Constructing 'Buddhism'
A Comparative Analysis of Buddhist Group Narratives in Scotland

by

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A dissertation submitted to the

School of Divinity
of
The University of Edinburgh

*in part fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of*

Master of Science by Research
in
Religious Studies

~ October 2007 ~

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Abstract

This thesis examines some mechanisms underpinning the construction of the public discourse on Buddhism in Scotland in general and Buddhist group narratives about Buddhism in particular.

Chapter 1 introduces the object of study as well as research questions and describes the methodology applied, which is grounded in a study-of-religions (*Religionswissenschaft*) perspective.

Chapter 2 discusses some theoretical accounts in the study of Buddhism(s) and investigates the creation of an ontologised category *Buddhism* as a scholarly object within the 'world religions' paradigm. It furthermore argues for the study of 'Buddhism' to focus on the actual human agents involved as well as on historico-regional aspects of the framework within which a discourse on Buddhism is constructed.

Chapter 3 provides a historical contextualisation of Buddhist groups in Scotland and examines the construction of 'Buddhism' within a selection of three Buddhist groups located in Scotland. These are the *Friends of the Western Buddhist Order*, the community around *Karma Kagyü Samyé Ling*, and the Thai-Scottish Association around *Wat Dhammapadipa*.

Chapter 4 concludes the study and provides a comparison of the Buddhism discourses constructed in these three groups. It also highlights general rules underpinning the public discourse on Buddhism in Scotland and locates this discourse in the wider field of the concept of the 'European history of religions' (*Europäische Religionsgeschichte*).

License

Thesis declaration

This thesis, submitted to the School of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh for the degree of Master of Science by Research, has been completed solely by Alexander Rödel. It has not been previously submitted for any other degree at this or any other university. Where other sources are quoted, full references are given.

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Alexander Rödel
October 2007

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Acknowledgements

A great thanks goes to the various Buddhist individuals whom I met and with whom I had interesting, often exceptional conversations that reminded me of the distinctive character of the academic business. They often challenged my own presuppositions and drew my attention to new spaces within the activity spectrum of their respective groups. Without their friendliness, insight and cooperation, it would have not been possible for me to learn anything about what people with a Buddhist identity actually do.

All the above individuals have, in one way or another, contributed to my study – even though some of them may certainly not agree with my argumentation. Nevertheless, all mistakes, weak arguments and incoherences in this study are, of course, mine.

A note on languages, translations and research ethics

In Sanskrit, Pali and Thai words, I follow the authors I am quoting in their use of diacritics. I also use diacritics whenever there is no English equivalent to a word. For better readability, I use the common phonetic transcription of Tibetan terms instead of the Wylie system. All translations from German into English are mine; when quoted for the first time, an excerpt of the original quote is given in the footnotes. Translations from Thai are by Pavis Devahasadin na Ayutaya. During my fieldwork, I was in contact with numerous individuals who provided me with information. However, to protect their anonymity, I refer specifically only to those persons who have decided themselves to publicly participate in the discourse on Buddhism (e.g., in newspaper articles).

List of illustrations, photographs and tables

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1 Introduction

1.1 What, if anything, is Buddhism?[1]

1.1.1 A response from the Milindapañha

In the Milindapañha[2], a famous Theravāda text, a bhikkhu called Nāgasena argues with the Greek king Milinda about Nāgasena's self. The bhikkhu declares that 'Nāgasena' is no more than a given name and explains that there is no self, no continuous person (*puggala*) masked behind this name. However, the king is not convinced by Nāgasena's rejection of a self and attempts to comprehend what Nāgasena actually means by his counter-intuitive statement:

> **Milinda:** "Well, then sir, is your physical form [...] 'Nāgasena'?"
> **Nāgasena:** "No, your majesty."
> "Are feelings [...] 'Nāgasena'?"
> "No, your majesty."
> "Are perceptions [...] 'Nāgasena'?"
> "No, your majesty." [...]
> "Is consciousness [...] 'Nāgasena'?"
> "No, your majesty."
> "Perhaps the five skandhas all together [...] are they 'Nāgasena'?"
> "No, your majesty."

Learning that 'Nāgasena' is not a 'person', Milinda is perplexed by the paradox that he nonetheless is able to perceive Nāgasena and, consequently, accuses the bhikkhu of lying. Turning the tables, Nāgasena starts to ask about the nature of the king's chariot, in which the king had arrived to meet the bhikkhu:

> **Nāgasena:** "[Y]our majesty, tell me what is the chariot.
>   Is the pole the chariot?"
> **Milinda:** "No, sir."
> "Is the axle the chariot?"
> "No, sir." [...]
> "Is the goad the chariot?"
> "No, sir."
> "Perhaps, your majesty, the pole, the axle, [...] and the goad
> all together - are they the chariot?
> "No, sir, they are not."
> "Then, your majesty, is it something other than the pole, the axle [...],
> and the goad that is the chariot?"
> "No, sir, it is not."
> "Well, your majesty, [...] I do not find any chariot.
> 'Chariot' is but a sound. What is this chariot?"

Defeated by these questions, the story tells us, Milinda is admits his own contradictions and finally agrees with Nāgasena's point. The king even concludes that "[t]he word

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chariot comes into existence, dependent on the pole, dependent on the axle, the wheels [...], the goad; it is a designation, a description, an appellation, a name." Consequently, Nāgasena replies:

> "You truly understand the chariot! In the same way, [...] the word *Nāgasena* comes into existence [...]. It is a designation [...], nothing but a name. But in the final analysis, the ultimate sense, there is no Person [*puggala*] to be found herein." (emphasis in original)

For the following study it is not necessary to examine different concepts of *anātta*[3] or to speculate about the historical impact of the above text. Leaving aside its idea-historical context for now, this brief extract of the Milindapañha illustrates how a particular paradox, structurally analogous to the Sorites paradox[4], can be used to postulate and justify claims about empirically non-accessible, or to be more precise, "non-falsifiable alternate realities" (Cox 2006:236-237; 2007:76, 83).

Of course, it is Nāgasena himself who creates this paradox: It is him who applies formal logic to the vagueness and fuzziness of language; i.e. he attempts to assess a non-defined, context-dependent term by means of definition. Because Nāgasena proposes a linear set of characteristics to apprehend a so-called strong emergence, the answers to any of his questions must be no. Through this, Nāgasena's chariot analogy implies and finally convinces the king that neither is there an essence within the concept 'chariot' nor, *mutatis mutandis*, within the concept 'person'.

1.1.2   Answers in terms of a field of study

Confronted with the above evaluation of 'chariot' and 'person', one might ask whether this could also be true for the concept 'Buddhism'. Is it a designation, a description, nothing but a name, so that in the final analysis there is nothing to be found therein? "Perhaps the real 'essence' of Buddhism is its teaching that there is no 'essence' in anything", suggests Robert Bluck (2006:186) in his study of "British Buddhism". By contrast, the Buddhist movement *Friends of the Western Buddhist Order* (FWBO 2007a) claim that "the essence of Buddhism is timeless and universal. But the forms it takes always adapt according to context." What is more, P. Lakshmi Narasu ([1907]1993) or

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3   For details see Collins 1982.
4   The Sorites paradox is also called the paradox of the heap (heap: English for Greek 'sorós'): If *n* grains form a heap, then surely *n*-1 would still form a heap. However, at what point do *n* grains not form a heap anymore?

Edward Conze ([1951]1957) even dedicated entire books to *The essence of Buddhism* or *Buddhism: its essence and development*, respectively.

The above are only four of various examples providing evidence that 'Buddhism' is not 'empty' for everybody and – as the social sciences regard *prajñaptimātra* or *suññatā* metaphysics as socially constructed, institutionalised realities (Berger/Luckmann [1966]1999) – cannot be empty. Indeed, since this concept emerged in the 19th century[5], people have always felt compelled to fill it; functionally speaking, 'Buddhism' is comprised of numerous ideas, thoughts, disputes and discourses, which may be summarised in the above question 'What, if anything, is Buddhism?'.

Various agents have provided numerous answers; many of them constructed a core to reify and identify what they assumed and claimed to lie behind the signifier 'Buddhism'. However, how do they fill the concept 'Buddhism' and what logic and rules are underpinning their selection processes? What makes them find different answers and in what manner do they propagate their convictions within the public discourse on Buddhism? These questions shall be further explored in this study.

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5   Cf., e.g., Smith [1962]1978:61; Masuzawa 2005:125.

1.2　Aims and foci of this study

1.2.1　Object and presuppositions of this study

As indicated above, this study is not about Buddhism. It is about 'Buddhism': that is the (academic and public) discourse on Buddhism, which is constituted by different constructions of Buddhism. For orthographical clarity, I shall use *Buddhism* to signify the idea of an ontologised entity or religion, i.e. a first-degree construct (Schütz 1971). In contrast, the signifier *'Buddhism'* (inverted single commas), as a second-degree construct, shall either point to Buddhism as a concept and term or to the discourse on Buddhism. In addition, I shall use double quotation marks, e.g. "Buddhism", whenever quoting terms or phrases.

The purpose of replacing Buddhism with 'Buddhism' is to break with its familiarity. This is certainly arguable (see 2.2.3; Sweetman 2003:350); nonetheless, I consider this distinction helpful in this study and follow scholars such as Russell McCutcheon (2003:256-260) or Steven Sutcliffe (2003:6, 9), whose use of inverted commas indicate both a problematisation of taxons and a focus on the reality-'manufacturing' side of essentialist folk-terms such as 'religion', 'New Age' or 'Buddhism':

> "In making this break we must remind ourselves that behind or before this discourse there lurks no purer, more cross-cultural thing [e.g., Buddhadharma; A.R.] [...]. Taking the social and historical scale of analysis as our only available reference point, we come to see that there exists only assorted human behaviors, none any more or less significant, meaningful, or valuable than any other."
>
> (McCutcheon 2003:257)

It is not my intention to present any data about an entity existing dissociated from claims about this entity postulated by human beings. Hence, I am not concerned with adaptations, translations or transformations of a vague set of items[6], which different socially constructed authorities[7] hold to be characteristically Buddhist.

Rather, my interest is directed at how different agents speak about and construct Buddhism; that is, I am concerned with introducing an excerpt of the discourse on Buddhism. I therefore consider this discourse as a framework actively constructed both by Buddhists (definition below) as elements of their social identity (Jenkins 1996) as well as by scholars grouping together various phenomena under the category 'Buddhism'.[8]

6　Cf., e.g., Silk 2002:392: "[W]e assume that all Buddhist texts are Buddhist–but really without knowing what we mean by this, and without having formalized *this feeling*." (emphasis added)

7　E.g., religious specialists, academics, state bureaucrats.

8　Of course, the categories 'scholar' and 'Buddhist' are not mutually exclusive.

Illustration 1: Elements and levels of the discourse on Buddhism.

{ Buddhism1,   Buddhism2,   Buddhism3,   Buddhism4, ... }

"Buddhism is x!"

"According to Buddhism, we should do this..."

"I as a Buddhist would argue..."

"Basically, Buddhism is z!"

} public discourse: 'Buddhism'
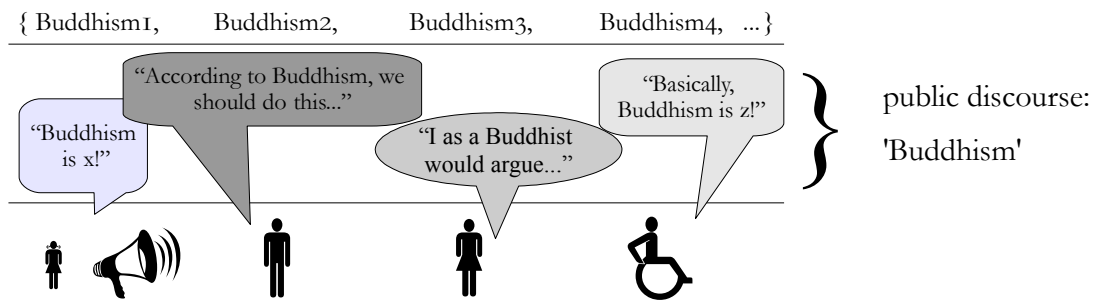
Steven Engler (2004), however, has reminded us of the lack of theoretical foundations for the application of (social) constructionism[9] in the study of religions. Of course, one major question must be addressed: Who or what actually constructs and why? Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann ([1966]1999:64-65), for instance, only mention the dialectic process between society as a human product and the human being itself, being a product of society. To my knowledge, a consensus has not yet been found and whereas some scholars may rely on cognitivist accounts (Engler 2004:308), others such as Tim Murphey (2000:401) see the solution in discourse theory which "translat[es] the constructive activity out of subjectivity and into discourse" (see 1.3.2).

