

Buddhism and Ecology Conference Participants and Abstracts

David Barnhill received his Ph.D. from Stanford University in religious studies, with a minor in Japanese literature. He is currently Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies and chair of the Religious Studies Department at Guilford College in North Carolina. He has published articles on the Japanese poet Basho as well as other aspects of Japanese religion and literature. He has served as Co-Chair of the Religion and Ecology Group of the American Academy of Religion. He is the editor of *At Home on the Earth*, a collection of writings on the sense of place (forthcoming, 1999).

Abstract of paper: Great Earth Sangha: Gary Snyder's Buddhist View of the Land and its Implications for Environmental Ethics

Gary Snyder views the land as a Buddhist community that encompasses both wilderness and the unconscious in Indra's organic net. His vision of nature's community embraces human society and its structures, and is thus an antidote to the often rancorous dichotomy between deep ecologists and social ecologists. The Hua-yen character of his view of the land also avoids the common dichotomy between individuals and holism as well as the amoral presentation of the Gaia theory.

John Berthrong is Associate Dean for Academic and Administrative Affairs and Director of the Institute for Dialogue Among Religious Traditions at the Boston University School of Theology. Active in interfaith dialogue projects and programs, his teaching and research interests are in the areas of interreligious dialogue, Chinese religions, and comparative theology. His most recent books are *All under Heaven: Transforming Paradigms in Confucian-Christian Dialogue* and *The Transformations of the Confucian Way*. Forthcoming is a comparison of the notion of creative transformation, *Concerning Creativity in the Thought of Chu Hsi, A.N. Whitehead, and R.C. Neville*, from SUNY Press. He is coeditor with Mary Evelyn Tucker of *Confucianism and Ecology*, also in the *Religions of the World and Ecology* series.

Christopher Chapple is Professor of Theological Studies and Director of Asian and Pacific Studies at Loyola Marymount University where he teaches religions of India and comparative theology. He has published several books, including *Karma and Creativity; Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions*; a co-translation of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, and several edited collections of essays, including *Ecological Prospects: Scientific, Aesthetic, and Religious Perspectives*.

Abstract of paper: Animals in the Early Sramanic Tradition

From early archaeological and textual materials, it is evident that animals were held in high regard in India. The Indus valley civilization adorned and apparently revered selected animal species. In the later sramanic traditions, especially within Buddhism and Jainism, animals play an important cosmological role. In the Jataka tales, a primary teaching tool of the Buddha, animal fables appear with great frequency. In early Jainism (and continuing within present day India), protection of animals is a central feature of religious observances. In this paper, the totem-like depictions of animals in the Indus valley civilization will be discussed as a possible context for the importance accorded to animals in later sramanic traditions. Select Jataka tales will be examined, as well as the place of animals in Buddhism and Jaina cosmology and ethics.

M. David Eckel is associate professor of religion in the Department of Religion at Boston University. He is the author of *To See the Buddha: A Philosopher's Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness* (Harper San Francisco, 1992) and the Buddhism editor for *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Religion*, general editor, Jonathan Z. Smith (Harper San Francisco, 1995).

Abstract of paper: The Issue of Anthropocentrism: On Emptiness and the Concept of Nature

In the literature of the environmental movement, the Buddhist tradition is often treated as a significant and positive counterweight to the more anthropocentric traditions of the West. This paper will explore the issue of anthropocentrism in the Buddhist tradition, through sources drawn largely from India and Tibet, and will develop a less stark, more nuanced, and, it is hoped, more useful view of Buddhist attitudes toward nature.

Joe Franke is a biologist, educator and environmental activist. Since 1998, he has been working with environmentally active religious leaders in Thailand, the Philippines, and Nepal through the Wat Forest Project. A variety of initiatives are being supported through the organization, including forest protection, reforestation, and the development of Christian-, Hindu-, and Buddhist-centered environmental education curricula for free distribution to schools in Asia.

