

UC Riverside

UCR Honors Capstones 2020-2021

Title

Buddhism, Meditation, and the Negotiation of the Public Sphere

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3nk7s6p8>

Author

Rudolph, Leana M.

Publication Date

2021-08-23

BUDDHISM, MEDITATION, AND THE NEGOTIATION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

By

Leana Marie Rudolph

A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

May 20, 2021

University Honors
University of California, Riverside

APPROVED

Dr. Matthew King
Department of Religious Studies

Dr. Richard Cardullo, Howard H Hays Jr. Chair
University Honors

ABSTRACT

This capstone serves to map and gather the oral histories of formerly undocumented Buddhist communities pertaining to their lived experiences in the Inland Empire. The ethnographic fieldwork conducted of 11 sites over the period of 12 months explored the intersection of diaspora, economy, and religious affiliation. This research begins to explore this junction by undertaking a qualitative and quantitative study that will map Buddhist life in the Inland Empire today. It will include interviews, providing oral histories, and will be accessible through a GIS map, helping Religious Studies and Anthropologist scholars to locate these sites and have background information on these locations. The Inland Empire represents many heavily populated, post-agricultural, and manufacturing areas in America today, which since the 1970s and especially since 2008 has suffered from many economic and social crises related to suburban poverty, as well as waves of demographic changes. Taking the Inland Empire as a petri dish for broader trends at the intersection of religion, economy, and the social in the American public sphere today, this capstone project hopes to determine how Buddhism forms at these intersections, what new stories about life in the Inland Empire Buddhist sites and communities help illuminate, and what forms of digital interfacing best brings anthropological analyses to the publics it examines.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my faculty mentor, Dr. Matthew King, for guiding me through this capstone project and giving me the experience of conducting IRB-approved research. Thank you for helping me as I juggled regular classwork, coping with changing conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and conducting interviews.

I also want to thank all of the participants involved in this project and for their time in answering all of my questions. Without them, I wouldn't have been able to conduct this research, and I am extremely grateful.

I would also like to thank the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) and the UCR Interim Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Dr. Thomas M. Smith for funding this research project, giving me the resources needed to complete this research.

Thank you to University Honors for providing me with this incredible opportunity to gain real experience in IRB-approved research and for giving us tools and resources to help us along the way.

Thank you to my friends in University Honors who supported me and gave me words of encouragement and validation as I worked on this project this past year. Thank you Jacob Rios, Alexa Arevalo, Fausto Ramirez, Hart St. Claire, Paulina Manzo, and Ayano Yukimoto.

I also want to thank Dina Elzanaty, Emma Adams-Long, and my mom, Diane Rudolph, for being there for me when things got difficult and for providing me with irreplaceable moral support when I needed it.

Lastly, I want to thank the rest of my family for supporting me and helping me get through this project while navigating life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....5

LITERATURE REVIEW.....13

METHODS.....17

QUESTION #1: How Communities Changed Over Time.....19

QUESTION #2: Experience and Involvement.....22

QUESTION #3: Experience and Challenges in Their Cities.....25

QUESTION #4: What Being a Buddhist Means to Them.....30

QUESTION #5: Meditation in Their Community.....34

QUESTION #6: Meditation for Members and Non-Members.....37

QUESTION #7: Public Teaching of Meditation.....38

QUESTION #8: Intersection of Meditation in Lives of Their Community.....41

QUESTION #9: Services Offered.....45

QUESTION #10: 2008 Recession and the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic.....48

CONCLUSION.....53

REFERENCES.....56

INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to analyze how Buddhism forms at the intersections of religion, economy, and the social arena by performing an intersectional ethnographic analysis of communities in the Inland Empires based primarily on ethnographic interviews. It aims to understand how Buddhism takes shape amongst residents in the private and public sphere as well as how various sites illuminate broader socio-economic dynamics since the 2008 recession. This research also hopes to bring to light what life is like in the Inland Empire for Buddhist populations.

I decided to conduct this research because I have always been interested in studying religion, and Buddhism is currently one I am most focused on. I grew up with a background in Christianity, but I wanted to know more about the actual lived experiences of Buddhists within the Inland Empire and found that no official research had been done on Buddhist communities in this region. At the time of this research, I majored in Anthropology with an interest in Religious Studies and wanted to gain experience with the IRB process as well as ethnography for my University Honors capstone project.

Before I conducted this research, I had several expectations for what I would find in data collected from interviews. I originally thought most of the temples wouldn't have an online presence, wanting to keep it more traditional and monastics would not be involved so much with technology. I also thought there wouldn't be much diversity in the ethnicity of membership and that an overwhelming majority of members were born into Buddhism. If there were converts, I only expected younger adults to convert to Buddhism and not people in later stages of life. I also expected their experience to be mostly positive in their communities and cities and didn't experience any challenges related to their Buddhist identity. As far as being a Buddhist, I

thought it would mainly mean finding inner peace within one's self. I also anticipated that most of the members meditated at least once a day or most days of the week sitting down in a chair or cushion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not think there would be many positives from temples and centers having to switch to an online format and would mostly result in negative consequences. In terms of services, I thought meditation classes or sessions would be the only thing temples offered in addition to Dharma talks. I also thought there would have been different meditation classes for beginners or non-Buddhists separate from long term members. In terms of outreach, I didn't expect any of the temples or centers to offer meditation classes outside the physical building. I expected meditation to have a major impact on people's lives and that it would influence many of their daily activities. I wasn't expecting the temples and centers to be community-facing like Christian churches, providing services such as feeding the homeless, and expected them to have a narrower focus on their own members. After conducting all of the interviews, I found only a few of my expectations to be correct. There were common themes of positive experiences in their temple and center communities as well as their relation to the surrounding community. However, there were many things I did not expect after reviewing all of the collected data.

I conducted interviews with 11 different Buddhist temples and centers throughout the Inland Empire and will provide introductions for each temple that participated using information gathered from interviews and websites. Dharmachakra Kadampa Buddhist Center located in Palm Springs was established in 2011 following the tradition of Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche, who is the founder of the New Kadampa Tradition (*Founder & Spiritual Directors* n.d.: para. 1). This center is one of the 1300 Kadampa Centers and branches

worldwide and everyone is welcome to learn meditation and to experience inner peace. The mission of the center is to help people learn how to be happy and to give practical teachings which help people solve their daily problems and to help them grow their good hearts and wisdom. The participant interviewed from this center was the Resident Teacher Amy Peng who has been practicing Kadampa Buddhism for over 15 years. She started teaching Kadampa Buddhism in 2009 and has taught in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Santa Monica. After completing the Intensive Resident Teacher Training Course in 2018, she was appointed to serve as the Resident Teacher at Dharmachakra Kadampa Buddhist Center in Palm Springs.

The community of the Dharma Drum Mountain Los Angeles Center (DDMLAC) first started in 1992 as a study group who met regularly in members' homes and then transitioned in 1996 to a branch office in Rosemead to better provide Chan meditation classes as well as Dharma talks (*Dharma Drum Mountain Los Angeles Center* n.d.: para. 2). They then developed from the branch office into a chapter in December of 2006 and moved to a different location on Telstar Avenue in El Monte (*Dharma Drum Mountain Los Angeles Center* n.d.: para. 3). With an increasing number of members, they started to outgrow that location and finally found their current location on Peck Road in El Monte in 2011 (*Dharma Drum Mountain Los Angeles Center* n.d.: para. 3). It wasn't until May 27, 2012 that the center opened to the public and had monastic residents to lead members (*Dharma Drum Mountain Los Angeles Center* n.d.: para. 4). The center promotes Chinese Buddhism along with Chan meditation practices following two Chinese Chan traditions, Caodong and Linji lineages, which were reconstructed and further developed into the Dharma Drum lineage of Chan Buddhism established in 2006 by Master Sheng Yen. The mission of the DDMLAC is to “[uplift] the character of humanity and [build] a

Pure Land on Earth” as well as “create a vibrant and sustainable community by encouraging spiritual growth and promoting happiness” (*Dharma Drum Mountain Los Angeles Center* n.d.: para. 1). Venerable Chang-Ju, who is part of the monastic community, volunteered to be interviewed for this study.

Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple, located in Hacienda Heights, is the North American Regional Headquarters of Fo Guang Shan and was constructed to serve both as a cultural and spiritual center for those curious about Chinese culture and Buddhism. The founder of the temple was Venerable Master Hsing Yun of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order and Hsi Lai Temple officially opened in 1988, being one of the largest Buddhist temples within North America (*Headquarter: Fo Guang Shan*. n.d.: para. 1). The temple promotes the ideology of Humanistic Buddhism through “...education, cultural outreach, community services, and spiritual practice” (*Headquarter: Fo Guang Shan* n.d.: para. 2). Hsi Lai Temple has also hosted several events held for both local and international participants. Shou-Jen Kuo, who is a Deputy Secretary for the Buddha’s Light International Association (BLIA) Los Angeles Chapter and Assistant Professor at the University of the West, agreed to participate in this study.