The above outline, of course, sets limits to the study: I shall not consider any cognitive, sociological, historical or any other explanations of the question why human beings construct essences or ontologise categories.

What is more, I shall use Scotland as a geo-political boundary to limit the field of research, even though the concept of nation-state societies has been sophisticatedly contested (Urry 2000). A reason for this is the distinctive multi-presence of Buddhist groups within an accessible area and spatially graspable region (see 2.3.3 and Sutcliffe 2003:13-14), with an own political identity (Urry 2000:153) and sufficient autonomy to create distinctive discourses on religion (see, e.g., SIFC 2001:2-3). In addition, the Tibetan Buddhist centre and monastery Samyé Ling, as the headquarters of a contemporary Buddhist global player, has had a strong influence on the development of 'Buddhism' in this North European country, which makes the Scottish case particularly interesting (see 2.4).

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9   For a differentiation between 'constructionism' and 'constructivism' see Engler 2004:292.

A further boundary is the selection of individuals and groups who consciously use the concept 'Buddhism' and 'Buddhist' for their self-representation, which I regard as a phenomenon by itself. I am therefore adopting Thomas Tweed's answer to 'Who is a Buddhist?' as a definition of 'Buddhist':

> "[S]elf-identification is a useful standard for defining religious identity, and not only because it avoids [...] essentialist approaches and includes the greatest range of characters. It also uncovers much about the status and meaning of the religion at a given historical moment and in a given cultural setting."
>
> (Tweed 2002:27)
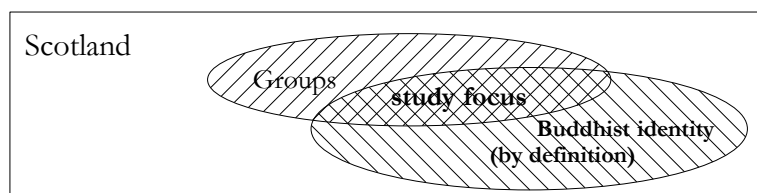
Illustration 2: Focus of the study

In sum, my study concentrates upon two major topics:

(1) It attempts to give an insight into a public discourse which is largely maintained by people with a Buddhist identity. Thereby, it is rooted in a *Religionswissenschaft* framework which is interested in the question how human agents creatively structure and view their life-world in a way which contemporary study-of-religions discourses consider to be religious.[10] By *Religionswissenschaft* I refer to the academic study of religions, which is a discipline within the humanities and social sciences. *Religionswissenschaft* distinguishes itself from other disciplines[11] associated with the term 'religion(s)' in that it attempts, for instance,[12] to develop academic non-*sui-generis* approaches to religious perspectives and behaviour without advocating one particular position.[13]

(2) The thesis intends to locate the characteristics of the Buddhism discourse within contemporary changes and developments in the 'European history of religions' (see 4.2).

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10   In this study I understand *religious* as an adjective which refers to a human behaviour and activity (i.e. "religioning"; cf. Nye 1999, 2000) which I conceive of as the construction of meaning as well as orientation and to make sense of one's (social) environment, world and life (i.e. the process of creating *Sinn-*, *Symbol-*, *Deutungs-* and *Orientierungssysteme*). Cf., e.g., Waardenburg 1986:34, Flasche 2000:164, Gladigow 1995:77.

11   E.g., Christian and Muslim theologies.

12   There are many more approaches to the academic study of religion(s), partly because a general consensus about the identity of *Religionswissenschaft* has not yet been found. For a selective variety see e.g. Hinnells 2005, Stolz 1999, Kippenberg 2003 and Antes et al. 2004a/ 2004b.

13   Cf. the IAHR's self-understanding (IAHR [2006]2007), being a major force in the discourse on what constitutes *Religionswissenschaft*: "[The International Association for the History of Religions] is the preeminent international forum for the critical, analytical and cross-cultural study of religion, past and present. The IAHR is not a forum for confessional, apologetical, or other similar concerns."

1.2.2 The shift from pragmatism to methodological issues

In his introduction to "The cultural translation of Buddhism in England" Philip Mellor (1989:8) notes a shift of focus while he was investigating 'Buddhism' in England:

> "The initial aim of this thesis was to consider how Buddhism in England had adapted to being translated into a western cultural environment. [...] I had a fairly clear idea of what 'Buddhism' was and what it was not. [...] However, as my research progressed and the material at my disposal increased, it became clear to me that 'Buddhism' was a problematic category. [...] From this point the study changed quite radically and methodological problems assumed an absolutely central position."

Even though my initial aim was to investigate why there were differences in the practice of 'western' versus 'Asian' Buddhists, the shift of my focus of study as well as my concerns about methodology correspond very much to Mellor's statement.

Consequently, I had to recall and reflect upon my education in Buddhism: media, school, university. Classes in *Religionswissenschaft* and Indology had provided me with more facets of a monolithic block. I had heard about Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Aśoka. I had read 'major' texts and had learnt about Ambedkar as well as the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. Introductions to Buddhism (e.g. Schumann [1976]1998, Gethin 1998, Keown 1996), describing *its* founder, scriptures and teachings, cosmology and practices had reinforced my initial understanding of Buddhism. Attempts to rethink these assumptions remained (and still remain) a challenge.

My current conclusions of this reflective process urge me to strongly question the assumption that there is any deeper logic determining distinct 'Buddhist behaviour'. The only rationale I found is an ongoing ontologising activity carried out by past and present advocates of Buddhism: this means, the persistent transformation of 'Buddhism' as a *descriptive* term, developed in the history of philosophy/ literature, into the discourse of human identities and human life-world.

What is more, being concerned with *human* agency, I am highly sceptical about the analytical usefulness of a taxon 'Buddhism' for understanding and classifying, for instance, contemporary social movements in Japan, Lanka, Europe or India. I therefore doubt that essentialist notions of what counts as Buddhist behaviour help to comprehend phenomena such as the formation of the *European Buddhist Union* or the increasing number of people publicly presenting themselves as Buddhists.

1.3   Methodology used in this study

1.3.1   Qualitative research

Hubert Knoblauch (2003:28) and Martin Baumann (1998:7) note that one of the major changes in the study of religions has been the shift from mainly textual approaches, predominately preoccupied with elite literature, to research informed by qualitative methods. Malory Nye (2000:450), however, points out that this shift from what he regards as Smartian phenomenonlogy, especially present in the UK, to methods from sociology and anthropology has failed to recognise further developments and critical reflection present in these two disciplines. Indeed, despite the general acceptance of qualitative methodology, there has been, to my knowledge, little debate on it. Accounts by Baumann (1998) and Knoblauch (2003), the journal *Fieldwork and Religion*, one special issue in the NAASR journal *Method & Theory in the Study of Religions* (Vol. 13, 2001) and a plea for "*qualitative* empirical methodologies" (Sutcliffe 2004a:xxvi; emphasis in original) within the BASR can be regarded as but exceptions within a still little-developed discursive field. Hence, I had to base my own readings of qualitative research also upon works from sociology (Flick 2005, Bryman 2004, Silverman 2001), which often lack the specific needs of the study of religions (cf. Knoblauch 2003:11-15).

It is beyond the confines of this study to produce an ethnography of Buddhist groups in Scotland. Rather, it is an empirically informed study of discourse production in three groups. My selection of groups was based on my initial interest in how 'Asian' and 'western' Buddhists[14] practised Buddhism in different ways. Hence, I specifically chose three Buddhist movements from a spectrum of membership 'socialisations' ranging from mainly European socialised members at one end to predominantly non-European socialised members at the other:

(1) The *Friends of the Western Buddhist Order* (FWBO), a conglomeration of groups perceiving themselves to be a 'western' Buddhist movement and predominantly comprised of 'converts'.

(2) The mainly 'western' community around *Samyé Ling*, which was founded by two Tibetan migrants and which has become known as the first Tibetan Buddhist centre and monastery in Europe.

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14   For a problematisation of these terms see 2.3.1.

(3) The predominantly Thai community around *Wat Dhammapadipa* in Edinburgh, which has strong ties with the Thai-Scottish Association and which is affiliated with Wat Buddhapadipa in London and the Bangkok Wat Mahathat.

My contact to these three Buddhist groups can be described as participant observation. In all three groups, I took classes or lessons orientated at introducing Buddhism. Most fieldwork was carried out within the period of September 2006 to April 2007.[15]

With the FWBO, I took a Buddhism introductory class and additionally visited the Edinburgh Buddhist Centre several times for meditation and discussion gatherings. Furthermore, I visited the FWBO's Buddhist Centre in Glasgow and met people involved with the FWBO outside of centres.

With respect to the Samyé Ling community, I took a Buddhism introductory class aimed at school teachers at Samyé Ling's monastery and visited a class at the Samyé Dzong Edinburgh. Furthermore, I attended special events such as the celebrations of Samye Ling's 40th Anniversary as well as "refuge" and "empowerment" gatherings, and I visited Samyé Ling's Holy Island Project (see 3.3.1).

With regard to the Wat Dhammapadipa community, I visited the Wat several times, where I spoke mainly to 'monks' and the Thai-Scottish Association. I also included non-ordained Thai people outside the Wat and had email contact to Wat Buddhapadipa in London. Being a member of the Dharma University society, I frequently met one particular Wat Dhammapadipa 'monk', who often visited the society and gave instructions about Buddhadharma and meditation.

My contact with these Buddhist groups followed a particular scheme: I established first contact, received instructions on recommended readings and gained information about the local groups. This means that initially I was informed mainly through 'insider literature', which consisted largely of leaflets, newsletters, magazines and internally produced journals. Later, I consulted academic accounts of the groups, as far as these were available.

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15   In addition, I was influenced by two other groups which participate in the public discourse on Buddhism: I took a class on Buddhism at the department of Asian Studies and became a member of the Dharma Society, both at the University of Edinburgh. I also participated in two inter-faith events in Scotland in order to gain an impression of how Buddhists represent their positions in a wider public sphere. Moreover, I have been influenced by my observations in Buddhist 'temples' in Hong Kong (2006) and Thailand (2007).

Furthermore, I analysed publicly accessible websites of the groups, since the internet, following the words of Oliver Krüger (2005:10), "offers the opportunity to trace [Luckmann's] 'invisible religion'". This included forums, official websites, intended for self-representation to a wider public, as well as websites concerned with specific inner-group content. Lorne Dawson's findings of human beings who react differently on the internet than in their offline life (2004:391) also encouraged me to analyse personal websites and blogs by some group members. I attempted to gain an impression of how group teachings were actually perceived and reproduced by long-term members. 'Web 2.0' (i.e. Ajax paradigm oriented) platforms such as YouTube, MySpace or Flickr also included relevant content.

In summary, I attempted to gain an 'intuitive' impression of the groups before I started to analyse them. Even though my analysis is largely based on written, published material, my selection of information is influenced by this 'first' perception of the groups. This means that I regard my quotes of the groups as representative for what I learnt whilst conducting fieldwork with the groups.

1.3.2 Narratives of identity and discourse analysis

As indicated in 1.2.2, what I found in my research was not Buddhism but the transfer of the taxon 'Buddhism' to essence (cf. Sutcliffe 2003:6) and the process of identity construction on the level of both individuals and organisations.

