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The Buddhists in Australia. Enid Adam and Philip J Hughes, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1996, xii + 71 pages, ISBN 0 644 35805 X, A\$9.95.

Buddhism in Western Australia: alienation or integration? Enid Adam, published by the author (eadam@echidna.stu.cowan.edu.au), x + 224 pages, ISBN 0 646 25136 8, A\$19.95.

Reviewed by

Helen Waterhouse

Study of Religions
Bath College of Higher Education
hwaterhouse@bathhe.ac.uk

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These two books are reviewed together here because of their similar content and authorship. The first is part of a series of profiles of religious communities in Australia. The series includes accounts of other minority religious groups and is intended as an exploration of the contemporary religious diversity of Australia. Aimed at the communities themselves and at a general readership *The Buddhists in Australia* includes a brief introduction to the history and teachings of Buddhism and its history in Australia as well as a review of the Buddhist organizations which operate there. Tables detailing the ethnic background, geographical spread, age and gender, marital status, occupation, education and income of Australian Buddhists are included, based on the 1991 Australian census.

This “View from the 1991 Census” (chapter 5) makes very interesting reading and contains some fascinating insights into past attitudes to minority religions in Australia. We are told, for example, that until 1981 New South Wales did not distinguish Buddhists from Muslims in their census processes. Most of the 140,000 Buddhists in Australia in 1991 were born in Asia, a third of them in Vietnam. Less than 14% (around 20,000) were born in Australia one third of whom had at least one Vietnamese parent. Most of Australia’s Buddhists arrived as refugees.

The second and weightier volume concentrates on Buddhism in the state of Western Australia where the 13,500 Buddhists form 1% of the total population and are the largest religious minority group. The specific focus of the study was the city of Perth. The book gives a brief description of the history of Buddhism in Perth and of the sixteen groups which may be found there. There are five groups representing Theravāda traditions; six from Mahāyāna schools including several Ch’an or Zen groups, only one of which is attended predominantly by Australians of European descent and a group of the Sōka Gakkai; and five Tibetan groups representing bKa’bryud and dGe lugs pa lineages, including the New Kadampa Tradition. Four of the groups are described in detail based on research by participant observation, interviews and questionnaires. These are a lay society and monastery affiliated with the Thai Forest Tradition of Ajahns Chah and Sumedho, and two Vietnamese run groups which cater for Perth’s large refugee population.

The approach of this second book is predominantly sociological and, as the title suggests, explores the effect of belonging to a Buddhist group on alienation from or integration within Australian society and the roles which religious values and practices play within this process. The research explores sociological theories of alienation and integration developed by Marx and Seeman and investigates whether Buddhists of European and Vietnamese descent feel marginalized within a predominantly post-Chris-

tian, secular society. As a contrast to the two Buddhist groups, and in order to explore the role of religion in the integrative process for the Vietnamese population, Adam also researched a Vietnamese Catholic community. Through the development of this theme we are given an interesting insight into the backgrounds and attitudes of Buddhists of Australian descent and the ways in which they consider their lives have been affected by Buddhist practice.

The conclusions drawn from the research are broadly threefold. The first is that Buddhism has grown vigorously in Australia, particularly over the last three decades. This reflects increasing interest among members of the majority culture and also the influx of refugees and others from nearby parts of Asia. Like other studies of Buddhism in “Western” nations, this Australian study has discovered that Buddhism is present in a large diversity of forms. A major theme running through both volumes is the side by side development of Buddhism among Westerners and among immigrant populations; sectors which Adam suggests have difficulty with integration mainly due to language differences. An exploration of other cultural factors would also have been interesting. Differing attitudes within these sectors, for example to the appropriateness of retreat for lay practitioners, seem to support the “Protestant Buddhism” thesis explored by studies of Western influence on Buddhism in the last fifteen years or so, but this issue is not explicitly considered in these volumes.

Second, Adam found that Buddhists in Perth with a European background do not, as has been suggested in previous research by Croucher (*A History of Buddhism in Australia 1848-1988*, Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1989) constitute marginal groups alienated from the wider society. The monastics, in particular, did not accept Seeman’s alienation categories and lay practitioners play full roles in society, working in a wide variety of occupations and enjoying social interaction with Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.

Third, and perhaps most significantly in the context of this research project, Adam found that, contrary to government and community expectation, the Vietnamese population were assisted, not hampered, in the integrative process by their Buddhist affiliation. The Catholic Vietnamese did not find integration easier because they belonged to a mainstream religious denomination. Interestingly, Adam found that Vietnamese Buddhists have integrated marginally better into Australian life than have the Catholics. For example, most of the Vietnamese Buddhists have taken Australian citizenship while only half the Catholics have done so.

The sociological framework of the second volume—the exploration of alienation and integration among Buddhists in Western Australia—

yielded proof of its own inadequacy to an extent. Alienation did not turn out to be a concept which the Western Buddhists, particularly the monastics, could accept. For many of the Vietnamese, the move away from the alienation of a hostile Vietnam to a less than perfect but nonetheless broadly welcoming Australia meant that these Western-derived measures of alienation were inappropriate to assess their experience. Nonetheless, the study does serve to seriously question some preconceptions about the role of religion in the integrative process.

A particular strength of the second book lies in the fact that it did not attempt to consider the practice of Buddhism in Australia without due regard to its cultural setting. Insights into contemporary and historical racial attitudes in Australia were instructive in the consideration of the establishment of Buddhism there and this enhanced the study. There remains plenty of scope for further investigation of Buddhism in Australia. It would be interesting to know, for example, more about relationships between the groups and their attitudes to adaptation to the new cultural setting. Australia's Tibetan derived groups, which we are told are extremely attractive to Australians of European descent, also deserve detailed analysis.

Both books are extremely readable and useful reference works providing another facet to the study of Buddhism in the West. Both offer a wealth of empirical data which will prove useful for further studies and stimulate questions for those interested in this area.