Abstract of paper: The Wat Forest Project: Organizing Support for Southeast Asia's "Green Monks"

This presentation will be about the Wat Forest Project, which seeks to provide material and technical support for the work of Thailand's environmentally active monks.

Ruben Habito, professor of world religions and spirituality, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, and resident teacher, Maria Kannon Zen Center, Dallas, Texas, also taught at Sophia University, Tokyo, from 1978 to 1989. A dharma heir of Yamada Koun Røshi of the Sanbø Kyødan Zen tradition, he has written *Healing Breath: Zen Spirituality for a Wounded Earth* (Orbis Books, 1993) and other works in Japanese and English.

Abstract of paper: Mountains, Rivers and the Great Earth: Zen Buddhism and the Ecological Question

The paper will consider Zen Buddhism vis-a-vis the question: does it or can it support an ecologically viable worldview and way of life? It will examine the basic marks of Zen Buddhism and the three fruits that come to bear in a practitioner's life, offering reflections on their ecological implications, both positive and negative.

Stephanie Kaza is Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Vermont, serving the Environmental Program with an appointment through the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources. She teaches and advises undergraduate and graduate students with a concentration in the environmental humanities.

Kenneth Kraft is currently chairman of the Religious Studies Department at Lehigh University. He received his Ph.D. in East Asian studies from Princeton University. He is the author of *Eloquent Zen* (University of Hawaii Press, 1992) and the editor of *Inner Peace, World Peace* (State University of New York Press, 1992) and *Zen: Tradition and Transition* (Grove Press, 1988). His work on engaged Buddhism has led to an interest in the ethical and cultural significance of nuclear waste.

Abstract of paper: Nuclear Energy and Engaged Buddhism: Making the Connections

This paper raises some questions prompted by the intersection of Buddhism and environmentalism. For example: Where do Buddhist environmentalists stand? If it were necessary to choose between devoting one's energy to the dharma and devoting one's energy to the environment, which would come first? Radioactive waste is presented as an illuminating case study, because nuclear issues pose unprecedented challenges to contemporary Buddhists (and non-Buddhists). The paper concludes with an argument for a "nuclear ecology" that incorporates all pertinent fields and resources, including religious ones.

Lewis Lancaster is professor of East Asian languages and Buddhist studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and is currently in charge of the Ph.D. program in the Group in Buddhist Studies on that campus. He has recently written "The Sources for the Koryo Buddhist Canon: A Search for Textual Witnesses" and "The History of the Study of Twentieth Century Forgeries of Dunhuang Manuscripts" and is editor of *Religion and Society in Contemporary Korea* (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1997). He has been active in the world of computers, organizing the Electronic Buddhist Text Initiative, a consortium of more than forty groups around the world dealing with Buddhism and the new technology. A CD-ROM containing Sanskrit Buddhist texts is underway.

Abstract of paper: The Cultural Collective and Buddhist Ecological Issues

Buddhism has been able to move from one cultural area to another, adapting to local situations and collective perceptions held by the various societies that adopted its teachings. Ideas about nature, animal life and cthonic spirits in the canonical literature and in the cultural patterns of Buddhist areas, give us a glimpse of how the collective operated. Present ecological interests provide another example of ways in which Buddhism was interpreted and practiced.

John Daido Looi is the resident teacher and spiritual leader of Zen Mountain Monastery in upstate New York. He has completed formal training in rigorous kōan Zen and in the subtle teachings of Master Dōgen's Zen. Drawing on his background as scientist, artist, naturalist, parent, and Zen priest, Abbot Looi speaks to Western students from the perspective of shared background. His books include *The Eight Gates of Zen* (Dharma Communications, 1992), *Two Arrows Meeting in Mid-Air: The Zen Koan* (Charles E. Tuttle, 1994), and *The Heart of Being: Moral and Ethical Teachings of Zen Buddhism* (Charles E. Tuttle, 1996).