By identity I do not mean the concept of a fixed, unchanged and continuous entity (cf. Roseneil/Seymour 1999:3), but a process, a "becoming" within the activity of identifying (Jenkins 1996:4), which Madan Sarup (1996:3) summarises as "the story we tell of ourselves and which is also the story that others tell of us." But what is this story about? Identity fabrication mainly involves the construction of *history* as Madan Sarup and Chris Weedon point out:

> "[I]t is in the construction of a narrative, the making and telling of a story, that we produce the self. The past does not exist except in the sense that we have to interpret past events and, in so doing, create history, identity and ourselves."
>
> (Sarup 1996:46)

This history, of course, is a particular version of 'the past'; it is the history to which we have access and which thus determines, to a certain extent, our understanding of the

present (Weedon 2004:83). By creating a history of Buddhism, Buddhist groups create their own history, i.e. their own framework within which the 'life'-stories of their institutions as well as of individuals can be located.

The creation of Buddhism as an identity marker is not a new phenomenon. Various studies have carefully traced the fabrication of Buddhist identity, for instance, as a means of resistance (e.g. "Protestant Buddhism": Gombrich/ Obeyesekere 1988); as a form of nativism (e.g. Ambedkar: Fitzgerald 2000:124-127); or as a means to strengthen the position of minorities (e.g. Chinese minorities in Indonesia: Brown 2004). These cases are remarkable in so far as they are concerned with the construction of religious identity; that means that they produce means to distinguish between groups and individuals on the basis of the European export 'religion'. The colonial context certainly is a major force in these examples. For instance, similar re-definitions of histories of Islam and Muslim identities took place in the de-colonialisation process of North African regions (cf. Damir-Geilsdorf 2004:90-94 and Burgat 2003[1996]:24-26).

These processes highlight another major element in the construction of identity: the creation of 'the other' through which one's own identity is conceived (Sarup 1996:47).

> "Like the structure of meaning in language, identity is relational. It is defined in a relation to what it is not. [...] All identities have their 'other' from which they mark their difference."
>
> (Weedon 2004:19)

However, 'the other' is not always present. Weedon reminds us that the creation of such narratives involves "exclusion or marginalization of other possible subject positions and other meanings" since the product must be a "singular sense" of who we are or where an organisation belongs to (Weedon 2004:61, 19).

What is more, as Sarup (1996:18) observed, some narratives become public narratives and may eventually become powerful myths. Even though these myths – for example, myths of religious, ethnic or racial identity – are fictitious, they have 'real' effects on the intersubjectively experienceable world (Weedon 2004:154; Prentiss 2003:3). Craig Prentiss (2003:5), drawing on Bruce Lincoln's understanding of myth, also reminds us that these special forms of narratives are used to "authorize [...] their preferences, to justify or re-create their social patterns, or to guide their decision making."

In this context, the notion of 'discourse' inevitably comes into focus. 'Discourse' in this study denotes "any system of interrelated meanings" as well as the means to socially

construct what we perceive as our world (Murphy 2000:399). The idea behind this is that (human) activity, behaviour, references or statements become only meaningful (to other human beings) within a relational framework.

Hence, the construction of Buddhism must be understood as a social activity within such a relational space. The framework within which the activity of producing, promoting and utilising knowledge of an entity called *Buddhism* takes place determines what can be said and what cannot be said about the respective entity (cf. Foucault's "discursive 'police'"; Foucault 1991[1972]:25). Reference points in the discourse on Buddhism outline and shape the repertoire from which various agents select and reproduce certain items. Overall, a focus on discourse facilitates a perspective which emphasises the 'doing', the 'producing', or as Sarup (1996:17) puts it, the 'how' of a narrative opposed to the 'what'.

However, the application of discourse theory involves questions about the role of the discourse-producing agent, as noted before with regard to constructionism. Mellor (2004:111), for instance, mentions the danger of regarding "human beings as remarkably powerless in the face of arbitrary and abstract discourses". Certainly, this lack of addressing agency, inherited from Foucault (Sarup 1996:74-75), is a weakness of discourse theory. Drawing mainly on Roland Barthes, Murphy (2000:401-402) suggests that a solution to the problem might be to perceive the subject itself, including concepts such as 'person' or the 'I', as contained within the discourse. Such positions (see also Brockmeier/Harré 2001:46, 51) all have in common that they weaken the position of the subject. However, the questions why these terms are thinkable and whether they are produced by neuro-physiological processes (cf. Engler 2004:308), Althusser's *Ideological State Apparatuses* (cf. Sarup 1996:53) or social interaction in general (Jenkins 1996:113) remain unresolved.

Nonetheless, being aware of these limitations, discourse analysis provides a powerful heuristic tool for shedding some light on the immanent rules and reference points within the stories about Buddhism told by narrators in Scotland.

2 The making of Buddhism(s)

2.1 Buddhism as a colour

2.1.1 A history of the human colour perception debate

Before I provide a selective overview of academic responses to the question 'What, if anything, is Buddhism?', I will briefly, and on a simplified level, illustrate a debate which might at first glance seem unrelated to 'Buddhism': the universality of colour name distribution. However, since its argumentative structure resembles that of the Buddhism discourse, but is less value laden, it may be a helpful metaphor to explore the formation of Buddhism and 'Buddhism'.

In general, the discourse on human colour perception encompasses the question whether or not colour naming is determined by a universal process, i.e. whether all 'cultures' order the visible wavelengths of the light spectrum into generally equivalent categories.[1] After Chomskyan criticism of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis[2] of linguistic relativity, most linguists, psychologists and cognitivists were convinced that the colour labels we assign to particular wavelengths of light had to be universal. What is more, in the 1960s/70s studies by anthropologists and scientists such as Brent Berlin, Paul Kay or Eleanor Rosch found empirical evidence for universal colour naming.[3] In addition, it was held that we create so-called basic colour terms (BCTs) due to the physical conditions of our eyes and our brain. These BCTs were found to be equivalent to the English language terms white, black, red, yellow, green and blue (Lindsey/Brown 2006:16611). All other colour terms were seen as only signifying the shades of these colours. However, recent findings by scientists such as Jules Davidoff (2001) and Debi Roberson et al. (2000, 2004) seem to confirm weak versions of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (e.g. Roberson et al. 2000:391, 2004:555; Davidoff 2001:387) and question the status quo of neuro-physiological determinism.

Therefore, they propose to comprehend human colour perception as the culturally variant organisation of the spectrum of visible wavelengths.[4]

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1   Of course, the numeral classification of wavelengths into a spectrum is also a 'cultural' product. In fact, one could argue there is no 'natural' order of light.

2   "We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. [...] the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds - and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way – an agreement that [...] is codified in the patterns of our language." (Whorf 1956: 213–214)

3   Cf. Davidoff 2001:382; Roberson 2000:1; see also Rosch Heider 1972, especially the case of 'mola'.

4   In their empirical study of Himba and English speakers they argue that the universal process observed "is a gradual progression from an uncategorized organization of color based on perceptual similarity
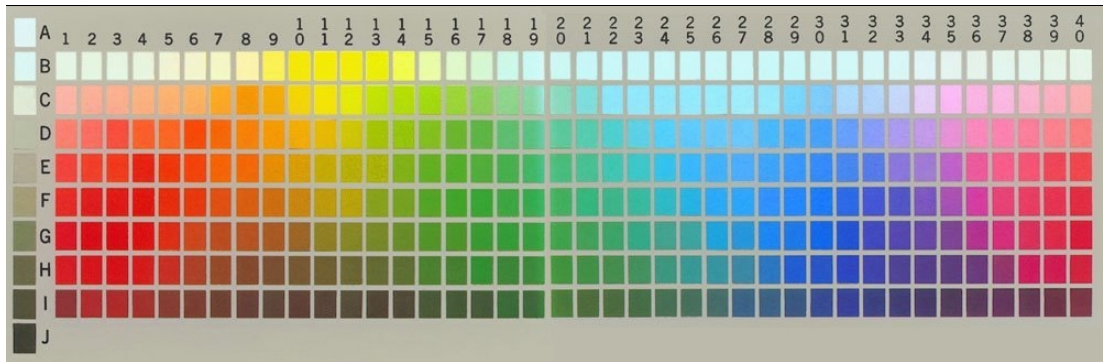
Illustration 3: WCS stimulus array (Source: http://www.icsi.berkeley.edu/wcs/data.html)

Illustration 1 shows the *World Color Survey* (WCS) stimulus array, which is based on Munsell chips[5]. With this grid as our point of departure, we could ask, for instance, whether we would ascribe the same colour term to cell F4 and F12. Viewers without red-green blindness would probably make use of different colour names. However, a distribution of two distinct BCTs to F4 and F40 might become more difficult, dependent on one's organisation of the colour space. In fact, cultural relativists claim that we have to *learn* how to order this space of colours.[6]

One of the examples given by cultural relativists are fieldwork findings from non-industrialised 'cultures' that clearly demonstrate immense differences in colour space organisation, as illustrated by the following two figures showing colour name distribution by English and Himba speakers.
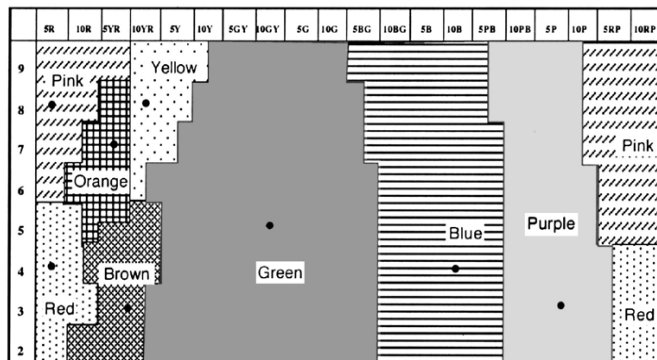
Illustration 4: English naming distribution (Source: Roberson et al. 2004:557)

(where dimensions are viewed as continua) to a structured organization of categories that varies across languages and cultures." (Roberson et al. 2004:569)

5   A set of chips based on the colour system by Albert H. Munsell. The system specifies a colour by hue, value, and chroma.

6   Davidoff (2001:386) invokes a study which shows that it takes young children several hundred attempts to become able to differentiate between red and green.
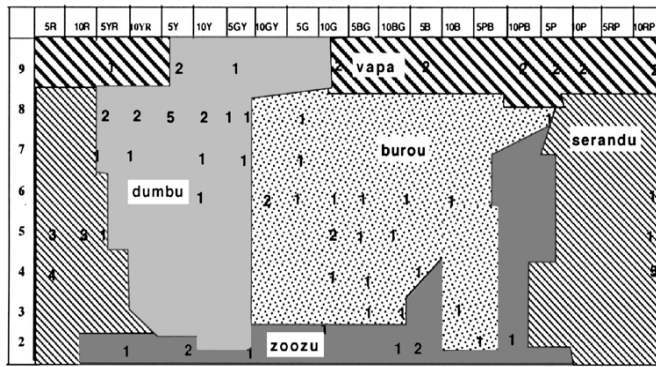
Illustration 5: Himba naming distribution (Source: Roberson et al. 2004:557)

In conclusion, the relativist claim encompasses the idea that we form our colour terms dependent on our environment and cultural milieu, so that we are more likely to perceive differences between certain wavelengths if we have learnt particular colour categories before. Of course, such claims have been highly contested by universalists. In addition to disapproval of research design, critics claim to have found statistical evidence for the clustering of colour names around focal points within the World Color Survey (Lindsey/Brown 2006; Regier et al. 2005).

However, challenged by Roberson's findings, Paul Kay and Terry Regier (2006:53), two of the main critics of linguistic relativity, acknowledge that to a certain extent "differences in color naming across languages cause differences in color cognition and/or perception". They conclude: "The source of the universal constraints is not firmly established. However, it appears that it can be said that nature proposes and nurture disposes." Therefore, a final scientific agreement is still due.