Huong Sen Buddhist Temple, located in Perris, was established by Venerable Abbess Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương in April of 2010 (*Introduction of Huong Sen Temple* n.d.: para. 1). The temple is a Pure Land-Zen nunnery that follows the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition for women who are committed to demonstrating the Buddha’s teaching in their daily lives (*Introduction of Huong Sen Temple* n.d.: para. 2). It also serves to provide a quiet place for local residents as well as visiting nuns and lay disciples to study the Buddha’s teachings, practice meditation, research Vietnamese culture, chant the penitential ritual, worship, share the Dharma, participate

in retreats, assemble for Amitābha Buddha's name recitation, and offer advice for attaining Buddha nature according to Theravāda and Mahāyāna sūtras (*Introduction of Huong Sen Temple* n.d.: para. 3). They also support and encourage the growth and development of the worldwide Bhikkhunī Sangha (the Buddhist community that consists of nuns, monks, lay members, and novices), which includes the Theravāda, Vajrayāna and Mahāyāna practice, and the preservation and dissemination of the Buddha's teachings in a multicultural environment (*Introduction of Huong Sen Temple* n.d.: para. 8). The two people who volunteered to participate in this research are Lisa, who is a secretary, and Sunyata, who is part of the monastic community.

The Metta Forest Monastery was founded by Ajaan Suwat Suvaco in 1990 and follows the lineage of the Thai Forest Tradition (*About the Monastery: Welcome*. n.d.: para. 1). This monastery is located in San Diego and is currently under the leadership of Thanissaro Bhikkhu who has been the abbot as well as meditation instructor since 1993 (*About the Monastery: Welcome*. n.d.: para. 1-2). The main purpose of this monastery is to help men become ordained bhikkhus but is also open to laymen and laywomen to practice Buddha's teachings (*About the Monastery: Welcome*. n.d.: para. 3-4). Thanissaro Bhikkhu, who is the Abbot at the monastery, was the participant interviewed for this site.

Middle Land Chan Monastery in Pomona was established in April of 2008 by Venerable Master Wei Chueh who was also the founding Abbot of the Chung Tai Chan Monastery located in Taiwan (*Welcome: Middle Land Chan Monastery* n.d.: para. 1). The Chung Tai Chan Monastery includes over one hundred Zen Centers worldwide and all follow the lineage of the Linji school of Chan Buddhism (*Welcome: Middle Land Chan Monastery* n.d.: para. 1). Prior to the opening of Middle Land Chan Monastery, Venerable Master Wei Chueh started the Li Quan

Chan Monastery 1987 in Taiwan, but over time they outgrew their location and needed a larger space (*Chung Tai Chan Monastery: Establishment of the Monastery* n.d.: para. 1). This led to the construction of the main Chung Tai Chan Monastery that was officially opened on September 1, 2001 (*Chung Tai Chan Monastery: Establishment of the Monastery* n.d.: para. 2-4). Linda (*pseudonym*) and Shannon (*pseudonym*), who are active members, agreed to participate in this study.

The Sakya Metta Buddhist Vihara is a Buddhist temple that was established in 2008 in Highland and is part of a project by the Karuna Buddhist Society. While assisting with religious practices as well as serving cultural and traditional revival purposes, the Karuna Buddhist Society is a nonprofit organization that was established in 2002 by elders of the indigenous Chakma community who migrated to the United States through the Diversity Visa in the mid-nineties and after 2000. This society serves to preserve the Chakma Buddhist culture, Chakma language, and spread the teaching of the Buddha in common. The Chakmas are originally native to Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, the Northeastern parts of India as well as Rakhine State of Myanmar. Venerable Ripon, who is a monk at the Vihara, agreed to represent his temple for this study.

The SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center is part of the American branch of the larger Soka Gakkai International (SGI) network that has centers and groups in 192 countries (Soka Gakkai International - USA, n.d., *About Us*: para. 1). They are a lay Buddhist organization with no hierarchy of monastics or priests (Soka Gakkai International - USA, n.d., *About Us*: para. 2-6). The community of the SGI-USA members in Riverside started with visiting each other's houses in the early 1960's. As they gained more members, they moved into their first

community center in the 1980's and over time ended up at their current location on Iowa Avenue in 2019. SGI-USA has their national headquarters located in Santa Monica, California (Soka Gakkai International - USA, n.d., *SGI-USA National and Territory Contact Information*) and instructs people in the practice of Nichiren Buddhism (Soka Gakkai International - USA, n.d., *About Us*: para. 1). SGI also has their own smartphone application which includes instructions on how to chant and a Nichiren Buddhism Library containing important reading materials for their members. In addition to their application, they also have their own *Living Buddhism* magazine which contains inspiring stories and advice for those struggling with everyday life as well as a weekly newspaper called *The World Tribune*. Two leaders from this center agreed to participate, Karen and Tom, who are both members of the Regional Leadership Team for the SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center.

The Van Thu Temple, located in Riverside, was established in 2005 by Venerable Thich Quang Phu. The property they bought was originally a worn-down home and it took them about two to three years to make it suitable for their temple. It also took them time to get permission from the city and to find people to help with construction. Due to financial limitations, the Venerable had to do a lot of the physical work himself. There were other members who pitched in physical labor to help, but they often had their own jobs as well as their own personal lives and were only able to help a few hours over the weekend. A disciple for Venerable Thich Quang Phu, Kathy Thai, was the participant interviewed for this site.

The Suddhavasa Buddhist Meditation Center was officially established February 1, 1997 by the Venerable Achan Sakchai after several members of the Thai community highly encouraging him to start it for residents in the Riverside and San Bernardino County (*History*:

History of Sudhavasa [sic] Buddhist Meditation Center n.d.: para. 1-2). Ven. Achan Sakchai hoped the center would help expand the Thai community in addition to providing a space for others interested in Buddhism (*History: History of Sudhavasa [sic] Buddhist Meditation Center* n.d.: para. 2). This center is the 38th Thai temple in the United States and was first located in Ontario, but as membership grew they needed a larger space so they moved to their current location in Riverside (*History: History of Sudhavasa [sic] Buddhist Meditation Center* n.d.: para. 2-4). As the membership continued to grow, they realized they needed to make renovations to the center and completed all renovations necessary by March 7, 2003 with the help of their members (*History: History of Sudhavasa [sic] Buddhist Meditation Center* n.d.: para. 6). Venerable Achan Sakchai Hongratana is the participant who was interviewed from this center and is part of the monastic community.

The Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep USA Buddhist Temple, located in Chino Hills, started as a Thai Buddhist community where a vast majority of their members immigrated to the United States from Thailand. They now include several members with different ethnicities, including Burmese, Vietnamese, people from Southeast Asia, and American. From the beginning, the temple was very diversified and was founded in 1996. Venerable Jirayut Tonlek, part of the monastic community at the temple, was the participant interviewed for this site.

Above were all of the participating temples and centers in this study as well as the motivation behind conducting this research. Every person interviewed were in various positions of leadership, including abbots, abbesses, secretaries, regional leaders, a disciple, and a Resident Teacher, all of various ages over 18 years old, and from various ethnic backgrounds, including Chinese, Vietnamese, and Thai among others. After reviewing those involved in this research, I

will now provide the historical perspective of Buddhism as well as Buddhism within the American context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research keeps in mind how Buddhist communities and sites have been represented in both scholarship and legal-political frameworks. Historically, there was a period from the late eighteenth century to the Victorian period where Buddhism was invented as a world religion in the colonial European scholarly and political imagination. This contrasts with the common misconception of seeing Buddhism as “...floating in some aethereal Oriental limbo expecting its objective embodiment” (Almond 1992: 12). Buddhism was created by the colonial British and took place in two phases: the first four decades of the nineteenth century and the first twenty-five years within the Victorian period (Almond 1992: 12-13). During the first four decades of the nineteenth century, Buddhism was seen as an object that existed in the Orient “...out there...in a spatial location geographically, culturally, and therefore imaginatively *other*” (Almond 1992: 12). Buddhism as a concept was made more manageable by the Westerners who travelled to the East, which included traders, travelers, soldiers, missionaries, and diplomats (Almond 1992: 12-13). It became a taxonomic object as Westerners travelled foreign land, making it less alien and less “other” (Almond 1992: 13). This view of Buddhism started changing in the Victorian period during the first twenty-five years (Almond 1992: 13). After Buddhism existed “out there” in the *present* Oriental, it started becoming defined as its textual *past* (Almond 1992: 13). Buddhism, therefore, came to exist mostly in institutes of the West and Oriental libraries, as well as in its manuscripts and text, at the desks of Western scholars who explicated it (Almond 1992: 13). It

“...came to be seen...not ‘out there’ in the Orient, but in the West that *alone* knew what Buddhism was, is, and ought to be” (Almond 1992: 13). As the West possessed texts relating to Buddhism, it became owned materially and through this ownership Buddhism became ideologically controlled by the West (Almond 1992: 13).

As explained by Berkwitz, colonialism had a profound effect on the invention and practice of Buddhism (Berkwitz 2006: 17). Several Asian countries that came under control of European states during the colonial period were forced to respond to European presence, including those who retained some independence like Japan and Thailand (Berkwitz 2006: 18). Although the experience and form of colonial domination varied between Buddhist communities, the influence of Christian missionaries and Orientalist scholars resulted in revisions to Buddhist practice and ideology in many cultures (Berkwitz 2006: 18). There was also a pursuit of knowledge of “Oriental” religions that coincided with the colonial pursuit of power (Berkwitz 2006: 18). According to Berkwitz, “...the more a colonial administration knew about the people and land it governed, presumably the more effective it could be in governing and using them” (Berkwitz 2006: 18). Although there were some positive views of Buddhism among Orientalists, other Western representations painted Buddhism as pessimistic and nihilistic (Berkwitz 2006: 19). However, these representations could have resulted from philosophers such as Schopenhauer, Hegel, and Nietzsche reacting to the spread of atheism and materialism in the West and projecting their desires and fears onto Buddhist tradition (Berkwitz 2006: 19). As time progressed, an important piece of literature pertaining to Buddhist representation was *The Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold that helped to make Buddhist ideas popular during the late nineteenth century (Berkwitz 2006: 20). It also appealed to liberal thinkers who maintained

divine truth could be held in different religious beliefs (Berkwitz 2006: 20). Instead of rejecting characterizations of Buddhism, Buddhists themselves appropriated depictions of their practice in the face of Westernized representations and critiques (Berkwitz 2006: 20) into what has been called reverse Orientalism.