Abstract of paper: Teachings of Mountains and Rivers: The Earth's Ethical Imperative

We will trace the development of a modern ethical environmental imperative beginning with the teachings of the Diamond Net of Indra from the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* of Buddhism, Chinese Hua-yen philosophy, and the Five Ranks of Master Tōzan, down through the Zen lineage of Zen Master Dōgen and the evolution of a moral imperative that is essential to our survival as a species as well as the survival of this great earth itself. Emphasis will be on the teachings of the insentient and the unique ethical perspective this creates when viewed in conjunction with the Zen Buddhist precepts as expounded by Zen Master Dōgen. We will conclude with a look at the practical applications of some of these principles in the monastery's ongoing environmental program, in operation for the last fifteen years.

Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel is an Academic Officer for Professional Studies and Adjunct Professor at Chaminade University, Honolulu, Hawaii. She teaches courses in philosophy, world religions, Zen Buddhism, sociology of family and marriage, and gender. Her research interests include Buddhist ecology, ecofeminism, women and economic development, and environmental issues in Thailand. She holds an M.A. in Philosophy from Ohio University and the Ed.D. in Educational Foundations from the University of Hawaii.

Abstract of paper by Leslie Sponsel and Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel: The Buddhist Monastic Community as a Green Society in Thailand: Its Potential Role in Environmental Ethics, Education and Action

In principle, monastic communities in Thailand may approximate a green society to some degree and in certain ways. This paper applies anthropological and ecological theories to explore the

potential contribution of monks in trying to deal with environmental problems in Thailand. This is contrasted with some examples of what is actually happening in practice.

Graham Parkes is professor of philosophy at the University of Hawaii and a former senior fellow at the Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions. He is the editor of *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (University of Hawaii Press, 1987) and *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 1991), translator of Nishitani Keiji's *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* (State University of New York Press, 1990), and author of *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology* (University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Abstract of paper: The Cosmic Buddha Teaches Through Rocks and Trees: Dôgen and Deep Ecology

The conceptions of nature to be found in the worldview of Dôgen would appear to be quite salutary for the environment. But perhaps the affirmation of *all* things as partaking in the *dharmakaya*, or as being Buddha-nature, might lead to an unhelpfully quietistic attitude toward environmental problems. A comparison with the worldview of "deep ecology" is instructive.

Christopher Queen is Lecturer on the Study of Religion and Dean of Students for Continuing Education in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University. His degrees in the history and philosophy of religion are from Oberlin College, Union Theological Seminary, and Boston University. Dr. Queen is co-editor and author of *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movement in Asia* (1996), *American Buddhism: Methods and Findings in Recent Scholarship* (1998), and *Engaged Buddhism in the West* (Wisdom Publications, forthcoming).

Steven Rockefeller is a Professor of Religion at Middlebury College in Vermont where he formerly served as Dean of the College. He received his Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York City and his Ph.D. in the philosophy of religion from Columbia University. He is the author of *John Dewey: Religious Faith and Democratic Humanism* (Columbia, 1991), and *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment is a Religious Issue* (Beacon, 1992). His essays have been published in a number of books and journals. Over the past decade, his work has given special attention to the interrelationship of democracy, ecology, and religious faith. He is currently coordinating the drafting of the Earth Charter for the Earth Charter Commission and Earth Council.

Abstract of paper: Buddhist Contributions to the Earth Charter

A worldwide effort is underway to create an Earth Charter that would set forth in clear, simple language a vision of fundamental ethical principles for the 21st century. This presentation will

describe the Earth Charter project and will invite dialogue on Buddhist contributions to the charter.

Leslie Sponsel (Ph.D. Cornell 1981) is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, where he directs the ecological anthropology concentration. He has conducted research on the cultural ecology of the subsistence hunting and fishing of several indigenous societies in the Venezuela Amazon during several trips from 1974-1981. Since 1986 he has been working in southern Thailand comparing the cultural ecology of adjacent Buddhist and Muslim communities, and as a Fulbright Fellow during the summers of 1994-95 he initiated a long-term research project on the role of sacred places in biodiversity conservation in Thailand. Among other publications, Sponsel is editor of the book *Indigenous Peoples and the Future of Amazonia: An Ecological Anthropology of an Endangered World* (1995) and coeditor with Thomas Headland and Robert Bailey of *Tropical Deforestation: The Human Dimension* (1996).