2.1.2 The colour perception discourse as a metaphor for Buddhism

Leaving behind the problems of electromagnetic radiation, I shall now apply the colour perception discourse as a metaphorical framework for 'Buddhism'. The premise underpinning this metaphor is the idea that human beings generate concepts (e.g. pure/impure, religious/secular, sport, music) to distinguish, organise and address particular spaces within the perceivable spectrum of human activity. If one metaphorically translates the colour perception discourse into 'Buddhism', at least two

mutually exclusive arguments[7] appear for the historical establishment of the category 'Buddhism'. Analogous to the English and Himba colour naming, illustrated above, the binary opposition can be characterised as follows:

(1) **Universalism** (corresponds mainly to essentialist approaches in the field of Buddhism/ 'Buddhism'):[8] the colour *religion* (yellow) **is** a human universal. Consequently, *Buddhism* (dumbu) signifies *religion* (yellow) of a 'culture' *x*; i.e. *religion* is translatable. In other words, *Buddhism* is a signifier of that particular human activity space which **equals** *religion* in a 'culturally' different context (dumbu = 'the yellow of Himba speakers').

(2) **Relativism** (corresponds mainly to constructionist approaches): the colour *religion* (yell*ow*) **is not** a human universal and is therefore not translatable – but it is acquirable. The signifier *Buddhism* (dumb*ow*[9]) was constructed by using a 'culturally' specific net within the spectrum of human activity existing in a different environment and cultural milieu. Therefore, *Buddhism* (dumbow) is the product of the wish to find *religion* (yellow) within a 'culturally' different human activity spectrum. However, *Buddhism* only **corresponds to** this particular space within one's own spectrum, assigned *religion*, since no equivalent exists in another spectrum (i.e. dumbow = just another concept for yellow, hence, ≠ dumbu).
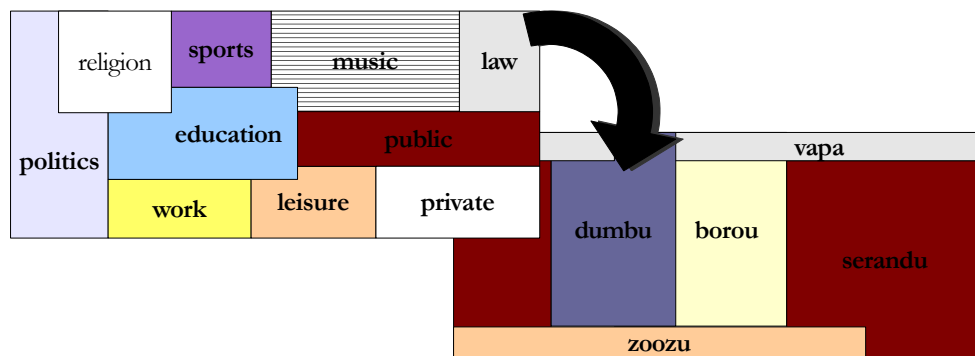
Illustration 6: Transfer of European distinctions onto a fictitious non-European spectrum of world perception.

7   See Engler (2004:308-9) for the proposal that these arguments do not necessarily have to be mutually exclusive.

8   I am referring here only to those universalist and constructionist positions in *Religionswissenschaft*/ Buddhist Studies which resemble universalism/relativism-patterns found in the colour perception debate.

9   I use the neologism *dumbow* to signify the space which is *postulated* to equal the space of *yellow*. By contrast, *dumbu* denotes a specifically Himba language colour space which does not exist in English. This is a very simplified model since one has to bear in mind that the representation of *dumbu* takes place in a particular situation, for instance, scientific research.

Scholars of category one are concerned with capturing an object (*Buddhism*) as accurately as possible. They aim to collect all shades of *Buddhism* and therefore create a first-degree construct (Schütz). Their goal is to develop a correct and precise picture of *Buddhism*. By contrast, scholars belonging to the second category are not interested in whether a particular object exists in 'reality'. Their 'object' is to capture representations of or claims about a postulated object; therefore, they aim to provide a second-degree construct ('Buddhism'). Obviously, the two approaches differ epistemologically in their point of reference: approach one selects and describes phenomena under investigation as forms of an (ontologised) object. Approach two does not distinguish between the object and statements regarding it; indeed, the object only exists, in terms of scientific accessibility, in the statements about it.

In conclusion, this metaphorical excursus was to illustrate how to imagine what may happen when human beings change space, temporally or geographically, and transfer 'culturally' variant categories from one *Lebensraum* ('habitat') to another. 'We',[10] of course, still think and classify the new space within our old concepts,[11] which, to us, appear to be 'culturally' invariant.

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10 'We', e.g., as 17th century colonialists coming to Ceilaõ/Ceylon or as 17th century Arabs coming to present-day India or even as 15th century Maya trying to interpret the arrival of the Conquistadors.
11 E.g., the term 'e-mail' is a metaphorical description (electronic movement) of an older, already familiar concept ('mail') for a new way of information processing.

2.2 Buddhism as a (world) religion

2.2.1 The term and concept 'Buddhism'

Many scholars (e.g. Carter 1993:28, Lopez 2005:5-7) have reminded us that the signifier *Buddhism* and its siblings *Boudhisme*, *Buddhismus* etc. have a history. In his remarkable study of the Victorian discourse on Buddhism, Philip Almond notes:

> "Buddhism was 'discovered' in the West during the first half of the nineteenth century. It was at this time that the term 'Buddha' ('Buddoo', 'Bouddha', 'Boudhou', etc.) began to gain currency in the English- and French-speaking worlds, and that the term 'Buddhism' first made its appearance in English in the scholarly journal which appeared, in part at least, as a consequence of the developing imperial interests of both England and France in the Orient."
>
> (Almond 1988:7)

Here, Almond identifies two major elements as important for the construction of Buddhism (as well as 'Buddhism'): (1) The "imperial interests" of European powers, or colonialism, and (2) the role of academia, or as Almond puts it more clearly:

> "Buddhist scholarship was not only the cause but also the effect of that which it brought into being - Buddhism."
>
> (Almond 1988:4)

This curative character of institutionalised academia, being the medium within which scholars such as Eugène Burnouf ([1844]1867) shaped 'Buddhism' *in vitro*, cannot be emphasised enough (Lopez 1995a:7-9). The constructors and their product(s), textual in character, noble in essence, and misunderstood by its adherents, have been subject to scrutiny (e.g. King 1999; Almond 1988). However, within this medium the "discovery"[12] of Buddhism had its own momentum, whose impact, in- and outside academia, has not yet been fully understood (Masuzawa 2005:143, 316).

Nevertheless, two principal mechanisms underpinning the discourse on Buddhism, some still in employment,[13] should be emphasised here: a) The superiority of textual sources and a Max-Müllerian approach of comparative linguistics to 'religions';[14] b) sheer essentialism as a consequence of reification, which John R. Carter describes as:

> "Now that a reified concept, *Buddhism*, was on the scene authors began to do things with it. It could be put into translations, its essence could be discussed, its quintessence sought, its heart disclosed, and its spirit made known. And the quest for a core continued, not always in accord;"
>
> (Carter 1993:29)

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12 In a private e-mail Philip Almond told me: "I called it 'discovery' since the notion that it was invented was too tendentious for a book title then."

13 Cf. Hallisey 1995:49; Lopez1995b:282.

14 Cf. Masuzawa 2005: xii, 3, 24, 145.

This essentialistic reification finally led from a descriptive term, through a category (Baird 1971:134) to a (world) religion, which I shall discuss in more detail in 2.2.2 and which Peter Bishop, in his study of Tibetan Buddhism, summarises as follows:

> "For the West to be able even to consider Tibetan Buddhism as a repository of techniques, it had to imagined as *a system*. [...] before this systematization could take place, Buddhism had to be distinguished from Hinduism rather than being viewed as merely a major sect. [...] Buddha-Dharma first became Buddhism, and then Buddhism became a *world religion*." (emphasis in original)
>
> (Bishop 1993:90-91)

A representative result of this essentialism provides James Deitrick's answer to his question "What is Buddhism" (2003:259), published in the *Routledge Critical Studies of Buddhism* series.[15] Deitrick's agenda (2003:265) behind his essentialist approach is to criticise 'socially engaged' Buddhist movements and to exclude them from the category 'Buddhism' :

> "[W]e might look for that which is 'basic' to Buddhism, some characteristic or set of characteristics that constitutes a necessary, though not necessarily sufficient, condition of something's being called 'Buddhism.' This would allow us to differentiate between what we might call 'nominal' and 'basic' Buddhism. [...]
> [I]t may suffice to locate even one characteristic that is necessary or basic to Buddhism, and use it as a minimal standard of comparison for judging whether engaged Buddhism in Asia ought rightly to be regarded as a novel application of Buddhist principles to contemporary social problems or a 'heretical' movement that misapplies the term Buddhism to its theories and practices."
>
> (Deitrick 2003:260)

Such a normative approach is not an idiosyncratic contribution to an otherwise critical discipline of Buddhist Studies. Deitrick's article forms an example of a larger movement within Buddhist Studies, which may be titled 'Buddhist Theology' (Jackson 2000; Freiberger 2004:270-271), and his example reminds us that behind each academic definition lurks a particular agenda.

2.2.2   Buddhism and the world religions paradigm

According to scholars such as Tomoko Masuzawa (2005), Timothy Fitzgerald (1990:101, 2000), Hans Kippenberg (2003:42-48) or Donald Lopez (2005), the formation of 'Buddhism' has to be understood within a wider picture: the construction of 'world

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15 For another example see Green 1989:275.

religions' during European colonialism. In fact, this process, which also contributed to the creation of *Religionswissenschaft*, is identified by Maszuawa in *The invention of world religions* as:

> "[...] a particular discursive practice, namely, 'world religions' as a category and as a conceptual framework initially developed in the European academy, which quickly became an effective means of differentiating, variegating, consolidating, and totalizing a large portion of the social, cultural, and political practices observable among the inhabitants of regions elsewhere in the world."
>
> <div align="right">(Masuzawa 2005:20)</div>

Indeed, once 'religion' had been separated from Christianity, a process which began in the 15th century (Gladigow 2006:§6-7) and which brought about a redefinition of "*religiones falsae*" as opposed to "*religio vera*" (Christendom), at least the elites of European Christianities saw themselves confronted with the new product of their own thinking patterns: the "other 'great religions' of the world" (Masuzawa 2005:18). Within this logic, European institutions of knowledge had to (re-)organise the newly gathered colonial data.

Furthermore, this logic was also constrained by the manner in which human beings, and probably other primates (cf. Vonk et al. 2004), learn: from the known to the unknown, finding subcategories to main categories (cf. Nguyen 2007). With regard to the representation of what Europeans imagined as 'religions', Lopez offers a description of this extension of subcategories:

> "In the seventeenth century, only four religions were identified in the world: Christianity, Judaism, Islam (generally called Mohammedism or some variant of the term), and Paganism (also known as Idolatry). The history of the academic study of religion is in one sense a process of replacing Paganism with a larger lists of isms: Hinduism, Confucianism, Daoism, Shintoism, Sikhism, and, of course, Buddhism."
>
> <div align="right">(Lopez 2005:5)</div>

This logic had different products. On the one hand, colonial powers responded to the confrontation with these 'objects' with events such as the *World's Parliament of Religions* in Chicago. A similar strategy and further predecessor of inter-religious dialogue can be exemplified by the work of Rudolf Otto, founder of the *Religiöser Menschheitsbund*, who developed the model of "*das Heilige*" (Otto 1917) as a shared fundamentum of the human behaviour he identified as religious on his numerous journeys outside Europe.

