust, they have forged new relationships (including financial ones) with the British state through the provision of such meditation courses (Starkey, 2020).

For monastic women living alone, teaching meditation may also contribute to sustaining their monastic practice. Offering a regular *dhamma* class and meditation retreats helps to build supportive surrounding communities of lay people that can provide financial assistance, which is particularly important for those who have vowed not to work for money, but also offers elements of emotional and spiritual friendship they might need while living outside of a traditional monastery environment or away from their teacher. While it is not always as easy as this, particularly when living alone with little institutional support, meditation is thus woven into the social fabric of monastic living in Britain. It is a tool to help an individual realize the Buddhist path, but it is equally significant in enabling the collective to develop and thrive.

Conclusion

As I have demonstrated, through the ethnographic evidence analyzed in this chapter, meditation is a key component of Buddhist monastic life in contemporary Britain. For monastic women, "meditation" includes silent seated practice, which has a particular resonance in the contemporary British imagination; walking meditation; and other observances that sometimes come under the rubric of "devotion," such as chanting or prostrations. These are blended together in different ways and at different times with other responsibilities to contribute to an overall structure for monastic life. Meditation is seen as a way to help in the realization of the Buddha's teachings, and is something that initially attracts women to Buddhist groups in Britain, as well as providing a motivation for monastic ordination. Yet, importantly, meditation has a dual function and it operates on an individual and a social level, binding communities together and helping to sustain them. In taking a closer look at the contextually specific detail of contemporary monastic life, we can more easily articulate the ways in which Buddhism and Buddhist meditation are integrated into differing social and cultural contexts and how they, in turn, are shaped by them.

A question I have returned to throughout this chapter is how the experiences of Buddhist monastic women in Britain might be different from monastic or renunciant women in majority-Buddhist or non-Western contexts in terms of their relationship with Buddhism generally, and meditation practices specifically. I have been keen to avoid an overly reductive analysis that makes homogenizing statements about "Western Buddhist women" or "Asian Buddhist women" without recognizing that different practices, approaches, personalities, and backgrounds shape both individual choices and patterns of collective daily living. Buddhist women, including monastic practitioners, are a diverse group and any one-dimensional comparison risks simplifying their varied experiences. Yet even with this caveat in mind, in this chapter I have indicated several points of similarity and difference that enable us to better articulate the ways in which the experience of meditation among female Buddhist monastics in Britain might be molded by context.

Chief among these differences are the social and economic backgrounds and circumstances of Buddhist monastic women. The majority of monastic women referred to in this chapter had all received a level of tertiary education, many had high-profile careers and had been economically self-sufficient prior to ordination, including living independently, often as home-owners. None of the women in this study ordained as teenagers or very young adults, and most waited until their thirties or forties or even later before becoming monastics, bringing with them life experiences and particular ways of envisioning monastic practice. None mentioned a desire to ask for ordination in order to avoid marriage, poverty, or to improve their social status. This is not always the picture presented in studies of female renunciation outside of the United Kingdom. In different Buddhist Asian contexts, such as Myanmar, younger women are also taking ordination alongside those who are older, and some do not have the same levels of education and social or financial background that many Western Buddhist women have. Some are less concerned with silent meditation as a primary practice. As I have shown, this is likely to have a bearing on the ways in which women articulate their motivations for monastic life and the journeys that they subsequently take. Yet Buddhist nuns outside the West are not all cut from the same cloth. Ethnographic work tells us that, across different Asian contexts, there are highly educated women with substantial social and economic status who are choosing a renunciant path in order to focus on meditation and spiritual goals, in very similar ways to the women described in this chapter. It is clear that there are differences within Buddhist Asian contexts, as well as differences between women in Asia and the West and, indeed, among women within Western cultural settings. As I have articulated in this chapter, one of the ways to examine these differences is to look at the different living situations of Buddhist renunciant women and consider how these affect meditation and the daily concerns of monastic life.

Although Buddhist monastic women in Britain adopt different approaches to spiritual practice and live in vastly different settings, many put an emphasis on silent meditation. The importance of having personal experiences of the Buddha's teachings is, in general terms, prioritized in the United Kingdom in monastic as well as lay circles, although this is not to say that studying the *dhamma*, for example, isn't also highly valued (Waterhouse, 1999). Yet silent meditation has an increasingly well-established place in contemporary British popular and health culture, and this has impacted on the spiritual trajectories of monastic women in Britain. One example of this is the initial articulation of the therapeutic benefits of meditation by women who became involved with Buddhism in Britain within the last two decades. Yet understanding the significance of silent meditation in the lives of many Western Buddhists should not obscure the variation of practices that are adopted by monastics, including other devotion and ritual, ethical and communal observances, and a dedication to social engagement and social work projects for Buddhists and the wider British public.