Within the American context, most Buddhists within the United States have consisted of immigrants from Asia or those descended from Asian immigrants (Tweed 2000: xi). It was the Chinese immigrant community who first brought their Buddhist faith with them to America in the 1850s (Tweed 2000: xi). This was followed by immigrants from East Asia, specifically Japan and Korea, who immigrated to Hawaii and states along the Pacific coast in the 1890s (Tweed 2000: xi). Despite racist laws that blocked entry to the United States for many Asians, the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 and the Immigration Act in 1924, Asian American Buddhists who already settled America continued their Buddhist practice (Tweed 2000: xi). It was in 1965 when the United States Congress deserted the “...unfair national quota system...[by passing the] Hart-Cellar Immigration Act which allowed more Asians to gain admission to the United States” (Tweed 2000: xi). Following 1965, “...almost four out of every ten migrants entering the country have come from Asia--Vietnam, China, Thailand, Laos, Kampuchea, Myanmar, or Sri Lanka” (Tweed 2000: xi). There were several temples and centers established within California during the 1960s, including but not limited to the San Francisco Zen Center started by Shunryu Suzuki, the Zen Center of Los Angeles founded by Maezumi, and the International Buddhist Meditation Center in Los Angeles started by Thein-an (Morgan 2004: xvi-xvii).

It was the World’s Parliament of Religions that took place in 1893 in Chicago that helped Buddhism become recognized as a serious and legitimate religion within the United States

(Seager 2012: 42). The World's Parliament of Religions also encouraged an interreligious discourse as well as helped launch the Buddhist missions in America (Seager 2012: 43). It helped to present the Dharma (Buddha's teaching) as a modern and living tradition during a time when many Westerners saw Buddhism as hoary with antiquity, exotic, and a form of mysticism (Seager 2012: 42-43).

Throughout history, the hostility Buddhism received was somewhat replaced by hopeful curiosity, interest, and almost widespread acceptance (Morgan 2004: 6). This did not mean that every person who converted to Buddhism was serious about their practice or converted to an "orthodox" type of Buddhism (Morgan 2004: 6). There were also a variety of reasons for why people converted to Buddhism, whether they became unsatisfied in their prior religious tradition or experienced a spiritual crisis (Morgan 2004: 6). Sometimes people were simply drawn to the aesthetic or cultural aspect of Buddhism and not the teachings of Buddhism (Morgan 2004: 6). There were also many who never converted to Buddhism but were simply sympathetic toward Buddhist lifestyles, ideas, and doctrines (Morgan 2004: 6).

Historically, Buddhism has been represented in a variety of ways directly relating to the worldview and experience of British travelers to Asia. They described Buddhism as an imaginative "other," a taxonomic object, and being defined by its textual past and possessed by Western scholars. These representations demonstrate how Buddhism was created instead of discovered by colonialists. Buddhism in the American context has been directly affected by immigration policy and impacted when immigrants were allowed to enter the United States from various parts of Asia. The World's Parliament of Religion in 1893 gave Buddhism validity as a legitimate religious practice and encouraged interreligious discourse that did not take place prior

to the event. Westerners have mostly responded to Buddhism coming from their own experience of prior religion, a spiritual crisis, or just simply being drawn to aesthetic or cultural aspects of Buddhism. While some converted, others were only sympathetic to Buddhism in general. Given this background on Buddhism in scholarship and in the United States, this research included many moving parts with interviewing 14 participants, following IRB protocols, and a GIS mapping component.

METHODS

This research was based on ethnographic interviews and I originally planned to visit each site and conduct all interviews in person. However, when COVID-19 started I had to adjust my research plans in order to comply with safety protocols and the project was reimagined as taking place fully online, becoming a distanced ethnography. This posed quite a few challenges to my research, including the difficulty of getting a hold of people and having to wait for responses to phone calls, emails, and physical letters. The amount of time it took to converse with people, receive access letters, obtain signed informed consent documents, and schedule interviews nearly doubled. There were many cases where I never received a response. There were also some instances where people did not have equal access to technology, making it more difficult to reach them. Another unexpected challenge was how long it took to transcribe all 14 interviews with each averaging one hour in length. Along with these challenges, having to cope with a rapidly changed world affected by COVID-19, going to school full time, prepping for and taking the GRE exam, and applying to graduate schools proved to test my grit and determination. Despite all of these challenges, the goals of this research were met.

This project also includes a digital mapping component done through ArcGIS Story Maps which shares major points covered in each of the interviews. This online map serves to digitize each community's living history and demographic information. It will also serve as a public-facing resource that future students and researchers can utilize for their own research. The prototype ArcGIS Story Map is titled *Buddhism in the Inland Empire* and can be found at <https://arcg.is/0SrbeD0>.

In terms of ethics, every participant was given the option of being assigned a pseudonym if they wanted their identity to be kept confidential, and two participants opted for this choice. However, all Buddhist sites listed in this research are named as they appear in real life. It also met ethical obligations of providing transcripts as well as each participant's contribution to the paper for them to review and approve. I also obtained all necessary permissions to conduct this study.

Participants from various temples and centers were asked the same set of questions related to the intersection of immigration, meditation, and the social as well as themes of history, demographics, personal experiences, and support services. They were asked how their communities changed over time in terms of their membership and their ethnic versus convert communities. This is directly related to the immigration of their communities as well as how they integrated into their surrounding community. In terms of personal experiences, they were asked what their experiences have been in both their temple/center community as well as their city and how being a Buddhist has influenced the way they move through society, highlighting aspects of the social and their Buddhist identity. They were asked several questions related to how meditation is part of their community and how it is taught to both members and non-

members, exploring the connection between meditation and the social sphere of their surrounding communities. Each participant was also asked what services their temple provides, analyzing how they provide support in terms of immigration of their own members as well as how they support their members in times of crisis. Finally, they were also asked how the 2008 recession and COVID-19 affected their communities in order to see how they responded to the crises as well as how they adapted individually and collectively, showing how the instruction of meditation adapted and how it assisted various people in the Inland Empire.

Many of the findings ended up being very different from my original expectations. Many of what I thought were ethnic communities ended up being convert communities and several had an online presence, especially after COVID-19. There was hardly any financial assistance given to their members, but there were various ways some helped in terms of immigration and provided services I didn't anticipate. There was also considerable variation in terms of meditation practices and approaches to outreach for their temples and centers.

QUESTION #1: How Communities Changed Over Time

Participants from various temples and centers were asked the same set of questions related to history, demographics, meditation, experiences, and support services. The first question that was asked was how the community changed over time. The overall trend in terms of membership has increased for a majority of the temples and centers, either due to population growth within their own original communities or due to an influx of converts. One center that did not entirely fit the trend was the Dharmachakra Kadampa Buddhist Center due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the age of its members, uneven access to Wi-Fi, and people moving out of

the area. While the center is made up of about 30% of younger people, about 70% of the membership is of retirement age. While a few new members joined after the COVID-19 pandemic started, there were a few older members who struggled with technology and had poor Wi-Fi connection, making it difficult for them to participate in weekly discussions or meditation classes.

While a majority of the Buddhist communities include people originally born into Buddhism and don't have many converts, the SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center, Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple, and Metta Forest Monastery have several. When talking with Karen and Tom, they both said a majority of their members are American converts. Although SGI originated in Japan, a majority of their members across the United States are not Japanese. For Hsi Lai Temple, it may seem that many of the Chinese American people who attend the temple within the Hacienda Heights region were originally Buddhist before the construction of the temple, but this is not true. Shou-Jen Kuo explained that many of the Chinese who moved into the surrounding area did not take on a Buddhist identity until after the temple was built. Many times, the Chinese American community in the area are introduced to Buddhism through funeral services Hsi Lai Temple provides when a family member passes away. According to Chinese tradition, there must be a ritual performed for the dead so they hire a monk who is usually thought to have the power to help the dead reach a type of Pure Land. This usually means family members sit there and do not assist with the ritual while the monk faces the coffin and gives the teaching to the loved one who passed. However, Hsi Lai Temple monks will always face the living during funeral rituals and instruct the family members to participate. When there are members who say they don't know the Sutras, the monk will simply instruct them to concentrate

their minds on their loved one. This is an occasion where many Chinese American family members are introduced to Buddhism. Shou-Jen also explained when it comes to outreaching to American converts who are not Chinese, the temple lacks more in this area because they have more Chinese-speaking programs than English-speaking ones.

There is a similar trend found in the Metta Forest Monastery that's similar to Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple. Thanissaro Bhikkhu explained that since they switched to Zoom, it has become easier for everyone to sit and chat instead of having discussions about Buddha's teachings. This led him to assign readings, which is something he hasn't had to do with the Thai community before. He said they have become much more educated because when many of them migrated from Thailand to the United States, they didn't have much background in Dharma and very little background in Buddhism. Thanissaro Bhikkhu said many of them had already become Westernized before migrating to the United States, but when they get here they realize they're missing a part of their culture. Like the majority of Chinese American members at Hsi Lai Temple, I thought the Thai members at Metta Forest Monastery had a much stronger background in Buddhism and more knowledge of Dharma than their white counterparts. However, it turns out many of them convert to Buddhism after settling in the United States.