On the other hand, a new list of world religions emerged (Masuzawa 2005:44-46), whose different items have been examined by various scholars: for instance, Harjot

Oberoi (1997) dealt with the construction of Sikhism, Eric Frykenberg (1993, 2000) discussed the concept of Hinduism, and Rosalind Shaw (1990) investigated the category of "African traditional religions".[16]

Even though most of these categories have been disputed on the basis of their essentialist character (Baird 1971:134), or what Masuzawa calls "comparative theology", they are still widely used (Masuzawa 2005:22-23). Certainly, Morny Joy's plea (2001:177-179) to critically address "the 'Eurocentric mindset' and [...] philosophic and methodological presuppositions" of *Religionswissenschaft*, stimulated by works such as Said's *Orientalism* (1978), is still legitimate.

In summary, the general line of argument found in the above, more or less post-oriental and postcolonial, accounts can be characterised as follows: Europeans encountered other regions of the world of which they had no previous knowledge. The 'new' knowledge gained was bound within the categories they had developed and brought from Europe. One of these categories was 'religion' which was expressed in the 'religion of *x*' rhetoric. Hence, structurally similar to the *interpretatio graeca* or *interpretatio romana*[17], colonialists from present-day western Europe created 'Buddhism' through their '*interpretatio colonica*'.

2.2.3   Criticisms of the post-oriental approach

Post-oriental approaches and postcolonial critique have themselves not remained uncriticised and various scholars have attempted to defend contested categories. For instance, like 'Buddhism' the concept 'Hinduism' has been subject to critical evaluation. However, David Lorenzen refutes what he conceives of as the outcome of postcolonial analysis of Hinduism:[18]

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16 Shaw (1990:342) writes: "The invention of 'African Traditional Religion' [...] is partly a function of this wider invention of such residual categories as 'traditional religions' within 'traditional' religious studies."

17 By *interpretatio graeca* and *interpretatio romana* I refer to the activity of ancient Greek and Roman writers to identify gods of subjected societies with gods of their own pantheon (e.g. Egyptian gods or Celtic and Germanic gods, respectively).

18 David Gellner (2004:368) uses Lorenzen's article as an authority: "In this context the idea that Hinduism is entirely a colonial construction, the bastard child of western orientalist scholarship and misguided Indian nationalists, is extremely attractive to left-leaning intellectuals. Unfortunately this theory is false, as has been shown in an important essay by David N. Lorenzen [...]."

"Hinduism wasn't invented sometime after 1800, or even around the time of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. What did happen during the centuries of rule by dynasties of Muslim sultans and emperors was that Hindus developed a consciousness o f a shared religious identity based on the loose family resemblance among the variegated beliefs and practices of Hindus, whatever their sect, caste, chosen deity, or theological school."

<div align="right">(Lorenzen 1999:655)</div>

"Although the religion of [the early] Puranas displays many continuities with the earlier Vedic religion, its principal features and emphases—particularly its greatly expanded mythology of the gods Vishnu, Siva and Devi—do, I think, justify marking this religion off as something new, as the beginning of medieval and modern Hinduism. This Hinduism wasn't invented by anyone, European or Indian. Like Topsy, it just grow'd".

<div align="right">(Lorenzen 2000:655)</div>

Scholars such as Lorenzen plead to maintain the category 'Hinduism' by blending out its meta-level discourse. Lorenzen stresses the (discovered) object which, he assumes, must have been there before the heterogeneous colonial powers arrived. A structurally similar argument can be found in Jonathan Silk's critique of Almond's *British discovery of Buddhism*:

"There must be a Buddhism which some people and some works of scholarship are able to reflect more accurately, honestly and directly than others. [...] If it is assumed that 'the construction and interpretation of Buddhism reveals much about nineteenth-century concerns,' then it is necessarily true that 'Buddhism' exists outside of and independent of those nineteenth-century concerns, through the lens of which it is interpreted."

<div align="right">(Silk 1994:173-174)</div>

Neither Lorenzen nor Silk agree with the counter-intuitive critique of essentialist category formation (cf. Baird 1971:134-141). For them, an object must be out there. Similar to the nature/nurture-dichotomy found in the discourse on human colour perception, Silk stresses the existence of objective constraints:

"There are better and worse descriptions of an object because, however ultimately unknowable in its essence, there is an object which by its presence restricts what can be said about it. No matter how unknowable the Buddha, some statements are more plausible than others."

<div align="right">(Silk 1994:183)</div>

One might ask: more plausible to whom? Silk does not refer to any criteria but to the restriction of "presence". Without further developing his essence/presence-dichotomy, he suggests a pragmatic essentialism instead:

"[E]ven if we aim at understanding how the enlightened Buddha was understood by others [...] it is necessary to post an essentialist basis without which we cannot evaluate any argument."

(Silk 1994:183)

Since Silk is concerned with the (non-subjective) reality of an object, he does not discuss object representation. However, drawing on James Cox' outline for a scientific study of human activity (2006:236-238), it is solely the representational level of a (postulated) non-falsifiable (alternate) reality of an object which is accessible to scientific methods – be it love, the Flying Spaghetti Monster or a Buddha – which is why the degree of trust and belief that we lay upon its representation(s) needs to be addressed.

A further criticism is delivered by Will Sweetman, who is concerned with representations of Hinduism. Sweetman (2004:31-32) argues that Orientalist impact on India can only be evaluated by a (still non-existent) "pre-history of Orientalism" (2004:16). Sweetman also rejects the critique of researching Hinduism as a 'religion', as proposed, for instance, by Fitzgerald (1990). He argues that such criticisms are based on a protestant, pre-modern understanding of the term 'religion' :

"That the modern academic concept of religion emerged in the West does not by itself mean that the concept is inapplicable in other cultures, any more than it means that religion did not exist in the West prior to the articulation of the modern sense of religion."

(Sweetman 2003:351)

Furthermore, since 'religion' as an abstraction can never be clearly demarcated (Sweetman 2003:348), he disproves of Fitzgerald (2000:149), who questions the analytical usefulness of 'religion' in an Indian context. Therefore, Sweetman criticises the practice of dissociating oneself from categories such as Hinduism. He holds that such categories only reflect abstract selections as "one of a number of possible ways of cutting across the available data" (2003:350) and proposes to ask: "How far is it profitable to analyse Hinduism as a religion?" He concludes (p351) that there is "no reason to abandon the terms 'religion' and 'Hinduism' if used in a reflexive way.

Whereas Sweetman's thoughts regarding available pre-19th century data are certainly correct,[19] his further points encompass at least two problems:

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19 However, Sweetman does not address the general problem of historiography, which does no deal with *history* as such but with *memories*.

(1) He assumes a "modern academic concept of religion", which is not protestant but applicable to non-Western contexts (Sweetman 2003:341, 351). However, he fails to include a reference to this concept and thus creates the illusion that there exists a consensus within academia about what constitutes 'religion'.

(2) Sweetman states that any abstract category has limitations but must be accessed by its profitability. However, he seems to ignore that Fitzgerald's work demonstrates that some concepts are more useful than others. By contrast, Sweetman does not provide a single example where the concept of 'Hinduism as a religion' has actually been illuminating; in fact, his argumentation neglects to discuss the relationship between the concept and its signifier. In other words: analysing Hinduism as an apple, is certainly legitimate; nonetheless, one must reveal one's agenda for doing so. Sweetman argues for such an awareness; however, he does not provide evidence for this reflexive practice to be a common academic standard in *Religionswissenschaft*, nor is he successful at offering an example which would actually prove the concerns of most writers against 'Hinduism' or 'religion' wrong.

Of course, the range of criticism of post-oriental and postcolonial works is much more diverse than my selective compilation above would suggest. For instance, other criticisms encompass the critique of the (sometimes) postmodern basis of post-oriental accounts and a defence of history-of-ideas approaches (e.g. Gombrich 2003).[20] What is more, Philip Mellor, in his critique of Said's *Orientalism* warns against the danger to reify 'the West' (2004:104) and to replace human consciousness by Foucauldian "arbitrary and abstract discourses" (p111).

Other scholars question the overall hermeneutic framework resulting from postcolonial critique. According to Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley (1993), the 'hermeneutic turn', which was thought to protect postcolonial scholarship against

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20 Richard Gombrich (2003:14) argues for a historicist approach in regard to Buddhism: "Firstly, we acquire more understanding of someone who must have had one of the most brilliant and interesting minds in the whole of human history. If it is élitist to be more interested in his thought than in the thought of any person the anthropologist meets in the street, or even in the local monastery, I am happy to be an élitist. Secondly, by seeing how original meanings have been lost and changed, *we are able to give Buddhism a history* - and thus incidentally to corroborate the Buddha's claim that all compounded things are impermanent." (emphasise added)

colonial *explanation* of 'cultures', actually facilitates two other 'evils': "hermeneutic exclusivism" plus the hermeneutic circle (p218, p203) and the textualisation of 'cultures' (p215), which again may provide a basis for cultural imperialism.

2.2.4   A plea for post-oriental approaches to 'Buddhism'

Simply put, scholars informed by post-oriental and postcolonial theory often stress the imaginative and discursive side of category formation. Some of their critics understand this as a claim that these 'objects' were created *ex nihilo* (e.g. Silk 1994:175) and therefore request for a more balanced historiography, which also includes the involvement of non-western agents (e.g. Bell 2000:5-6). Here, Hans Kippenberg and Kocku von Stuckrad offer a solution for both parties, which they see in the distinction between invention and construction:

> "Something cannot be reiterated enough in this context: The construction of history is not the same as the invention of history; relativity means mutual relationship but not arbitrariness."[21]

(Kippenberg/von Stuckrad 2003:41)

Kippenberg's and von Stuckrad's "relativity" is based on Charles Hallisey's concept of "intercultural mimesis". This concept aims to include the role of the 'alleged victims' or to stress, as Richard King (1999:148) summarises it, "[the] intercultural interchange that occurs between the native and the Orientalist in the construction of Western knowledge about 'the Orient'". Scholars often refer to intercultural mimesis in order to either refute post-oriental and post-colonial critique (see Monius 2006) or to nuance European encounters with non-European societies between the 15th until early 20th century, exhibited, for example, by King:

> "It is important to reiterate [...] the role played by Asian Buddhists and specific Buddhist texts in the modern construction of Buddhism. [...] Asian Buddhists and their sacred literature [...] contributed to Orientalist representations of 'Buddhism'. It is in this sense that we should see the construction of Orientalist notions such as 'Buddhism' or 'Hinduism' as the product of a process of intercultural mimesis."

(King 1999:149)

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21 "Eines kann in diesem Zusammenhang nicht oft genug wiederholt werden: Das Konstruieren von Geschichte ist nicht dasselbe wie das Ausdenken von Geschichte, Relativität bedeutet gegenseitige Bezogenheit und nicht Beliebigkeit."

However, Hallisey's approach to tackle "latent Orientalism" (1995:31) should be understood, as Hallisay himself proposes, as "no more than suggestive" (p49). Indeed, it becomes clear that "intercultural mimesis" *contextualises* the imperial business rather than questioning the overall theoretical framework of postcolonial critique:

(1) Hallisey's argumentation is based upon the myth of Thailand's independence. Since Thailand has never officially been a European colony (p48-49), Hallisey assumes Thailand's Buddhist "reformation" processes (p49), which resembled sangha changes in British and French colonies in South East Asia, to be without colonial influence. However, Hallisey does not discuss the 'native' circumstances which caused Rama I. and Rama IV., and their successors, to feel in the need for changing the 'Siamese' sangha.[22]

(2) Hallisey furthermore emphasises the role of Lankese bhikkhus, who supported Orientalists such as Rhys Davids and influenced the representation of Buddhism (p47). However, he does not further discuss the "Protestant Buddhism" milieu (Gombrich/Obeyesekere 1988) in which these bhikkhus were operating. Moreover, what Hallisey suggests as the actual mimesis, i.e. to "imitat[e] traditional Buddhist pedagogical patterns [...] [and to] us[e] vernacular commentarial literature as an aid and guide to the meanings of the more authoritative canonical texts" (p43), was still determined by at least two specifically European-colonial approaches: the textuality of sources and the selection of people perceived by colonialists as religious specialists (cf. Blackburn 2001:17; Veidlinger 2006:9).