One of the key issues facing Buddhist monastic women in Britain is support, both practical and emotional. While in Asia there are a number of monastic communities, including nunneries, that provide structured homes and localized networks for renunciant practitioners, this is not universally the case elsewhere. While there are British monasteries that have been established now for decades and that have a community of lay supporters, such as Samye Ling, Throssel Hole, or Amaravati, there are some traditions, such as the Tibetan Gelug or Nyingma, who do not have monasteries for women in Britain. As a result, some women struggle to balance their monastic vows and their meditative and ritual practices with the realities and responsibilities of daily life and financial survival (Starkey, 2014, 2020). The impact on their meditation practice is twofold and includes the potential for lack of time and dedicated space for meditation and ritual practice, and the challenges that come from not being in close proximity to other practitioners and teachers in a communal setting in order to foster spiritual progression. There are similar concerns that have been raised in terms of support for Buddhist nuns in Asian contexts also (see, for example, Tsomo, 2002); however, the high cost of living coupled with the relative infancy of Buddhist monasticism in Britain can lead to a lack of understanding and support for renunciant lifestyles, all of which has a particular effect on women and their religious practice.

Notwithstanding this, what is clear from the testimonies of monastic women, both in Britain but also beyond, is their dedication to the spiritual life and Buddhist teachings, and their willingness to work toward realizing them regardless of any individual or institutional opportunities and constraints. The women in this study often acknowledge the difficulties that they face as Buddhist monastics in a new environment, whether they live in monasteries or alone, following a path that isn't easy or culturally familiar. What meditation provides, therefore, is routine, shape, and structure to British Buddhist monastic life and a sense of ongoing connection to Buddhist traditions, teachers, and communities. Buddhist meditation has both individual and collective value and is likely to continue to play a central role in the development of Buddhist monastic culture in Britain.

References

Angell, J. (2006). Women in brown: A short history of the order of *siladhara*, nuns of the English Forest Sangha, part one. *Buddhist Studies Review 23*, 93–112.

Batchelor, S. (1994). *The awakening of the West: The encounter of Buddhism and Western culture*. Berkeley: Parallax Press

Beckford, J. A. (1978). Accounting for conversion. *British Journal of Sociology 29*(2), 249–262.

Bell, S. (1991). *Buddhism in Britain—development and adaptation*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Durham.

Bell, S. (2000). Being creative with tradition: Rooting Theravada Buddhism in Britain. *Journal of Global Buddhism 1*, 1–23.

Bluck, R. (2006). *British Buddhism: Teachings, practice and development*. New York: Routledge.

Cantwell, C., & Kawanami, H. (2002). Buddhism. In L. Woodhead, P. Fletcher, H. Kawanami, & D. Smith (Eds.), *Religions in the modern world* (pp. 47–81). London: Routledge.

Cheng, W.-Y. (2007). *Buddhist nuns in Taiwan and Sri Lanka: A critique of the feminist perspective*. London and New York: Routledge.

Chodron, T. (1999). Introduction. In T. Chodron (Ed.), *Blossoms of the Dharma: Living as a Buddhist nun* (pp. xxv–xxxvi). Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Coleman, J. W. (2001). *The new Buddhism: The Western transformation of an ancient tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Conze, E. (1982). *A short history of Buddhism*. London: Unwin.

Cook, J. (2010). *Meditation in modern Buddhism: Renunciation and change in Thai monastic life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cook, J. (2016). Mindful in Westminster: The politics of meditation and the limits of neoliberal critique. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory 6*, 141–161.

Crane, H. (2004). Resisting marriage and renouncing womanhood: The choice of Taiwanese Buddhist nuns. *Critical Asian Studies 36*, 265–284.

Crosby, K. (2014). *Theravada Buddhism: Continuity, diversity and identity*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.

Eifring, H. (2015). Meditative practice and cultural context. In H. Eifring (Ed.), *Meditation and culture* (pp. 3–8). London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Gethin, R. (1998). *The foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gilbert, A. (1980). *The making of post-Christian Britain*. London: Longman.

Goswell, M. (1988). *Motivational factors in the life of a religious community and related changes in the experience of self* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Bath.

Gutschow, K. (2004). *Being a Buddhist nun: The struggle for enlightenment in the Himalayas*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Harvey, P. (1990). *An introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harvey, P. (2013). *An introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Havnevik, H. (1989). *Tibetan Buddhist nuns: History, cultural norms and social reality*. Oslo: Norwegian University Press.