Abstract of paper by Leslie Sponsel and Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel: The Buddhist Monastic Community as a Green Society in Thailand: Its Potential Role in Environmental Ethics, Education and Action

In principle, monastic communities in Thailand may approximate a green society to some degree and in certain ways. This paper applies anthropological and ecological theories to explore the potential contribution of monks in trying to deal with environmental problems in Thailand. This is contrasted with some examples of what is actually happening in practice.

Donald Swearer is the Charles and Harriet Cox McDowell Professor of Religion at Swarthmore College, where he teaches courses in Asian and comparative religions. He was the Numata Visiting Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of Hawaii in 1993 and a Guggenheim Fellow in 1994. His recent publications include *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* (SUNY Press, 1995) and *The Legend of Queen Cama* (SUNY, 1998).

**Abstract of paper: The Hermeneutics of Buddhist Ecology in Contemporary Thailand
Buddhadasa and Dhammapitaka**

Buddhadasa, the Thai Sangha's most innovative interpreter, and Dhammapitaka, its most respected scholar, have both lectured and written on the topic of Buddhism and the environment. Each monk, furthermore, develops a distinctive hermeneutic based on his particular reading of the text and tradition. This paper will first analyze their distinctive constructions of Buddhist ecology; it will then assess their views in the light of Ian Harris's critique of "green Buddhism."

Mary Evelyn Tucker is a professor of religion at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where she teaches courses in world religions, Asian religions, and religion and

ecology. She received her Ph.D. from Columbia University in the history of religions specializing in Confucianism in Japan. She has published *Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism* (SUNY, 1989). She co-edited *Worldviews and Ecology* (Orbis Books, 1994) with John Grim, *Buddhism and Ecology* (Harvard/CSWR, 1997) with Duncan Williams, *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans* (CSWR, 1998) with John Berthrong, and *Hinduism and Ecology* (forthcoming) with Christopher Key Chapple. She and John Grim are directing the series of twelve conferences on Religions of the World and Ecology at Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions. They are also editors for a series on Ecology and Justice from Orbis Press.

Duncan Ryûken Williams is a Ph.D. candidate in religion at Harvard University specializing in Japanese religious history. He has been a visiting lecturer at Brown University, Trinity College, and Sophia University, Tokyo. He is the translator of Shinichi Inoue's *Putting Buddhism to Work* (Kodansha, 1997).

Abstract of paper: Liberation and Death: Issues in the Study of Rites to Release Animals (*Hôjô-e*) in Medieval Japanese Buddhism

Based on temple, shrine, government and literary records, this paper problematizes idealized notions of Buddhist rites to release animals (*hôjô-e*) by examining how this ritual was actually carried out by Buddhist and Shintô institutions in medieval Japan. Though motivated by Buddhist notions of compassionate action and merit-making, this liberative ritual often involved the death of large numbers of animals. In actualizing compassionate action towards animals or the environment, this paper will argue for a more thorough examination of historical examples.

Jeff Yamauchi is the resident naturalist at Zen Mountain Center and founder of Earth Witness Foundation, which is dedicated to integrating Buddhism and environmentalism through education. He received his master's degree in environmental studies from Prescott College, Arizona, in 1996. He is currently planning an extended solo trip along the John Muir Trail in the California Sierra Nevada.

Abstract of paper: The Greening of Zen Mountain Center: A Case Study

Located in the San Jacinto Mountains of Southern California, Zen Mountain Center provides an ideal wilderness setting to integrate Zen Buddhist practice with environmental concerns. This presentation addressed an eight-aspects plan, which will be implemented in creating a truly "green" religious community. Zen Mountain Center has the potential to serve as a model for other spiritual centers in the coming millennium.