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22 In regard to changes in 19th century Theravāda, Hallisey claims that "the Thai developments were clearly not determined by the presence of antagonistic Westerners" which is why "we should avoid attributing too much force to the 'West' (or Christianity, or Protestant assumptions, or Orientalism)". He bases this claim on Reynolds 1976 and Keyes 1989. An evaluation of these authors, however, give a different impression than Hallisey's argument would suggest in the first place: "These two circumstances–the presence of Westerners willing to discuss comparative culture, and a reform monastic order critical of monastic culture–combined to force on more and more Siamese a new awareness of themselves and their past." (Reynolds 1976:212)
Furthermore, Hallisey quotes Keyes (1989:124, 126) as support to his own thesis but neglects that Keyes (124-125) indicates the (British influenced) 'Protestant Buddhism' environment within which Rama IV. developed his influential ideas about a reformed sangha. Keyes (p124) also refers to Burmese and Siamese warfare that led to the 'subtle revolution' of Rama I. Pamaree (2006:8,23) sheds some light on the Burmese and Siamese relations, which cannot be understood without bearing in mind the presence of European powers (incl. weapon trade) at that time.

In this context, European colonialism becomes, at best, a 'selection pressure'[23] on conquered regions. Thus, we need to investigate how this selection pressure facilitated the speaking about Buddhism (and of course 'Buddhism'). Stephen Prothero's (1996) analysis of Henry Steel Olcott, provides a basis for such examinations. Drawing on linguistic theory of creolisation, Prothero (1996:8) describes Olcott's Buddhism as "a 'creolization' of the [American] Protestantism of his youth and the Buddhism of his adulthood." With reference to linguistic terminology, Prothero emphasises the rules underpinning Olcott's actions:

> "While the lexicon of his faith was almost entirely Buddhist, its grammar was largely Protestant. If you think of the religious beliefs and behaviors of Olcott as a form of discourse, it will become apparent that at the more superficial lexical level, Olcott echoed his Asian Buddhist acquaintances both in words and in actions. [...] But at the more enduring grammatical level of deep structural and unconscious assumptions, Olcott remained an American Protestant."
>
> (Prothero 1996:9)

Employing Prothero's analysis of Olcott, we may describe these processes of 'cultural contact' as 'powers of standardisation' that set up a 'grammar' of how to communicate an object of concern. But who established these rules? What was the logic behind particular agendas? *Qui bono*? These questions are important for the study of any agents or interest groups which were then present in these regions - whether it be people from the British Isles, Lan Na or the Kandyan kingdom.

To conclude: In any legitimate critique of postcolonial theory we should not neglect the technological, ideological and economic reasons for why people from present-day Europe arrived, administered and fought in regions they called 'the Orient' – as Fitzgerald reminds us in his examination of the religious/secular-dichotomy in Japan:

> "The idea that there are some special phenomena in all societies that can be described as religious or religions was [...] an idea received from the west, or at least negotiated into existence by local [e]lites with the help of trading enterprises, military officers, Christian missionaries, colonial administrators and others. [...] In most cultures that became colonised, what we call law, economics, and politics were not separated out into distinct spheres but were embedded in a different indigenous way of representing the world. It was this disembedding that was a necessary programme for the imperial power if it was to impose western-style laws, create capital markets and forms of exchange, and to 'educate' the people in the new school systems."
>
> (Fitzgerald 2003)

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23 My metaphorical use of the evolutionary biology term 'selection pressure' refers to the idea that external forces on a system may press the development of the given system into a particular direction. This means that certain groups and individuals, ideas and concepts are privileged over others.

2.3 Buddhism(s) in 'the West'

2.3.1 The rhetoric of Buddhism in the West

In an increasing number of contemporary academic introductions to Buddhism, readers find themselves confronted with at least one chapter on "Buddhism in the West" (Gethin 1998, Keown 2000), "Buddhism beyond Asia" (Harvey 1990) or "Buddhism comes West" (Robinson 2005:292). These chapters, often presented in the last part of such introductory books, are based on the assumption that different religious traditions which have been grouped as Buddhism or "Buddhist religions" (Robinson 2005) can (now) also be found in areas of the world which have become known as 'the West'.

Indeed, all of these categories raise classificatory problems in regard to 19th century definitions in a 21st century world: Does a Sinhalese Buddhist community in Stockholm constitute Buddhism in the West? Is an Italian backpacker in Kathmandu, who strictly follows her Lama and speaks Tibetan fluently, a Western Buddhist? Is she more 'western' than her Japanese friend who accompanies her? Are Dalit Buddhists in the TBMSG[24] Western Buddhists? Should we redefine all these categories each time we choose a new group of people to be object of our research? What then constitutes the group under investigation?

Often, chapters on "Buddhism in the West" are not simply ignorant of Saidian critique. Even though notions of "Buddhism in the West" to some extent incorporate the presupposition that Buddhism is rooted in a part of the world considered as 'the East', the motivation for this distinction is different. In contrast to "Islam in the West", which is often paired with notions of migration and violence (cf. Almond 2004), "Buddhism in the West" is seen as the emergence of groups which predominately recruit "Caucasian middle-class people", often described as "convert", "white" or "western" Buddhists, who adapt, translate and cultivate the Buddha's teachings.[25] Such narratives mostly start with 'Westerners' who went to 'the East' in order to 'learn' Buddhism. Once they returned, these Euro-Americans established "Buddhism in the West", which will, according to Prebish and Baumann (2002:4), "in the twenty-first century [develop] independent Western forms and schools of Buddhism." Such

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24 *Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Gana*, est. 1964 by Sangharakshita; now the Indian wing of the FWBO.

25 Cf. Prebish 2002:2-3; For a definition of terms such as "convert", "white", or "cradle" Buddhists see Tweed 2002 and Bluck 2006:16.

interpretations can also be found in variations which adopt nation-state concepts and result in terms such as "British Buddhism" (Bluck 2006), "Brazilian Buddhism" (da Rocha 2001), "American Buddhism" (Prebish/ Tanaka 1998) etc. The overall question often underpinning such approaches can be exemplified by Robert Bluck:

> "[H]as Buddhism in Britain merely copied the original Asian traditions, or are we able to see new developments, new seeds or shoots that may be growing into distinctive forms of 'British Buddhism'?"
>
> (Bluck 2006:2)

Within the Buddhism-in-the-West narrative, groups with a migration background, which called themselves Buddhist, have long been neglected. What is more, the relatively recent consideration of these groups led to tensions within the academic discourse on Buddhism and is reflected in the "two Buddhisms" thesis.[26] This notion became necessary to handle the structurally very different phenomena of 'convert' and so-called 'ethnic'[27] Buddhism since both groups were to be subsumed under the same umbrella term, 'Buddhism'.

2.3.2 The 'Buddhism is like a tomato' paradigm

Academic encounters, which use the concept 'Buddhism in the West', or even 'Western Buddhism', are often based upon a particular academic paradigm. The general idea postulated by this paradigm is that Buddhism originated in India, spread to different countries, adapted to different cultures and obtained new shapes (see, e.g., Bluck2006:1; Prebish/Baumann 2002:2, 6-7). It is an essentialist model that distinguishes Buddhism from 'culture'. Hence, especially in its strong version, it is concerned with Buddhism per se rather than with people, who consequently are seen as merely 'containers' of this reified Buddhism.

With reference to a debate between Martin Baumann and Eva Neumaier-Dargyay in the 1990s (Baumann 1994, 1996; Neumaier-Dargyay 1995), I shall call this model the "Buddhism is like a tomato" paradigm.[28] Baumann's intention in his article "The

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26 Cf. Numrich 2003:58-59 based on Prebish 1993:189; the thesis claims that there are two Buddhisms: one practised by "ethnic Asian-American Buddhist groups" and one of "mostly members of European-derived ancestry".

27 By 'ethnic' Buddhism scholars mean those people whose ancestors or who themselves have come from countries which are described, in public discourse, as both Asian and Buddhist.

28 For a similar metaphor, using pumpkin seeds, see Numrich 1996:3.

transplantation of Buddhism to Germany" (1994:35) is to "outlin[e] several processive modes which occur while geographically transplanting a religious tradition." Building upon Hubert Seiwert, he anchors the object of transplantation, "*Buddhdharma*" (1994:38), only to those "(symbolic) systems" (1996:367) that refer to the figure of Śākyamuni Buddha, i.e. to "the common doctrinal foundation of Buddhist religion" and the "final source of referential authority, which is the word of the Buddha (Sanskrit *buddavacana*) " (1994:37). Baumann then explores five modes of transplantation (e.g. "contact", "ambiguity and adaptation") and six strategies of adaptation (e.g. "translation" and "assimilation"). Since his theoretical framework is embedded into the metaphor of transplantation, Baumann works with terms such as "home tradition", "host culture" and "imported religious tradition" (1994:44, 52) and neglects the agents' agendas involved.

Dismissing this model as too simplistic, Eva Neumaier-Dargyay (1995:187) stresses in her critique of Baumman that "[o]ne needs to question whether the forms of Buddhism that arrived in Germany were identical with those the religion exhibited in its mother countries." Furthermore, she explains that "the 'imported' religion is already in an altered state before it ever gets appropriated by the host culture" (1995:188). Naumaier-Dargyay admits that "[t]he idea that symbolic systems of culture can be moved and transplanted like plants or other material things is enticing." But condensing her critique into the overall question "Is Buddhism like a tomato?" (1995:186), she emphasises that such a metaphorical framework "packages complex processes rather neatly" (1995:187).

2.3.3   Buddhism as a socio-regional phenomenon

What are the alternatives to metaphors of transplantation for discussing such phenomena grouped as 'Buddhism in the West'? If things are so complex and complicated, how can we understand what Prebish (2002:4) calls "processes of settlement and growth" in a different way? Perhaps, a solution might be to further develop and improve our terminology in regard to "transplantation" of religious traditions (Baumann 1996:371). However, I consider a native/foreign-dichotomy and

other metaphors of transplantation, which obscure the object of transplantation, as unhelpful starting points for any historical approach other than *Ideengeschichte* ('history of ideas'). Since they smuggle in an underpinning premise of historical continuity of (a particular) tradition, they hinder the examination of historical events from any perspective other than this one particular thread. Therefore, I would like to suggest a threefold grid of 'least common denominators'; a phenomenon which may be summarised as 'Buddhism' production in contemporary Scotland:

(1) **Individual level:** The results of statistical surveys (e.g. the 2001 Census) confront us with a growing number of people who tick "Buddhist" to questions concerned with religious identity. Here, two simple factors mesh with each other: First, Scottish residents have learnt to identify themselves as "Buddhists". Second, government executives decided both to ask for religious identity and to offer "Buddhist" as an option to be ticked.[29]

(2) **Institutional level:** There is a growth in institutionalised groups, labelled as "Buddhist", whose membership is based on and defined in terms of "being Buddhist". Such developments, taking place in Scotland, have not been historically recorded prior to the 19th century. Typically, these groups are not geographically bound to nation-states and act on economic and humanitarian levels as well as on the political scene.

(3) **Migratory level:** People who, for various reasons, migrate from one part of Eurasia (e.g. political Vietnam) to another which may be thousands of kilometres away (e.g. political France). When they arrive at their new environment, they will be placed within local prevalent discourses of social classifications and categories. Within these prevalent discourses, elements of the migrant's behaviour may be classified as 'Buddhist' and thus become a direct reference point in local narratives about Buddhism.

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29 Cf. Scottish Executive 2005:66; Even though 'Jediism' was not listed in the census questionnaire, 0.227% identified as "Jedi" under the rubric of '"Another religion" (compare to Buddhists: 0.13%). One must therefore consider the context and forces behind the actual items to choose from: "None, Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic, Other Christian (please write in), Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Another Religion (please write in)." (2005:66). In comparison, during the Nazi regime, German Buddhists in the *Wehrmacht* could only choose between 'catholic', 'protestant', 'protestant sect' and '*Gotterkenntnis nach Mathilde Ludendorff*' ('god realisation according to Mathilde Ludendorff') (Baumann 1995b:106-107).