Another theme among a few participants is that some of the communities started meeting in people's homes before a property was bought. This included studying scriptures as well as meditation or chanting together. This was the case for the DDMLAC and the SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center. The DDMLAC originally started practicing together in 1992 in each other's homes while members of SGI-USA Riverside were practicing at their own homes in the 1960's before Karen moved into the area in 1984. Before they moved into their first community

center, Karen described her house as one of the informal community centers because they didn't have a public space at the time.

QUESTION #2: Experience and Involvement in Their Communities

The second question that was asked to participants was what their experience was in their own community and what was their involvement. Many of the participants were part of the monastic communities, but others had different titles and many have had mostly positive experiences. Dr. Amy Peng is a Resident Teacher at the Dharmachakra Kadampa Buddhist Center and her overall experience has been positive and found a majority of people in both the center and in the local community to be friendly.

Venerable Chang-Ju is part of the monastic leadership in DDMLAC and helps to instruct meditation sessions. She explained that her experience has been mostly positive and has a good relationship with both the members and other monastics in her community. Venerable Chang-Ju and other monastics are always happy to see their members progress in their own practice and hold study groups where members can share their experiences in their application of meditation concepts and methods in daily life. She said the study groups are often very encouraging.

Shou-Jen Kuo, who has been the Deputy Secretary in the BLIA Los Angeles Chapter as well as an Assistant Professor at the University of the West since 2018, has lived in southern California since 1999 but has also traveled to several places for his job with BLIA World Headquarters. He said he has had a good experience in the Los Angeles area and has found many people on the east coast and west coast to be friendly toward Buddhists. Other venerables he has been in contact with who reside in the Inland Empire have said their experience in the

area has been pleasant. Shou-Jen also served as the Executive Secretary for the BLIA World Headquarters located in Hsi Lai Temple from 2001 to 2008.

Lisa Colvil is a secretary for Venerable Sunyata at the Huong Sen Buddhist Temple and one of her responsibilities is helping the Venerable manage emails and messages. Venerable Sunyata is part of the monastic community at Huong Sen Buddhist Temple. Venerable Sunyata mentioned that her experience in the community has been favorable and she herself has gone to people's homes to give talks about Buddha's teaching and help them overcome negative situations. She has also provided meditation classes to both children and adults and during the COVID-19 pandemic, she gave classes once a week over Zoom.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu is the Abbot at the Metta Forest Monastery who, during the COVID-19 pandemic, also taught classes through Zoom. He has also given Dharma talks as well as Q&A sessions at other locations. He has found his experience in the community to be good and finds the monastery to be a good place to practice meditation. Thanissaro Bhikkhu explained that he emphasizes to people who come to the monastery that it's a meditation center, so there is not a lot of sitting around or talking. They also have Dharma talk every night.

Shannon and Linda are both active members of the community at Middle Land Chan Monastery. For confidentiality purposes, I will not mention their involvement or role in their community.

Venerable Ripon Chakma Bhikkhu is part of the monastic community at the Sakya Metta Buddhist Vihara. He explained that his role as a monk is very huge in the Buddhist community and especially in the temple. Venerable Ripon described his role as a social and spiritual leader, both to adults and children. He and his abbot Venerable Upagupta Chakma help to teach the

younger generation Buddhist ethics as well as meditation, respecting their elders, and how to reflect on their own lives through the teachings of the Buddha. They also serve to provide spiritual strength for their communities in difficult situations. When I asked him if he considered his experience in the community to be overall positive or overall happy, he said that we are human beings and that no one is definitely happy or unhappy and there are moments that go up and down. And looking back in the past, he also acknowledged that they have improved their social and spiritual values in terms of education, lifestyle, spirituality, and communal harmony.

Karen, who is a part of the regional leadership team at SGI-USA, mentioned her experience within the Inland Empire has been good. She has been involved in her community by joining discussion meetings for her district in SGI-USA and would participate in home visitation. Home visitation is where she would visit members, chant with them, and share Buddhism with their neighbors. Originally, she said when she was first married and lived in Riverside, she was a vice chapter leader and also had to take on a role for the Men's District Leader when the Men's District had some financial difficulties and somewhat disappeared. Those responsibilities included coordinating activities for the district as well as planning meetings. Tom is a vice leader of the men's regional group for SGI-USA and has been a leader within the organization since he was a young man.

Venerable Sakchai Hongratana is part of the monastic community at the Suddhavasa Buddhist Meditation Center. His experience has been good within his community and when they needed help building the temple in the last 16 years, their neighbors have helped support them in many ways.

Kathy Thai is a disciple of one of the monks at Van Thu Temple and explained how she first became involved with the temple after the passing of her nephew. After listening to the monk praying and talking at the funeral, she said something clicked and she started opening up more to Buddhism than before. She emphasized that she was always Buddhist, but she didn't practice Buddhism like she does today. Kathy explained that her involvement in the temple is much deeper than before and became a disciple of Venerable Thich Quang Phu in August of 2019. Some of the responsibilities that come with being a disciple includes helping to plan, set up, and clean up after major events, such as the Lunar New Year, as well as help prepare for funeral services.

Venerable Jirayut Tonlek from the Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep USA Buddhist Temple is part of the monastic community and has been there for about six years. He explained that his experience at the temple has been pretty good and that they have a lot of their services during the weekend. They have Saturday meditations and service on Sunday, which to him, is similar to how Christian churches perform. He explained his role as providing information to various individuals and visitors because he speaks English well, hence why he was the one interviewed for the temple. Another one of his responsibilities is to guide members through meditation in both Thai and English and he is also the secretary of the local market at the temple itself. As secretary, he typically runs around the temple and sees what people need.

QUESTION #3: Experience and Challenges in Their Cities

The third question asked was what their experience was like in their city as a Buddhist and if being Buddhist in the Inland Empire presented any challenges to them. For a vast majority

of the Buddhist communities, many of them have had pleasant experiences living in their cities and haven't experienced any challenges related to their Buddhist identity. For Amy from the Dharmachakra KBC, she said her identity as a Buddhist is not noticeable like ordained Sangha. People cannot tell she is a Resident Teacher at a Buddhist center because she appears very normal and dresses in ordinary clothing. She also hasn't had too many challenges even though she's only lived in the Palm Springs area for the past two years. Venerable Chang-Ju from the DDMLAC mentioned that she herself has not experienced any kind of special social challenges as a Buddhist, even though her surrounding community is mostly non-Buddhist.

Shou-Jen Kuo from Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple said his experience in the west and east coast have been fairly good because they are more liberal. He said he didn't feel out of place being a Buddhist, especially in the Los Angeles area. Venerables that he's friends with who do reside in the Inland Empire all say that living there has not been a problem. However, in some areas in the Midwest, like Texas, or the deep south, he's found the people are not always friendly with those who are Buddhist. He did reiterate that on average, he has found many Americans who are friendly and respect Buddhist tradition, even if they don't fully understand it.

For Venerable Sunyata, she said there have been many challenges in terms of growing their membership and spreading their influence in the community. She explained that their members come from a different city due to the location of Huong Sen Buddhist Temple. Another challenge she mentioned was the lifestyle not only in her city, but also in those surrounding her. Venerable Sunyata explained that people are so busy with their work and family that they don't have a lot of time to do their spiritual practice every day. Therefore, their involvement in the temple is not as strong as in her home country.

Lisa from Huong Sen Buddhist Temple said she herself has not experienced many challenges in her city because she understands English very well and is able to communicate to others about her religion, culture, and way of life. In terms of her experience in the city, she said they haven't done much in the community yet but plan on doing things for the city sometime in the future. Lisa really wants to outreach more to the Americanized community even though their community is mainly Vietnamese.

For Thanissaro Bhikkhu, the challenge he experienced in his city was a matter of cultural immersion. He explained that he lived in the United States until the age of 22 when he moved to Thailand. He had to learn Thai, their culture, and learn Dharma all at the same time when he became ordained. When he came back to the United States in his 40's, he experienced culture shock again because he spent most of his adult life in Thailand. The main challenge he faced moving back was taking on the role of Abbot where he had the responsibility of teaching other people as well as getting in touch with architects and contractors to have the buildings for the Metta Forest Monastery constructed. As far as his interaction with the city, it has primarily been related to the permit process. Even though this isn't related to his experience in his city as a Buddhist, the Metta Forest Monastery has experienced discrimination related to their Buddhist identity when providing free books to prisoners across the country. Thanissaro Bhikkhu said they have run into some discrimination with prison chaplains who didn't want their prisoners to deal with anything except their version of Christianity.

Linda said she doesn't reside within the Inland Empire, but as far as the community within the Middle Land Chan Monastery, she's noticed people from all different socioeconomic

and cultural backgrounds come to the monastery. She thinks it reflects the environment of the Inland Empire with its culturally and economically diverse community.

For Shannon, she said they have experienced challenges, but in Buddhism they know it's sometimes because conditions have not ripened yet. She gave the example of setting up a booth at the 2020 Asian American Expo and over the course of two days, they passed out several thousand flyers as well as some free publications. However, in the end only two people came to the monastery for classes after the Expo. Shannon explained that in the greater Los Angeles area, there are many monasteries and temples which means people have other selections and choices, some of which may connect more with their cultural or ethnic identity. For Middle Land Chan Monastery, they mostly identify as a Chinese Buddhist temple and therefore have a lot more Chinese Buddhists than other ethnicities, such as Thai or Japanese. On the Middle Land Chan Monastery website, they have a statement posted about discrimination they experienced while trying to build a monastery in the City of Walnut before they ended up building their monastery in Pomona, burdening their free exercise of religion (*January 18, 2012 Statement* n.d.: para. 1-2). They tried to establish their monastery in Walnut for 10 years, but even after doing everything the city requested, the Center's request to build their monastery was denied (*January 18, 2012 Statement* n.d.: para. 2). This forced the monastery to relocate to Pomona, and they decided to file a lawsuit against the City of Walnut, not to seek revenge but to help protect religious justice and religious freedom for everyone else (*January 18, 2012 Statement* n.d.: para. 3). It was meant to serve as a reminder to the City of Walnut to treat all religions equally and fairly (*January 18, 2012 Statement* n.d.: para. 4). The two parties ended up reaching a harmonious agreement in the end in May of 2012 (*May 24, 2012 Statement* n.d.: para. 1).

