

## South Asia

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R. Michael Feener and Anne M. Blackburn, eds., *Buddhist and Islamic Orders in Southern Asia: Comparative Perspectives*

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Although the sometimes-violent interactions between Buddhists and Muslims in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have garnered much news attention in recent decades, histories of these interactions are more sophisticated, and much more connected, than one might at first suspect. In this ambitious edited volume, editors R. Michael Feener and Anne M. Blackburn suggest that historians and specialists of these two multivalent, multilocal religious currents in the Indian Ocean region have much to learn from the fruits of one another's methods and investigations. They posit "Southern Asia" as a geographic frame that more accurately encompasses the Cold War-era areal distinctions of "South" and "Southeast Asia," which they view as potentially anachronistic to the self-identification of peripatetic religious wanderers and traders (8).

The volume engages current research into the political and religious work of "orders" and "lineages" across various institutionalized communities and contexts inflected by, or self-identifying as, Buddhist and Muslim. In doing so, the editors aspire to "draw attention to similarities across Islam and Buddhism—both within and beyond Southern Asia—in the ways that orders were shaped and reshaped through trans-regional processes under way within their respective traditions," while "specify[ing] more closely significant points of chronological convergence between the formative dynamics of orders in both traditions" (9). The editors argue that such examinations of various institutional microdynamics among and across these traditions will attest to the benefit gained by engagement between scholars of Buddhism and Islam (14).

The first case, Ismail Fajrie Atalas's chapter, "A Ḥadramī Sufi Tradition in the Indonesian Archipelago: The Itineraries of Ibn Yaḥyā (1794–1849) and the Ṭariqa 'Alawiyya," considers some of the ways in which Sufi-oriented 'Alawiyya scholars and communities in the nineteenth-century Malay-Indonesian archipelago made use of notions of *ṭarīqa* in order to mark their unique forms of sharī'a doctrine and practice as "a practical mechanism of tradition" (21). Examining the writings of one such scholar who navigated shifting modalities of trade, royal power, and networks of fellow itinerant scholars, Atalas reveals in what contexts the *ṭarīqa* 'Alawiyya was successful in generating distinct and increasingly standardized Sufi religious and intellectual forms for itself, and furthermore, how it creatively constructed these traditions as "inherited."

Like Atalas, Alexey Kirichenko's chapter, "The Itineraries of 'Sīhaḷa Monk' Sāralaṅkā: Buddhist Interactions in Eighteenth-Century Southern Asia," follows the wanderings of a sole monk in order to illuminate the many and overlapping networks in which one Buddhist monastic made a peripatetic life and career. We follow one of the monks who was involved in the 1750s lineage transmission of monastic ordination between Siam and Laṅkā, who subsequently became re-embedded in multiple Burmese courtly and monastic contexts before returning to Siam at the end of his life. Kirichenko argues that it was precisely the interstitiality of monks like Sāralaṅkā that made them valuable to the political and religious elites of multiple courts. Monks like Sāralaṅkā were regarded both as sources of religious knowledge and lineage transfer and as

conduits for diplomacy and communication across the broader Southern Asian Buddhist world (50).

Drawing on Arabic and Tamil sources from Lañkā and Southern India, Torsten Tschacher queries the extent to which there existed stable *ṭarīqa*-identifying communities and lineage designations among Sufi communities prior to the mid-eighteenth century. Unlike their Mughal and Northern Indian counterparts, Tschacher argues that there is not good evidence to suggest that institutions and communities became linked to notions of *ṭarīqa* until the modern period. Rather than using more “vertical” frameworks like “lineage,” Tschacher calls for a more robust emphasis on “horizontal” networks and features of self-identification prior to the large-scale political integration of the region (76–77).

Kenneth Dean’s contribution to the volume, “Whose Orders? Chinese Popular God Temple Networks and the Rise of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist Monasteries in Southeast Asia,” like Tschacher, considers early modern expansion of religious and economic networks outside the purview of integrated state control. Dean shows that “Southeast Asian” Chinese temple networks spread from Fujian throughout the archipelago from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries and provided the contexts for the performance of a vibrant array of rituals and political institutions inflected by Mahāyāna Buddhist as well as Daoist religious ideals, practices, and wandering specialists (100–1). One intriguing ritual Dean describes that orients us to the nexus of religious and political praxis in these networks is the “possession ritual,” which authorized the expansion of the network in new directions, such as the Straits Settlements during the nineteenth century.