If migrants themselves have been 'exposed' to discourses about Buddhism in the regions of their 'first-place' socialisation, for instance, nationalist discourses in Lanka or social reform identity discourses created by Ambedkar Buddhism in India since 1957, they may communicate these narratives in their new environment, which – under certain circumstances – might than be reproduced by local elites (e.g. political agents, academics, media producers).

For the reasons illustrated above, I understand the Buddhism-in-the-West narrative as an origin myth, which fulfils specific tasks in the process of constructing Buddhist identity. That is, (1) to provide a sense of historical security as well as authenticity and (2) to prophetically draft a future framework for some contemporary Buddhist movements – both in the light of an *anachronistic* (re-)construction of socio-political developments in Asian societies within a period of 2,500 years.

In doing so, this myth resembles narratives which locate a contemporary time period within a spectrum of *past* time epochs which themselves have been constructed out of a *contemporary* analysis and subsequent systematisation of the past. For the purpose of clarification I shall also emphasise that the origin myth encoded in the rhetoric of 'Buddhism in the West' is to be differentiated from: (1) the public (and scholarly) discourse on Buddhism in Euro-American parts of the world (i.e. 'Buddhism' in 'the West') and (2) the sociology of Buddhist groups in these localities (Buddhist groups in 'the West').

Thus, the rhetoric of 'Buddhism in the West' may also be understood as an element of 'Buddhist theology'[30], which does not have any explanatory power within a historio-critical analysis from a *Religionswissenschaft* point of view. Nevertheless, employing Cox, the origin myth of 'Buddhism in the West' becomes a field of study:

> "Scholars of religion do not study alternate realities themselves, since these cannot be studied, but they analyse what is postulated about that which is non-falsifiable and in what way this affects the communities which do the postulating."[31]
>
> (Cox 2006:237)

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30 See 'Buddhist theologian' Alan Wallace (2000:74): "[T]he modern historical study of Buddhism might help Buddhists by demonstrating the adaptability of their own tradition as it has transformed from one culture and historical era to another. Such knowledge could help Buddhists maintain the vitality of their tradition in today's world, rather than adhering dogmatically to the forms Buddhism developed in other cultures and historical eras."

31 The postulation of a continued transmission of the Buddha's dharma from his context into 'western' countries is indeed non-falsifiable; so are postulations about the Buddha's existence as well as his enlightenment, statements about nirvana, etc.

For an approach that abandons metaphors of transplantation, based on assumptions about 'non-falsifiable continuities', one could turn to Hans Kippenberg (1995), who argues for an approach termed *lokale Religionsgeschichte*, i.e. the regional historiography of religion(s), which also takes into account the concrete, everyday life-world of a region's inhabitants (1995:16). By this, he means an approach which overcomes the discrepancy between data gained from 'religio-historical'[32] and social scientific analyses of religion(s). According to Kippenberg, it is elementary for a *lokale Religionsgeschichte* focus to establish a balance between interpreting human activity through the template of authoritative scriptures alone and the total neglect of such scriptures as "detached theology which is practically more or less without consequences"[33] (1995:14). However, Edith Franke (2005b:17) emphasises that Kippenberg is still too centred on scriptures and warns against the danger of classifying religions into 'institutionalised (high culture) religions' (*Hochreligionen*), 'folk religions' (*Volksreligionen*) and 'pseudo-religions' (*Pseudoreligionen*). Therefore, she states that all different levels of religious phenomena have to be analysed with the same priority.

In reference to the spatially constraining focus of *lokale Religionsgeschichte*, Hubert Seiwert (1995:146) summarises the approach as follows:

> "The concentration on graspable geographical spaces allows us to perceive religion as an element of our everyday life-world (*Lebenswelt*).Thereby, it becomes clear that social reality often corresponds only to a restricted extent to the image imparted by authoritative sources."[34]

What is more, Seiwert (1995:153-154) notes the different outcome of a localised, regio-historical approach, which he adopts for his study of South Chinese coast regions, in contrast to mere *Ideengeschichte*:

> "On the basis of research anchored to regional historiography we can realise, however, that the image imparted by official sources is in many ways distorted. The sharp distinction between Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism is the product of an examination predominantly based on a focus on the history of literature. For the largest part of the population, including the local elites, this distinction had no or only a minor impact on their religious practice."

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32 Kippenberg means the pre-1990s predominant history-of-literature approach to the study of religions.
33 "[...] abgehobene, praktisch mehr oder weniger folgenlose Theologie."
34 "Die Konzentration auf überschaubare geographische Räume erlaubt es, Religion als Bestandteil der alltäglichen Lebenswelt wahrzunehmen. Dabei wird deutlich, daß die soziale Realität oft nur in sehr eingeschränktem Maße dem Bild entspricht, das die autoritativen Quellen vermitteln."

"Research in the area of *lokale Religiongeschichte* allows us, indeed it forces us, to take into consideration concrete, spatially and temporarily specified events and processes. In our sources, we do not encounter '*Buddhism*' ('der Buddhismus'), but a particular ritual or a specific institution at a determinable place and a determinable time." (emphasis added)

(Seiwert 1995:154)

Therefore, similar to Franke (2005b:15), who maintains that studies of religion(s) without a regional focus result in "inappropriate generalisations which cannot withstand empirical verification", Seiwert proposes an anthropological focus for the study of religions (1995:155):

"We are confronted with human actions and the products of human actions - including interpretations of the world as well as social institutions and material objects. It is our own scholarly interpretation in the first place which classifies the empirical reality into categories such as economics, politics or religion. Religion and religions are not empirical objects but categories of our thinking."

It is this non-essentialist and non-generalising framework which, to my mind, make *lokale Religionsgeschichte* an important applicable focus to be used in the study of religions. Thus, in the context of *lokale Religionsgeschichte*, Scotland, as a geo-political boundary, certainly provides an adequate and geographically graspable environment for studying the production of the discourse on Buddhism as one element among others within the history of religion(s) in Scotland (*Schottische Religionsgeschichte*).

3 The construction of 'Buddhism': case studies

3.1   Contextualising Buddhist groups in Scotland

3.1.1   An extract of historical notions of Buddhist activity

The attempt to produce a historiography of Buddhist groups and the making of 'Buddhism' in Scotland poses major challenges because 19th and 20th century sources regarding histories of non-Christian groups are rare. Until very recently, there have been hardly any academic historiographies of non-Christian groups (see e.g. Brown C. 1987:253).[1] Thus, my historical contextualisation of Buddhist groups in Scotland relies almost entirely on narratives of history provided by Buddhist groups themselves or other agents who merely reproduce 'insider' narratives.

According to *The Scotsman* archive (1817 onwards) and Rawdon Goodier[2] (2006/2007), Scotland saw the emergence of Buddhist groups by the beginning of the 20th century. Around 1910 (Scotsman 1910a:1, 1910b:1), the *Buddhist Society* of the University of Edinburgh announced talks on Buddhism and the Glasgow and Edinburgh lodges of the *Theosophical Society* increasingly became meeting places for people interested in Buddhism (Goodier 2006a:1; Scotsman 1923:3). Later, in 1952, a Scottish branch of the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was founded in Edinburgh (Goodier 2006a:1; Oliver 1979:55; Humphreys 1956:106-107).

In the 1960s more study groups emerged in Edinburgh (Goodier 2006b:1). These groups were often visited by Euro-Americans returning to the UK from South East Asia, where they had been ordained. Furthermore, these 'western' teachers also established new groups themselves. For instance, Ananda Bodhi (Leslie Dawson), a Canadian who encountered Buddhism through Theosophy and the *London Buddhist Society*, set up the *Johnston House community* in Dumfriesshire (Mellor 1989:175; Oliver 1979:107). However, Bodhi later returned to Canada, due to rivalry in the British Buddhist scene, and sold Johnston House to two Tibetan immigrants (Mellor 1989:163, 175; Rawlinson 1997:502, 569), who had arrived in England in 1963 (Rawlinson 1997:560). The two Tibetans, Akong Rinpoche and Chögyam Trungpa, used this opportunity to extend Johnston House, thereby establishing *Karma Kagyü Samyé Ling*, which has been considered to be the "first Tibetan Buddhist centre in Europe" and which has included a monastery since 1988 (Bluck 2006:110-111).

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1   For exceptions see, e.g. Oliver 1979 for the UK, Sutcliffe 2004b, 2006 and Whaling 1999 for Scotland.
2   Biologist Rawdon Goodier is a senior member of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives ("'lay minster") and publicly represents Buddhism, for instance, at interfaith events.

Samyé Ling became a magnet both for people interested in Buddhism and alternative 'New Age spirituality' (cf. Bluck 2006:111) as well as for local and national media, for instance, when the 14th Dalai Lama came to visit the monastery in 1984 and 1993 (cf. Murray 1989:39-41) or when the main temple building was publicly opened in 1988 (see, e.g., Gill 1988)

In the 1970s the *Friends of the Western Buddhist Order* (FWBO) established themselves in Glasgow, after its founder Sangharakshita had been excluded from the *English Sangha Trust* in 1966 (Mellor 1989:183) and had founded the FWBO in 1967 (Vishvapani 2001:19). In the following decades, FWBO groups spread across Scotland and were able to establish their second permanent Buddhist centre in Edinburgh in 2006.

According to Goodier (2007a:1), the 1980s were an important period for the Buddhist scene in Scotland because it was then that larger groups such as the *Order of Buddhist Contemplatives*, the *Forest Sangha*, and *Shambala* grew stronger in Scotland.

What is more, the growing number of Asian migrants from the 1950s (Maan 1992: 3-4) brought new narratives about Buddhism into Scottish society. However, not all immigrant groups established institutionalised organisations. For instance, to my knowledge,[3] there is no Scottish Chinese structure, apart from *Falun Gong* perhaps, which represents itself as Buddhist; however, the 2001 census listed 28% of Buddhists as Chinese (Scottish Executive 2005:15). In contrast, Scottish Thai Buddhists, mostly first generation, saw the establishment of an institutionalised Scottish group in 1997 and their *wat* in 2005.

Initiatives such as the *Sangha without boundaries* in Edinburgh (launched 2006) or the *Scottish Inter Faith Council* (launched 1999) have encouraged the different Buddhist communities to engage with each other in communal activities (e.g., 'inter-sangha' retreats). As a result, from my experience, numerous members of Buddhist groups possess a knowledge of their local Buddhist environment. Furthermore, there is a growing consciousness to be a part of a Buddhist scene in Scotland, even though most institutionalised groups operate on a national or even global level. These orientations also indicate the need to understand the agents promoting such 'ecumenical' projects and their particular motives involved.

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3 During my two terms in the *Buddhist Society* of the University of Edinburgh (then *Dharma Society*) with members mainly from Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, who referred to themselves as ethnic Chinese, we never made contact with Chinese institutionalised groups. Even after some research, I could not find any Chinese group in Edinburgh which functioned on a 'Buddhism' basis.

3.1.2   A brief overview of Buddhist institutionalised groups

Similarly to other western European countries (cf. Baumann 2002:85; Waterhouse 2001:129), Scotland is characterised by an enormous diversity in regard to its institutionalised Buddhist landscape. Nevertheless, apart from the Sinhalese *Scotland's Buddhist Vihara* in Glasgow and the Thai *Wat Dhammapadipa* in Edinburgh, most groups predominately recruit 'western' or 'converts' Buddhists.[4]

In 2006/2007, most groups I found were located in Scotland's two biggest cities: Glasgow and Edinburgh (cf. also Scottish Executive 2005:30). Altogether, I found 15 different groups (excl. University societies), forming more than 50[5] institutionalised groups. The *FWBO*, offering classes from the Lowlands through the Highlands to the Shetlands, run their retreat centre *Dhanakosa*, two larger Buddhist centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and one emerging centre in Stirling.