Holt, J. C. (1995). *Discipline: The canonical Buddhism of the Vinayapitaka*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Kawanami, H. (2013). *Renunciation and empowerment of Buddhist nuns in Myanmar-Burma: Building a community of female faithful*. Leiden: Brill.

Lopez, D. S. (2001). *The story of Buddhism: A concise guide to its history and teachings*. New York: Harper Collins/Harper One.

McMahan, D. L. (2008). *The making of Buddhist modernism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mohr, T., & Tsedroen, J. (Eds.). (2010). *Dignity and discipline: Reviving full ordination for Buddhist nuns*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom.

O.N.S. (2012). *Religion in England and Wales 2011* [Online]. ONS. Retrieved from http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt-religion.html

Page, S.-J. & Yip, A. K.-T. (2017). *Understanding young Buddhists: Living out ethical journeys*. Leiden: Brill.

Prebish, C. S. (2007). Sangha. In D. Keown & C. S. Prebish (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (pp. 653–661). London and New York: Routledge.

Salgado, N. S. (2004). Religious identities of Buddhist nuns: Training precepts, renunciant attire and nomenclature in Theravada Buddhism. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion 72*, 935–953.

Salgado, N. S. (2013). *Buddhist nuns and gendered practice: In search of the female renunciant*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schopen, G. (2004). *Buddhist monks and business matters: Still more papers on monastic Buddhism in India*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Scott, A. (1981). *Anagarika Dharmapala: The founder of the London Buddhist Vihara and Maha Bodhi Society* [Online]. Retrieved from http://www.londonbuddhistvihara.org/Dharmapala.htm

Shaw, S. (2006). *Buddhist meditation: An anthology of texts from the Pali Canon*. London and New York: Routledge.

Silber, I. F. (1981). Dissent through holiness: The case of the radical renouncer in Theravada Buddhist countries. *Numen 28*, 164–193.

Smith, S., Munt, S. & Yip, A. K.-T. (2016). *Cosmopolitan Dharma: Race, sexuality, and gender in British Buddhism*. Leiden: Brill.

Starkey, C. (2014). Experiencing the liminal: Understanding separation and transition amongst Buddhist monastic women in contemporary Britain. In I. Jonveaux, E. Pace, & S. Palmisano (Eds.), *Sociology and monasticism: Between innovation and tradition* (pp. 206–226). Leiden: Brill.

Starkey, C. (2020) *Women in contemporary British Buddhism: Ordination, community, connection.* London: Routledge.

Starkey, C., & Tomalin, E. (2016). Building Buddhism in England: The flourishing of a minority faith heritage. *Contemporary Buddhism 17*, 326–356.

Thanissaro, P. N. (2014). Almost a proper Buddhist: The post-secular complexity of heritage Buddhist teen identity in Britain. *Journal of Global Buddhism 15*, 1–14.

Tsedroen, J. B. (1988). Living by the Vinaya in the West. In K. L. Tsomo (Ed.), *Sakyadhita: Daughters of the Buddha* (pp. 202–213). Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.

Tsomo, K. L. (1988). Nuns of the Buddhist traditions. In K. L. Tsomo, (Ed.), *Sakyadhita: Daughters of the Buddha* (pp. 103–108). Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.

Tomalin, E., & Starkey, C. (2016). A survey of Buddhist Buildings in England. *Historic England*, Project 6749. Retrieved from https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/survey-of-buddhist-buildings-in-england/

Tsomo, K. L. (1999). History of Buddhist monasticism and its Western adaptation. In T. Chodron (Ed.), *Blossoms of the Dharma: Living as a Buddhist nun* (pp. 3–16). Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Tsomo, K. L. (2002). Buddhist nuns: Changes and challenges. In C. S. Prebish and M. Baumann (Ed.), *Westward Dharma: Buddhism beyond Asia* (pp. 255–274). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Turner, A., Cox, L., & Bocking, B. (2010). Beachcombing, going native and freethinking: Rewriting the history of early Western Buddhist monastics. *Contemporary Buddhism 11*, 125–147.

Waterhouse, H. (1997). *Buddhism in Bath: Adaptation and authority*. Leeds: University of Leeds (Department of Theology and Religious Studies).

Waterhouse, H. (1999). Who says so? Legitimacy and authenticity in British Buddhism. *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies 20*, 19–36.

Wijayaratna, M. (1990). *Buddhist monastic life according to the texts of the Theravada tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wijayaratna, M. (2010). *Buddhist nuns: Birth and development of a women's Buddhist order*. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.