Venerable Ripon said he has only lived in San Bernardino for about 2 years, but for the Chakma community there hasn't been any major challenges for them. He said in the United States they have rights and freedom as long as you are peaceful and don't harm others. However, the Chakma community is possibly the smallest Buddhist community in the United States because they are small in number. Therefore, even though they bought their property in San Bernardino because of the price, it can be a challenge to maintain it financially because their community is small. He explained that it takes a lot of dedication and sacrifice to find them support and he is thankful for his community.

For Karen from the SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center, she hasn't experienced any kind of unique challenges pertaining to being Buddhist. She also mentioned she hasn't faced discrimination related to her Buddhist identity. The only challenge she's experienced personally is that according to Buddhist teaching, when you have problems you have to look at yourself and ask what you can do to change the situation and solve the problem. Instead of putting blame on other people for your problems, you have to take responsibility for your actions and focus on what you can change. That's the main challenge she's faced related to her Buddhist practice and identity. For Tom, he said there aren't any major challenges he or other members have faced pertaining to them being Buddhist. He mentioned that their main goal is to create a positive environment and spread world peace. They also want to contribute towards world peace as individuals and hope that it transcends to others around them. Tom also recognized that we are human beings and that it may be hard sometimes to work toward this goal, but as an organization and as individuals it is their daily objective and prayer that they affect their community in a positive way.

Venerable Sakchai Hongratana at the Suddhavasa Buddhist Meditation Center said they did face some challenges when they first moved into the area. When they first started the temple, there were some people in the area who did not like them because they did not understand what Buddhist monks were or their purpose. The Venerable said many neighbors saw the monks and thought they were the same people who asked for money at airports, but this changed when the neighbors had a better understanding of their identity and role as Buddhist monks. After they had a better understanding of who they were and what they did, neighbors treated them more favorably.

Kathy Thai from the Van Thu Temple said they haven't experienced any big challenges involving their Buddhist identity. She said nobody really emphasizes much on the belief of the other person in their community, so they haven't faced challenges or discrimination in that way.

For Venerable Jirayut, he hasn't had many challenges living in his city because he understands English very well. He also said they live in a very diverse community in Chino Hills, saying there are also Hindus, Christians, Mormons, and others who also occupy the same area as them, so it has been a pretty good atmosphere for their community and haven't experienced hostility.

QUESTION #4: What Being a Buddhist Means to Them

The fourth question that was asked to participants was what being a Buddhist meant to them, and this was a question they were allowed to answer in any way they wished. Amy Peng said being a Buddhist means someone who goes for refuge to Buddha, Dharma (Buddha's teaching), and Sangha (the Buddhist community that consists of nuns, monks, lay members, and

novices). She sees a Buddhist's job as practicing loving kindness, compassion, and refraining from harming others. With that comes training their mind and making actions pure so they are not harmful to the self, to everybody around them, and to the rest of the world.

To Venerable Chang-Ju, being a Buddhist meant learning from the Buddha the wisdom he gained through his own practice and passed down to us in his teachings so that we can have a better and happier life. It also means not depending on the external or other people to make us happy and having the right mindset. However, improving our mindsets is not only for our own sake, but also to help others.

According to Shou-Jen Kuo, being a Buddhist means having a specific worldview that helps orient people to better understand what is going on in their surrounding environment. He explained that many people define Buddhism as a lifestyle, and he accepts this description because of all the practices people need to follow in order to become a Buddhist. To Shou-Jen, Buddha's teaching has special meaning and helped him to re-understand the world.

Lisa said being a Buddhist meant living a simple life. It also means to be compassionate and to be more open to other cultures as well as just being happy with who we are and for who they are. For Venerable Sunyata, she admires the Buddha and the Buddha's teaching. To her, Buddhism has promised her that if she maintains her practice and devotion to the teaching, she will attain liberation and be free of the suffering of life. Due to practicing Buddhism, she finds more peace within herself and is also happier when helping others. Being a Buddhist made her feel that she can help others and gave her purpose in life.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu defines being a Buddhist as dedicating one's life to finding Nirvana. He found that on his own quest, he had to develop generosity. Being a Buddhist also

means developing generosity and other social virtues. He agreed that being a Buddhist is more than mentally acknowledging things like generosity, compassion, patience, and building goodwill as truth, but that one must practice these virtues.

Linda said that being a Buddhist means being given a more systematic way to look at different things in life. It also means gaining a deeper understanding of the world around us and helping us to interpret or translate what people are facing in their lives. Linda agreed that being a Buddhist gives a sort of blueprint for how to navigate life and its challenges. For Shannon, being a Buddhist helped her find her inner self and to become a more compassionate and empathetic person. Being a Buddhist, she also wants to give others a sense of serenity and compassion to those around her.

For Venerable Ripon Chakma Bhikkhu, being a Buddhist starts with having confidence in Buddhism itself and taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. To be a Buddhist means having much higher admiration, respect, and faith in the Triple Gems (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha) and transforming yourself into a better person and taming your senses from evil thoughts and actions. Being a Buddhist also means having a better understanding of this life and to become a better and happier person by practicing the Four Noble Truths for higher spiritual achievement.

Karen said that being a Buddhist for her means chanting every morning and every evening. Being a Buddhist also means she has a new chance to make a fresh start each morning and to contribute something to the world. Part of being a Buddhist also includes the daily self-challenge she experiences, because she loves that she can continue to challenge herself every single day in her practice. She also explains that being a Buddhist has also made her feel vital

and more youthful. Tom said that being a Buddhist means being the best person that he can in his pursuit of enlightenment or pursuit of being truly happy. For him, being a Buddhist means finding absolute happiness where negative events don't deter him as much and gaining the tools to overcome his daily obstacles. It also means not only working on and helping himself, but also helping others to do the same.

Venerable Sakchai Hongratana said that being a Buddhist means having a generous mind and to help people with no wish in return. It also means that generosity and virtue must work together to build his discipline as well as training his mind to be strong in dealing with defilements such as hatred and delusion.

For Kathy Thai, she's had two different experiences of being Buddhist. The first was before her nephew passed away and prior to August 2019. She explained that her heart was not in it and would only sometimes go to the temple. She felt indifferent to her Buddhist practice and would go if her mother asked her. Her second experience was after August 2019 when something clicked while listening to the Venerable speak and pray at her nephew's funeral and she started getting more involved with the temple. After deepening her Buddhist practice further, she agreed that it has helped to find more inner peace within herself.

Venerable Jirayut Tonlek said being a Buddhist is just a way of life they practice in order to live in the present moment and not focus too much on the past or present. It also includes doing the best of their actions in the present moment so they can live a good life and be aware of what they do.

QUESTION #5: Meditation in Their Community

The fifth question posed was how meditation is a part of their community, and this was looking to gather information such as how often people meditated and how it was integrated into their daily lives. All of the participants that were interviewed said meditation was a big part of all of their communities, and a few emphasized that they also help teach their members how to utilize meditation in everyday activities. Some participants were only able to make assumptions as to how often their members meditated, but a vast majority said they were unable to answer that part of the question. For Linda from Middle Land Chan Monastery, she said students are encouraged to set aside 10 to 20 minutes a day to meditate, so it's possible that many of their members do meditate daily. Amy Peng from the Dharmachakra Kadampa Buddhist Center said that meditation is an integral part of their tradition. During meditative sessions, students are encouraged to also practice meditation during their break so they can better integrate it into other activities. She gave a specific example of how one could integrate meditation: while someone cooks for their family, they could be meditating on love and wishing for them to be happy at the same time. Kathy Thai from Van Thu Temple also said that anyone can practice concentration not only through meditation, but also while doing normal activities. Kathy similarly gave the example of concentrating while in the kitchen. She explained that for herself, she meditates often and anytime she starts to feel upset about something, she switches to a meditation mode to help calm herself down.

Venerable Chang-Ju from DDMLAC mentioned that meditation is very important to her community. Meditation practice will help increase the awareness of one's own thoughts, speech, actions, and one's relationship to others as well as the environment. With awareness comes the

ability to better help ourselves as well as help others. Venerable Chang-Ju said the teachers at the center help members learn how to apply methods from sitting meditation in other aspects of life away from the cushion. In order to help students learn how to apply these methods, learning concepts is crucial for deeper understanding.

Shou-Jen Kuo mentioned that mediation is part of Buddhist teaching and daily life, but that it's not the whole of the practice. He explained that meditation is more like preparation for following the Eightfold Path, and specifically right concentration. Shou-Jen gave the example of one master in Chinese Chan tradition saying, "Sitting Meditation solely cannot attain Enlightenment. If keeping still can be enlightened,...the rock already gained Enlightenment." Although Hsi Lai Temple does have special meditation programs that are also multi-day sessions, meditation is not the whole of these programs. They also include studying scripture, and there are also ritual programs as well. His response was somewhat similar to Venerable Sunyata who said that meditation is also a part of the community, but they do other things as well, such as worshipping, repentance, and learning the Sutras. Meditation for them is also part of the practice, but it doesn't constitute the whole.