Despite the rich and careful treatment of the material in this chapter, I cannot help but note that in a volume that aspires to, and often successfully does, gaze beyond the potentially anachronistic areal distinctions of “South” and “Southeast Asia,” both this chapter and Martin Van Bruinessen’s that follows, “Sufi ‘Orders’ in Southeast Asia: From Private Devotions to Social Network and Corporate Action,” continue to rely on such distinctions throughout their otherwise rich and finely textured treatment of the historical material. Van Bruinessen’s chapter picks up on the volume’s earlier discussion about the evolving identification and work of the word *ṭarīqa*. Van Bruinessen suggests that as a widespread devotional form, in Indonesia *ṭarīqas* were also absent from historical records until about the nineteenth century, and furthermore, they were neither the sole, nor perhaps even the most important, “orders” in the region. For instance, Van Bruinessen demonstrates that communities of *putihan* (“people in white”) distinguished themselves from the *tarekat* with stricter devotional and ascetic practices (125, 144).

Continuing the book’s rich thread grappling with the historical purchase of *ṭarīqas* across Southern Asia, Nancy K. Florida’s chapter, “Shaṭṭāriyya Sufi Scents: The Literary World of the Surakarta Palace in Nineteenth-Century Java,” delves into its use in early nineteenth-century Java to tease out practical notions of “path,” “discipline,” and “lineage” from manuscript evidence. Differing somewhat from Tschacher and Van Bruinessen’s conclusions, Florida suggests that the *tarekat* was not characterized by either a horizontal lineage or a corporate body (respectively) but rather by a pedagogical system of religious knowledge and pupillary succession which—here agreeing with the others—became concretized within larger, more formal orders in the later part of the century (154).

The final chapter, Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa's "Negotiating Order in the Land of the Dragon and the Hidden Valley of Rice: Local Motives and Regional Networks in the Transmission of New 'Tibetan' Buddhist Lineages in Bhutan and Sikkim," considers the individual life story of one wandering monk against the backdrop of interregional Buddhist lineage-making and transmission (186). In this way, its argument provides a nice compliment to that of Kirichenko's earlier in the volume. Where Kirichenko argues that a Siamese-Laṅkān ordination transmission in the eighteenth century did not yield a new "lineage," Holmes-Tagchungdarpa suggests that a rich diversity of monastic and non-monastic, institutional and non-institutional religious formations and practices attended the exchange of knowledge, rituals, and collaboration among localized Vajrayāna-inflected communities in the Eastern Himalayas.

Holmes-Tagchungdarpa demonstrates that multiple and sometimes overlapping local affiliations and networked engagements allowed wandering monks like Risung Rinpoche to serve as powerful nodes of religious transmission and education. Thus, in a volume largely centered around religious orders, Holmes-Tagchungdarpa and others, perhaps most notably Van Bruinssen, invite us to consider in what ways "orders" and "lineages" are but one of any number of important social, pedagogical, and ritual formations that inherit, and in fresh contexts reimagine, the richly textured traditions of Buddhism and Islam across Southern Asia.

While the volume represents an exciting and important new direction for religious historians of Asia inspired by trends in "connected" and "transnational" history, and while the sophisticated analyses by its authors largely advance the volume's central ambition, its editors might have coaxed among the authors a greater conceptual or comparative engagement with one another's material. Where almost all the chapters considering Islamic communities or materials engage one of the book's constant and most interesting threads—the utility or applicability of the term *ṭarīqa* to their case studies—there is somewhat less of this continuity among chapters engaging Buddhist materials, and less still *between* these groups. In subsequent volumes, such conceptual and comparative engagement strikes me as a fruitful next step in the important new intellectual direction in which this stimulating and timely volume otherwise admirably sets out.

Tyler A. Lehrer  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*