For Karen and Tom from the SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center, they don't practice what is traditionally thought of as meditation. They practice their daily chanting of the Namu Myōhō Renge Kyō. Tom explained that when chanting, they chant in a meditative-like state, showing that meditation can be done in different ways and not just in the ways people traditionally think of when hearing the word "meditation." For him, Tom said he feels the goal is that as long as you chant, you will get to that place of enlightenment as long as you continue and never stop your daily practice. He explained that he has seen instances where people were

able to move in a direction where their mind is clearer through the practice of chanting. While Tom had this view of chanting, Karen didn't see chanting in the same way. She said she wouldn't really call it a meditation, because for her meditation is something one does to go inside yourself, and she sees practicing Namu Myōhō Renge Kyō as reaching outward. When Karen was asked if a lot of the other members chanted every evening and every morning, she said the active members do practice chanting every day at least twice a day. Knowing that Karen was fluent in English and could be classified racially as white, I asked her if chanting in Japanese hindered her experience of connecting with or understanding the chant, but she said it didn't because there are books she has read that explains the meaning of the chant. She also said chanting in Japanese is very useful when attending big events where different SGI groups from around the world join together, because everyone knows the exact same chant.

Similar to Tom's view that meditation isn't just sitting in one place, Venerable Ripon Chakma Bhikkhu shared a similar view. He affirmed that many people perceive meditation as only sitting in one spot and closing one's eyes. The truth is, most people have to work, eat, make money, etc. so they don't always have the time to sit in meditation. Even when people sit for meditation, their minds still wonder because they are worried or anxious about the next day. With this in mind, Venerable Ripon along with the other monastics instruct people that if they don't have time for sitting meditation, then they should be mindful and aware of what they are doing, thinking, and saying. Concentrating solely on the activity at hand can be a type of meditation on its own.

QUESTION #6: Meditation for Members and Non-Members

The sixth question that was asked to participants was how meditation is taught to its members as well as those not part of their community. This question was looking to gather information on the different strategies to instruct meditation and in what format. For a majority of the temples and centers interviewed, there wasn't a different way of instructing meditation for those who have practiced Buddhism for a long time versus those first starting meditation, which may or may not include learning concepts and scriptures depending on the temple or center. For Van Thu Temple, Kathy explained that they don't have official classes for teaching meditation. Instead, people come and meditate during the service they hold every Sunday. If there is an individual who has a question or needs help with meditation, then they will be assisted individually.

Shannon from Middle Land Chan Monastery said they will hold classes in different ways for their members and the general public. In terms of meditation technique, it didn't sound like they taught members differently than non-members. However, Shannon mentioned that when teaching those who are not Buddhist, they won't include Buddhist jargon or anything they define as religious. For the public, they mainly focus on technique and not so much the teachings behind meditation or Buddhism. For their monthly ceremonies, it is more oriented toward Buddhist members and there is less meditation involved as well as much more chanting and listening to Dharma talks. According to Linda, there are different techniques for meditation that are taught in classes separate from the monthly service. There is also a total of three different levels of classes. Some of the techniques are considered more basic, but she said none are

considered superior or inferior. Some people who have been practicing meditation for years still use more basic techniques.

Venerable Jirayut Tonlek from the Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep USA Buddhist Temple said they do offer meditation classes with varying levels of difficulty. They teach sitting, walking, lay down, and sleep meditation and they often start with the easiest technique. Venerable Jirayut explained they typically start with sitting meditation and then work their way up to walking meditations. If a student has difficulty walking, then they will go straight to lay down meditation. He also said for those who are not familiar with meditation, they will teach them basic sitting meditation starting off with 10 minutes in length.

QUESTION #7: Public Teaching of Meditation

The seventh question that was posed was how the public teaching of meditation was a part of their community both today and in the past. This question was mainly interested in how they outreached into the community by providing meditation classes to places outside of their temple or center. Some participants said they have taught meditation in public places while others don't teach outside of their temple/center. The latter outreached by bringing those interested in meditation and Buddhism into the temple or center itself instead of venturing outward. A common theme was that many were interested in providing meditation classes outside of their establishment or center but lacked the opportunity.

Three centers who have provided classes in different places but also invited school kids to visit their facility was the Dharmachakra Kadampa Buddhist Center, the DDMLAC, and the Siddhavasa Buddhist Meditation Center. Amy explained she had taught branch classes at a local

community library and students at Dharmachakra KBC have invited kids to visit the center in the past. She also mentioned she's very interested in providing meditation classes to college students at places such as the College of the Desert, University of Riverside, or even the University of California, Riverside. Many people who visit the Dharma Kadampa Buddhist Center have told Amy that they wished they found their Buddhist teachings earlier, which is why Amy's very interested in helping college students as they begin their adult lives. Amy also said she was thinking of doing outreach with the Sunnyland Center and Garden and the V.A. Venerable Chang-Ju from the DDMLAC explained that they have provided teaching to UCLA in the past. They also have some of their teachers going to hospitals to provide meditation guidance to a group of patients. However, over the past two to three years they have not had many offers to provide meditation instruction elsewhere. DDMLAC have also organized children camps once a year during their summer break as well as family camps where parents can learn meditation with their children. Venerable Sakchai Hongratana from the Suddhavaasa Buddhist Meditation Center said they have gone to college campuses to teach meditation as well as having students from colleges come to the physical center to learn meditation.

Lisa from Huong Sen Buddhist Temple mentioned her temple doesn't do meditation classes in other areas. She did mention, however, that Venerable Sunyata would go out and do sermons at other places, talking about the Dharma and Buddhism. Even if they don't provide meditation classes, Venerable Sunyata venturing outward and giving talks can be a form of outreach.

For Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple, Shou-Jen Kuo said in the past he brought up the idea of offering a class to those who are mainly interested in meditation as a way of bringing people

into the temple because he is involved in the outreach for the temple. However, he said someone from the monastic community told him Fo Guang Shan is not willing to advertise meditation as the only solution and as a marketing strategy. He explained the temple wants to teach people meditation in a Buddhist context instead of a secular context. When I asked if Hsi Lai Temple ever taught meditation-type classes at colleges or public schools, Shou-Jen said a major part of the outreach program for Hsi Lai Temple was to invite students to come visit the temple itself, and meditation is always a part of the program. The temple has provided various activities and is always open to the temple community and others who want to better understand Buddhism.

For Metta Forest Monastery, Thanissaro Bhikkhu said instead outreaching by providing a meditation class, they participate in more of a prison outreach by providing books to prisoners. It wasn't their initial intention to perform this type of outreach, but there were people in prisons asking Metta Forest Monastery to provide books pertaining to Buddhism. Through the network of the prison community, prisoners became aware that there were free books on Buddhism available. When I asked him if he could tell me which prison has asked for free books, he said there have been prisons all over the country requesting books from them, not just in Southern California.

For the SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center, they do teach chanting to people outside of their community and have regular introductory meetings where members of the public are invited to attend, learn about the practice, and ask as many questions as they want. They do teach non-Buddhists how to chant if they want to learn. Karen said that for the most part, they share individually what they do within SGI-USA to people they already know. According to

Tom, they have a Buddhism 101 course that people outside of the community can take to learn more about Buddhism itself.

QUESTION #8: Intersection of Meditation in Lives of Their Community

The eighth question that was asked to participants was how they understood the way their teaching of meditation intersected in the lives of their community. This question was looking to see what kind of impact meditation instruction has made on community members. For many sites, meditation made a big impact on people's lives and concentration learned through meditation is integrated into many daily activities. Amy Peng mentioned earlier that members are encouraged to practice meditation in their daily life so that their spiritual life does not become separate from their lived experience. As previously mentioned, she gave the example of cooking for one's family, but at the same time that person could also be meditating on love and wishing them to be happy. She mentions, "...it's not simply an action,...cooking...actually becomes a meditation because you're meditating on love." Amy gave a second example of when someone is volunteering at a soup kitchen and said, "...you could be stirring that pot of soup and you can just be wishing for all these homeless people to be happy, for them to be protected,...and for them to have shelters." As far as knowing whether or not their students meditate every day, she was not sure but thought that those most likely to practice daily were those participating in their Foundation Program classes.

Venerable Chang-Ju had mentioned previously that everyone is taught how to integrate what they learned in meditation into their daily lives, which shows that the center wants meditation to affect people's lives greatly. She said that it does take a lot of practice but what is

more effective is knowing the concepts and being “...able to change the mindset when they encounter circumstances...in their daily life.” Due to the pandemic, they added more classes that helped their members to better understand the concepts with added book study groups. Within these study groups they also share their own personal experiences to help each other learn how to better apply meditation in different areas of their lives, as well as how to learn when they fail. Venerable Chang-Ju said, “...our members also will share cases where [they] fail to apply...and I think all [of] this is very important as an experience for others to learn because we learn from failures as well.” She has seen changes in many of the members over the past several months when they share the experiences and sees that they are better able to change their mindsets and figure out how to get themselves out of afflictions.

Shou-Jen gave the example of a Chinese American family who had a family member pass away and that based on Chinese tradition, they go to Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple for funeral services. It’s during these services that several people first learn how to meditate. When monks are giving family members instructions, they are aware that this is an occasion when many of them learn Buddhism as well as meditation. When they learn more about meditation, they are told that meditative practices can be applied to every aspect of their daily lives. They use meditation to help calm themselves down so they may have wisdom to solve the problem they’re facing.

For Lisa, she considers whatever helps to calm her down as meditation and not just what’s traditionally considered meditation. She suggests to people who feel stressed or anxious to try taking a walk or hike somewhere in nature, or to do a different activity such as painting or writing. For her, people don’t have to follow a strict formula in order to properly meditate.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu from Metta Forest Monastery explained that some people are more serious about their meditative practice than others. He's found that if you want people to better understand Dharma, then having people meditate first is very important because it's largely about training the mind. It's important for people to not solely focus on meditating, but that they also learn the Dharma because it's part of the practice.

For members at Middle Land Chan Monastery, everyone is encouraged to meditate every day at home and most of them will meditate several days a week. For those who have been at the monastery for a while, they will do their own kind of Sutra studies which includes chanting on their own time for 10 to 20 minutes depending on everyone's schedule. For Shannon personally, she tries to stick with 20 minutes of meditation a day, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. She said she was sure some people meditate more or less that amount, but everyone is encouraged to set aside a minimum of 20 minutes a day. If they aren't able to do 20 minutes, then they're encouraged to meditate for 10 minutes when they get up and 10 minutes before they go to sleep.

For members at the Sakya Metta Buddhist Vihara, Venerable Ripon explained that if people want to experience results in their meditation, they have to practice. However, he and the other monastics realize that people have very busy lives so sometimes it's hard for them to practice every day. When they're experiencing anxiety or negative thoughts, they are taught that they can overcome those thoughts with positivity. Monastics also help train members to practice generosity because when we do good things for other people, then we ourselves feel good, too. Even though not everyone has the free time to meditate, everyone can still practice being generous at any moment in the day.

For Karen from SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center, chanting is part of the path to enlightenment and helps to manifest one's life force and goodness. It also makes one connected to the goodness and life force of the universe. When Karen chants, she finds that it gives her a lot more energy. Many of the active members chant at least twice a day, though there is no limit on how often people can chant. She said the amount of times people chant in one day also depends on their circumstances. However, if members chant regularly, they will notice a better result. Similar to most things in life, practice is the key.

Venerable Sakchai Hongratana said there are many levels at which people practice meditation at the Suddhavasa Buddhist Meditation Center. Some people may practice once a week while others practice many times a day. There are also members who are considered temporarily ordained and they will join the monastics and meditate three times a day.

Kathy Thai from Van Thu Temple said she cannot speak for a lot of people because sometimes people meditate and you cannot even tell that they're meditating. For example, someone could be standing in front of you, and they are talking to you but they are meditating at the same time. For many people at the temple, they are generally very friendly and come off as very relaxed, so it's easy for her to assume that many do meditate at least once a day. Even during the pandemic when everyone called each other to check on everyone, they always seemed pretty cheerful and happy. To Kathy, in order for people to have that much happiness and peacefulness, they would have to be meditating regularly.

For Venerable Jirayut, he has heard from some members that they have been improving in terms of not worrying as much and spending a lot more time with themselves when they

meditate. For members, meditation brings enough peace to reflect on their actions in life and helps bring them more appreciation for what they have as well as self-awareness.

QUESTION #9: Services Offered

The ninth question asked was if the temple/center offered any services to its community besides meditation classes, such as financial or immigration support. A majority of Buddhist temples and centers do not provide financial services, although there are some who wished they had the capability. A major reason for why some temples couldn't provide financial or immigration support was due to lack of funding since many are small in size. Another temple saw providing those kinds of services directly to members could foster an unhealthy dynamic between the temple and its members. Although many didn't offer immigration support, they sometimes helped their members by referring them to others who could mitigate their problem. There were many, however, who said they don't offer those kinds of support, but emphasized that their support is more educational, spiritual, or psychological in nature. Technically, all centers and temples provide this sort of support on some level. There have also been a few temples and centers who have participated in charity work in their local community and not solely members in their temple.

For a few of the temples and centers, they will provide immigration support for religious workers or monastics who migrate to the United States, specifically helping them to obtain a working visa. The Dharmachakra Kadampa Buddhist Center in Palms Springs has not personally helped teachers or practitioners obtain a visa. However, their main U.S. World Peace Temple called the Kadampa Meditation Center New York has knowledge of how to obtain work

visas for working visitors and will help provide them with accommodations, food, and possibly a stipend. She has only heard of the center helping people apply for working visas, but they don't provide refugee support. According to Venerable Sunyata, the Huong Sen Buddhist Temple will sometimes help religious workers come to their temple from outside the United States and help them attain a green card in order to help serve their community, especially if they are monks or nuns. However, according to Lisa, their temple is too small to help everyone else with immigration and are only in the position to help either Buddhist monks or nuns at the moment. Lisa also mentioned they don't provide any financial services, but they do offer wedding and funeral services.

For Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple, they never offer financial support to members because they don't want to foster that kind of relationship between the temple and devotees. For them, when there's a secular relationship, like a mortgage or loan program between the temple and devotees, there's a greater chance there could be trouble or dissension between the two if something goes wrong. As for immigration, sometimes the Hsi Lai Temple will provide a lecture on immigration law to give important information to members, invite an immigration officer to come to the temple and give legal advice to the devotee or those interested, or they can give referrals to those who want to speak with an immigration lawyer. This is similar for the Suddhavasa Buddhist Meditation Center who also have a General Consulate come to the center to help with the Visa and give service to the community. Venerable Sakchai Hongratana didn't mention their temple specifically helping with financial issues for their members, but he did say that members brought in cooked food to give to neighbors in need, especially towards the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. For Metta Forest Monastery, Thanissaro Bhikkhu said

their monastery isn't there for that purpose, so they don't provide immigration or financial support. However, if someone in the community dies or one of their relatives passes away, the monastery will do a general chanting for them.

There are times when people may need a job because they were fired or laid off and need assistance with finding new employment, so the Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep USA Buddhist Temple will sometimes help their members find a job. The temple also brings in food vendors, similar to a farmer's market, for their members to shop for food. They are looking into other ways of providing services for their temple members in the future, such as having a monk graduate from law school who could help with immigration as well as establishing a nursing home in the temple to help elderly members who have no place to go.

Many of the temples/centers have engaged in charity work within the local community as well as beyond the United States. This includes the Van Thu Temple which has helped the homeless, especially around Thanksgiving, with members donating sweatshirts, clothes, and food. There are also a few members who go with the Venerable to third world countries to help with issues involving food, money, or medicine and typically make these trips annually. Van Thu Temple has also sent money to those in Vietnam who are affected by annual flooding by donating money. There is no fixed amount the members are expected to donate. According to Venerable Ripon, the Sakya Metta Buddhist Vihara will do charity work in areas outside of the United States, specifically the native places or places they originally immigrated from, including India and Bangladesh. Sometimes they will also join other temples in their charity work because individually, they aren't capable of providing major services to their community yet. Some of the members from the SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center have helped support those who were

affected by a fire in the San Bernardino area by donating blankets and clothing as well as donating masks as an organization internationally, according to Tom Marquez.

QUESTION #10: 2008 Recession and the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic

The final question was broken up into two parts. They were asked how the 2008 recession as well as the current COVID-19 pandemic affected their communities. For quite a few of the participants, they were unable to address the first part of the question because they either joined post-2008 or their temple/center was established after 2008. However, they were all able to describe the affects the pandemic had on their communities and temples.

One common theme among all temples was having to switch their activities from in-person to online. Many have utilized platforms such as Zoom, Facebook Live, YouTube, and Google Meet. However, this came with its own set of challenges for many members at several temples and centers. Some students of the Dharmachakra Kadampa Buddhist Center didn't always have good Wi-Fi access due to their location or not all of their members were tech-savvy, especially since many of them were of retirement age. Members not being as tech-savvy or being older without technological skills was also a problem for some members within the SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center and was a deterrent for some, according to Tom. However, with the ongoing pandemic, more and more members and guests participated in their online Zoom meetings and noticed that many older members became more comfortable and acclimated with what was once very difficult for them.

For Venerable Chang-Ju at the DDMLAC, teaching meditation is a lot harder because they aren't able to feel the conditions of the students and have a much harder time checking their

posture. This was also similar for the Middle Land Chan Monastery who didn't provide online classes in the beginning because they believed there would be a lack of quality in learning experience. However, they still sent out encouraging emails to their students to keep up their daily practice as well as sharing words of wisdom from Buddhist teachings.

For Lisa and Sunyata, it was difficult because Sunyata couldn't go out and give talks at other places like she normally would, and they couldn't visit services at other temples.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu said many people wanted to give cooked food to the monastics, but they had to do so carefully and drop off food at the Metta Forest Monastery. This was a common problem for a majority of the monastics at these various sites since they are usually supported by their communities financially and food-wise. People also wanted to visit the monastics at the Metta Forest Monastery, but were only able to do so outside. While some people were able to drop off food at temples and centers, others had no one visiting their temples and the monastics had to cook their own meals, like Venerable Ripon at the Sakya Metta Buddhist Vihara.

Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple closing its doors was substantial because when Master Hsing Yun started the temple, people gathering for activities was an important feature of its function as a community center. Having the ability to gather in groups taken away was a challenge for Hsi Lai Temple to foster that same kind of communal bond for its members, although it wasn't entirely impossible thanks to technology. This was similar for the SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Temple, whose mainstay of their organization was gathering in groups in people's homes for district meetings.

The Sakya Metta Buddhist Vihara also experienced some financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic due to some members of their community losing their jobs. Venerable

Ripon explained that the monastics heavily rely on the support and generosity of their community members to provide financial support as well as cooked meals. When there were members who lost their job, it made it much harder to pay bills and support the temple like they normally would. When an event affects a majority of the Buddhist population, it's usually extremely difficult for the monastic community who heavily rely on the rest of the community for support.

There were, however, many advantages with switching online. Amy from the Dharmachakra Kadampa Buddhist Center said before the pandemic, their international festivals were held in person which would require their students to travel. Since many of their students were of retirement age, traveling was much harder for them than others. After their festivals switched to online, they were able to attend all of them without a problem.

Venerable Chang-Ju from the DDMLAC said the center would hold activities at the center at night, and traffic in Los Angeles is a problem for a majority of the people. When everything switched online, people didn't have to worry about making it to the physical center on time in order to participate in their activities. There were also some older members who had a hard time driving at night, so switching to online made it safer for them. There have also been more people joining online because people didn't have to travel to the temple to participate and their numbers have nearly tripled. She also remembered, especially at the beginning of the pandemic, that many members were afraid to go visit the temple in fear of catching the virus, so the internet helped them to stay more connected with their center and partake in activities without fearing for their health and safety. Switching to online has also allowed members who had moved away from the area to still be a part of the community. There were also events held

in Taiwan that Venerable Chang-Ju was able to view over livestream, such as Chinese New Year and the Passing of the Lamp of Wisdom. She told me she normally misses out on these events since she started living in the United States but being able to view them over livestream makes her feel like she's not so far away. Despite the lower efficiency of meditation classes, they've been able to diversify the classes they offer even while being online. They added short group practices, lectures, and yoga classes. DDMLAC is also connected to two other centers in San Francisco and Vancouver, and since going online they have all collaborated more and offered classes to each other's centers, increasing the number of available classes offered to their members. In the end, they have nine monastics working together to better diversify their courses and lessons.

For Hsi Lai Temple, Shou-Jen mentioned that parking was an issue for many people trying to come to the temple. They only have around 200 parking spaces, but many activities have had more than 600 people. When everything switched to online, people didn't have to worry about finding a parking space or getting there on time. This is also helpful for those who have to take care of family members, because typically events like rituals will last all day. After switching to online, it made it easier to participate in the ritual and be able to attend to family members soon after.

The Metta Forest Monastery had been constructing their monastery since 1990, and during 2008 they had to deal with lots of infrastructure before anything else could be built. This included work being done to water pipes, paving the road, etc. It took them a while to save money in order to complete it, and the rest is still being built today. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic Thanissaro Bhikkhu said their income unexpectedly increased and money

had come from unexpected places. This is an advantage to everything going online for their monastery, which was being able to receive money from different areas instead of having to solely rely on their immediate surrounding communities.

According to Venerable Ripon, the COVID-19 pandemic became a good time for people to dig deeper in their practice and to strengthen their generosity, kindness, and support for others. Community members have leaned more into the teaching that everything is impermanent. Being connected to people online has also made it possible for the Sakya Metta Buddhist Vihara to help people in other areas of the world, such as Bangladesh and India, who are going through an even more difficult time than many in the United States due to lack of resources. Switching to online has also helped Venerable Ripon teach students from different parts of the world as well through Zoom.

Digging deeper into one's practice was also similar for Karen from the SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center. She said the pandemic has helped strengthen their view that no matter what happens to them, they will overcome challenges they face. There will be times in life when bad things will happen, but you can still have a positive mindset and come out on the other side a winner.

Being able to see old faces at meetings has been positive for Tom because even though he wasn't able to see everyone during meetings like he normally would, conducting meetings over the internet gave others the opportunity to join who were normally restricted due to distance and travel.

Overall, the major advantage to switching to online during the COVID-19 pandemic was being able to provide support to members to help them stay more calm, healthier, and to have

more hope. This was the case for members of Van Thu Temple as well as the Middle Land Chan Monastery. Shannon said students benefited greatly from having online classes as well as the members from the Suddhavasa Buddhist Meditation Center since many people were scared to go to public spaces at the time. It has even brought some communities closer, like the Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep USA Buddhist Temple, because Venerable Jirayut said people were sacrificing more of their own time and budget in order to pitch in for the temple during the COVID-19 pandemic which has also helped the monastic community immensely to continue providing spiritual support.

CONCLUSION

After conducting all of the interviews and reviewing data, there were several findings that were different from my initial expectations. For example, I originally thought most of the temples wouldn't have an online presence. However, there were many who did have an online presence and had the capability to conduct classes and services virtually. There were monastics who were also involved with technology. Another expectation I had included thinking there weren't any Buddhist communities with large convert populations throughout the Inland Empire. However, it turned out there were a few temples with fairly large convert populations, including Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple, SGI-USA Riverside Buddhist Center, and Metta Forest Monastery. I also had the expectation that only younger adults would convert to Buddhism, but I found there were people who were older who were converting to Buddhism, even in their retirement stage.

Although many didn't experience challenges related to their Buddhist identity, there were instances of religious discrimination, difficulty with cultural immersion, and difficulty with members participating in the temple due to the American lifestyle. I originally also thought being a Buddhist meant finding inner peace within one's self, but for many it meant a lot more than what it provided for them. I also anticipated that most of the members meditated at least once a day or most days of the week sitting down, but it turns out the amount of times Buddhists meditated greatly varied depending on circumstances and motivation. Meditation also doesn't solely mean sitting silently.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not think there would be many positives from temples having to switch to an online format and would mostly have negative consequences. However, there were several positives including not having to travel, not dealing with traffic, increasing one's membership, and still being able to teach meditation in some capacity during a stressful worldwide pandemic. In terms of services, I thought that meditation classes or sessions would be the only thing that temples offered and that they wouldn't be community-facing like Christian churches, having a narrower focus on their own members. However, there were some temples and centers that helped refer members to immigration lawyers, provided lectures on immigration, helped members find employment, helped the homeless, and even helped those outside of the United States.

For meditation instruction, I expected there to be different classes for beginners or non-Buddhists separate from long term members. While there were some centers and temples who taught classes with varying difficulties, for the most part they were not taught differently. In terms of outreach, I didn't expect any of the temples or centers to offer meditation classes

outside of the physical building and also saw outreach as purely teaching outside of the centers and temples. However, there were a few who did teach classes as well as give talks outside of the temple/center and there were instances where non-Buddhists were invited to visit the temple/center itself.

There were only two expectations that were met while conducting this study. I originally expected meditation to have a major impact on people's lives and that it would influence many of their daily activities, and for quite a few it did have a major impact. For example, it helped Kathy Thai to remain calm whenever she felt angry and to have a clearer mind to deal with problems as they manifested. For Karen, her practice of chanting made her feel much more energized and motivated to take on daily challenges. I also expected their experience to be mostly positive in their communities and cities. For a majority of the participants, many had positive experiences within their city as well as their own community.

REFERENCES

- About the Monastery: Welcome.* (n.d.). Metta Forest Monastery. Para. 1-4.
<https://www.watmetta.org/about.html>.
- Almond, P. (1992). *The British discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Pp. 12-13.
- Berkwitz, S. (2006). *Buddhism in World Cultures Comparative Perspectives*. Santa Barbara:
ABC-CLIO. Pp. 17-20.
- Chung Tai Chan Monastery: Establishment of the Monastery.* (n.d.). Middle Land Chan
Monastery. Para. 1-4. <http://middleland.org/chung-tai-chan-monastery/>.
- Dharma Drum Mountain Los Angeles Center.* (n.d.). Dharma Drum Mountain Los Angeles
Center. Para. 1-4. <http://www.ddmbala.org/v2-la-center>.
- Founder & Spiritual Directors.* (n.d.). Meditation in Palm Springs. Para. 1.
<https://www.meditationinpalmssprings.org/about-the-center/founder-spiritual-directors/>.
- Headquarter: Fo Guang Shan.* (n.d.). Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple: Fo Guang Shan.
www.hsilai.org. Para. 1. <http://www.hsilai.org/en/hlt/fgs.php>.
- History: History of Sudhavasa [sic] Buddhist Meditation Center.* (n.d.). Suddhavasa Buddhist
Meditation Center. Para 1-4, 6. <http://www.suddhavasa.org/history/>.
- Introduction of Huong Sen Temple.* (n.d.). HUONG SEN BUDDHIST TEMPLE CHUA
HUONG SEN. Para. 1-3, 8. <http://huongsentemple.com/index.php/en/>.
- January 18, 2012 Statement.* (n.d.). Middle Land Chan Monastery. Para. 1-4
<http://middleland.org/presses/january-18-2012-statement/>.
- May 24, 2012 Statement.* (n.d.). Middle Land Chan Monastery. Para. 1.

<http://middleland.org/presses/may-24-2012-statement/>.

Morgan, D. (2004). *The Buddhist Experience in America*. Westport: Greenwood Press. Pp.

xvi-xvii, 6.

Seager, R. (2012). *Buddhism in America*. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 42-43.

Soka Gakkai International - USA. (n.d.). *About Us*. Soka Gakkai International - USA: Nichiren Buddhism for Daily Life. Para. 1-6. <https://www.sgi-usa.org/about-us/>.

Soka Gakkai International - USA. (n.d.). *SGI-USA National and Territory Contact Information*.

Soka Gakkai International - USA: Nichiren Buddhism for Daily Life. <https://www.sgi-usa.org/find-us/>.

Tweed, T. (2000). *The American encounter with Buddhism: 1844-1912; Victorian culture and the limits of dissent*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Pr. Pp. xi.

Welcome: Middle Land Chan Monastery. (n.d.). Middle Land Chan Monastery. Para. 1.

<http://middleland.org/welcome/>.