Photograph 1: Main temple at Samyé Ling - front

Likewise, groups which place themselves within Tibetan traditions form a large fraction in terms of group numbers. Supposedly due to the monastery's popularity and the *Holy Island project,* those groups affiliated with *Karma Kagyü Samyé Ling* and the *Rokpa Trust* outnumber other Kagyü groups such as Ole Nydahl's *Diamond Way* or *Shambala International,* which recently started their *Shambala Retreat Center* in Findhorn. In addition, the *New Kadampa Tradition* (NKT) run their international retreat centre *Tharpaland* in Dumfries and have established two meditation centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh, alongside several meditation groups throughout Scotland. Finally, Sogyal Rinpoche's

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4   Since I did not visit all Buddhist groups in Scotland, I cannot guarantee the 'convert' milieu of all of these groups. However, I assume the situation in Scotland not to differ much from the rest of the UK.

5   I.e. study, meditation and practice groups, including retreat centres.

Rigpa advertises one centre in Edinburgh and there is one group, connected to the *Heritage Buddhist Charitable Trust,* which refers to itself as Tibetan Bön.

Among such groups representing themselves as Zen groups the *Order of Buddhist Contemplatives* (*Serene Reflection Meditation*) appears to be the biggest umbrella group. Furthermore within the Zen spectrum, there are several groups of the *Community of Interbeing*, affiliated with Thich Nat Han's *Order of Interbeing*, one *Western Chan* group, and the *Glasgow Zen Group* connected to Nishijima Gudo Wafu's Sōtō-Zen group *Dogen Sangha.*

Among the groups using the term Theravāda in their self-descriptions, we find the *Thai Forest Sangha* in Glasgow and Edinburgh, which is affiliated with the *Aruna Ratanagiri Buddhist Monastery* in Harnham, Northumberland, and the Sinhalese *Scotland's Buddhist Vihara* in Glasgow.

Other groups using the label Buddhism are the *Sōkka Gakkai International UK*, represented by various district groups, and *Wat Dhammapadipa* in Edinburgh.

Photograph 2: Wat Dhammapadipa - front

The case of Wat Dhammapadipa also points to the terminological problem of the expression 'group' and reminds us that the number of institutionalised groups does not necessarily correlate with group size, nor with the degree of influence. If one conceives of Wat Dhammapadipa and the *Thai-Scottish Association*, understanding itself as the lay Buddhist organisation for the Wat, as one single 'group', this 'group' may then be regarded as the centre for all persons identifying themselves as Buddhist Thais in Scotland. To my knowledge, there are no figures of Thai people living in Scotland, let alone the number of Thai Buddhists. However, according to the *General Register Office for Scotland*, 736[6] Scottish residents responded in the 2001 Census as 'born in Thailand' – a

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6   Statistics Customer Services, General Register Office for Scotland, Ladywell House, Ladywell Road,

figure vaguely corresponding to the Thai-Association's own estimation of 400-500 Thai Buddhists in Scotland. In comparison, FWBO figures from 2006 claim 36 WBO members in Scotland (Lokabandhu 2007) plus an estimated year 2000 number of "over 2,000 Friends" to be resident in the *entire* UK (McAra 2007:17-18). Considering that in 2007 fewer than one quarter of FWBO groups were located in Scotland (SFECM 2007:11-12), the Thai figures implicate, to a certain extent, that the Thai Buddhist community is not a minority group within the Buddhist landscape in Scotland even though it constitutes only one 'group' (cf. also Baumann 2002:95).

Moreover, according to the Scottish Census 2001, only 52% of Buddhists identified themselves as 'white'. In addition, only 39.39%[7] of the Buddhist population in Great Britain ticked 'white' in the 2001 census (see table below). This raises the question, especially for Great Britain, why academic encounters with the phenomenon of 'Buddhism in the West' are most often concerned with groups predominately drawing 'white' Buddhists clientèle (see Kay 2004:32-34; cf. Numrich 1996:xxi-xxii; Waterhouse 2001:121-122). An answer to this may certainly lie, as indicated above, in the 'western' academic focus on institutionalised groups.[8] However, if the full spectrum of Buddhist activity in a regional area is to be investigated, a study focus based solely on group numbers, which does not take into account that certain forms of institutionalisation particularly take place in 'western' Buddhist groups, seems to be inadequate.

	Scotland	England & Wales	Northern Ireland	Great Britain	United Kingdom
Population in total:[9]	5,062,011	52,041,916	1,685,267	57,103,927	58,789,194
Buddhists in total:	6,830[10]	144,453[11]	533[12]	151,283	151,816
% Buddhists:	0.13%	0.28%	0.03%	0.26%	0.26%
% 'White' Buddhists:	52%[13]	38.79%[14]	n/a	39.39%	n/a

Table 1: People with a Buddhist identity in Great Britain/ United Kingdom; Source: 2001 Census Data of the UK, Scotland, England & Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Edinburgh, EH12 7TF; email from 24/07/2007.

7   It was not possible to find out the 'white' proportion of the 533 Buddhists in Northern Ireland, which is why I have to restrict myself to mainland Britain (Great Britain).

8   See, e.g., Bluck (2006:3), who identifies Britain's largest Buddhist groups on the basis of their institutionalisation.

9   http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=185; accessed 27/07/2007

10 Scottish Executive 2005:37.

11 http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/ssdataset.asp?vlnk=6892&More=Y; accessed 27/07/2007

12 http://www.nisranew.nisra.gov.uk/Census/Excel/KS07c.xls; accessed 27/07/2007

13 Scottish Executive 2005:15.

14 http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/ssdataset.asp?vlnk=6892&More=Y; accessed 27/07/2007

3.2 FWBO 'Buddhism'

3.2.1 Contextualising FWBO narratives about Buddhism

The *Friends of the Western Buddhist Order*, consisting of the institution *FWBO* and its 'inner circle' of ordained *WBO* members (sometimes orthographically reflected as F/WBO), is one of the better researched groups within the spectrum of contemporary Buddhist movements (e.g., Batchelor 1994; Baumann 1993; Bell 1991, 1996; Bluck 2006; McAra 2007; Mellor 1989, 1991, 1992; Kantowsky 2003; Oliver 1979; Rawlinson 1997; Waterhouse 2001). The FWBO describes itself as having been established in London in 1967 by Sangharakshita, also known as Dennis Lingwood or 'Bhante' (Vishvapani [2000]2006b; 2001:15, 19)

In terms of stratification, the FWBO offers the following identities (cf. Bell 1996:94): "Order member" (ordained full-time members), "Mitra" (initiated members) and "Friend" (e.g., recurrent visitors/ class participants). Since Sangharakshita retired completely in 2000, major decisions about the ordination process have been made by the *College of Public Preceptors*, currently a group of 31 WBO members (Dhammarati 2007). Nonetheless, local Buddhist centres, for instance, the Glasgow Buddhist Centre and the Edinburgh Buddhist Centre, with their respective directors Viryadevi and Kalyanavaca

Photograph 3: Glasgow Buddhist Centre - entrance

possess a certain autonomy (cf. Vishvapani 2006a:14). Overall, the FWBO movement may be described as a heterogeneous movement, encompassing, for instance, the Madhyamaloka "think tank" (Vishvapania 2006a:2), the publishing house *Windhorse Publications* and wholefood shops such as *The New Leaf* in Edinburgh.

It represents itself as a global movement which is not restricted to 'the West'. According to the FWBO (Lokabandhu 2007, SFECM 2007), 24.2% of its 1380 Order members and 20.2% of the centres and groups were located outside North America, UK/Europe, Australia/New Zealand). Nevertheless, the UK remains the focal point of FWBO activities.

As examined by Hellen Waterhouse (2001:146-147), the FBWO propagates its discourse on Buddhism via professionalised public relations, magazines, and education material for religious education teachers (*Clear Vision Trust*). In addition, the general representation of Buddhism in *St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art* in Glasgow was created in cooperation with the FWBO Glasgow Buddhist centre.[15] Furthermore, FWBO narratives about Buddhism are delivered through the *Scottish Inter Faith Council*, public evening classes, open days, and numerous FWBO websites, provided via the *FwboNet Webhosting Business*[16], which all contribute to the FWBO's high visibility.

When conducting fieldwork with the FWBO in Scotland (see 1.3.1), I encountered narratives of Buddhism during meditation classes and informal tea breaks; information was delivered in a teacher/pupil mode and senior members often took an authoritative role in explaining Buddhism. Moreover, I was immediately confronted with Sangharakshita as a major reference point within the FWBO. Indeed, narratives of the FWBO movement are not imaginable without reference to this individual – be it criticisms against the movement (within and outside the movement), such as the FWBO files (Schnake 2007[2000]) or accusations appearing in *The Guardian* newspaper (Bunting 1997), etic descriptions or self-representations. Reading his books was soon recommended to all beginners; his life was presented as a hagiography – at least in my direct encounters with FWBO members.

Photograph 4: Glasgow Buddhist Centre - library   *Photograph 5: Glasgow Buddhist Centre - meditation room*

Books and talks by Sangharakshita are available in FWBO libraries and local book shops, published by Windhorse, or for free on the internet[17]. Thus, within FWBO

15 I learnt this when I was working for the museum in 2006.
16 http://www.fwbo.net; accessed 22/09/2007
17 http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com; accessed 04/10/2007

'Buddhism', Sangharakshita (still) holds a major, legitimising function, which may be described as the transmission of knowledge about the core of Buddhism. Today, of course, Sangharakshita's conception of Buddhism is just one element within FWBO 'Buddhism'; nevertheless, it is a key element and, at the same time, an orientation point and 'deep structure' (cf. 4.2.2) for other narratives in the FWBO.

3.2.2 Sangharakshita's narrative about Buddhism

Sangharakshita's conception of Buddhism is intertwined with his narrative of (true) religion, which he defines in terms of mutually excluding contrasts (1975:8): "blind belief", "acceptance of any creed or dogma", which he rejects, versus "energetic practice" and "the achievement of [...] experiences". Thus, he dissociates his concept of religion from what he takes to be "conventional religion" (Sangharakshita 1966b:5). In addition, Sangharakshita expands his new definition by a twofold dichotomy:

> "Religion-as-Revelation [...] places the strongest possible emphasis on faith in God, faith in His prophet, messenger or incarnation, faith in His infallible Word, faith in His Church, faith in His priest. [...] Moreover, Religion-as-Revelation's house is divided not only against itself but against other houses as well - against Science, for instance, which has succeeded in demonstrating the fallibility of many an infallible scripture."

> "Religion-as-Discovery, on the other hand, holds that Religion is essentially a manifestation of the human spirit, that man is able to discover the Way to Truth himself by means of his own unaided human efforts [...]. It sees Science not as an enemy but as a friend and fellow worker."

> <div align="right">(Sangharakshita 1975:19-20)</div>

This revelation/discovery-distinction helps Sangharakshita to differentiate between one system which is "divided against itself", "against Science", and encompasses "fallibility", and a second, preferable system which is "unaided", dependent on "one's own volition" (1975:19) and has "Science" as a friend. Having constructed his fundament of religion, Sangharakshita is able to classify different forms or 'species' of religion:

> "The three extant Semitic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are clearly all dominated by the conception of Religion-as-Revelation. [...] Buddhism and Taoism[18] are perhaps the only religions which consistently adhere, in their oldest and most authoritative scriptures, to the conception of Religion-as-Discovery."

> <div align="right">(Sangharakshita 1975:21)</div>

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18 Daoism is described as "not wholly free from the suspicion of Buddhist influence." (1975:23)

This quote illustrates two common argumentative patterns of Sangharakshita's teachings: first, Buddhism is *the* choice if one does not wish to follow "Semitic" or theistic religions; second, proper Buddhism is found through its oldest scriptures – a claim deeply embedded within FWBO discourse, encouraging FWBO members to study "primary texts" (cf. Waterhouse 2001:149).

Moreover, Sangharakshita's thinking encompasses notions of an evolutionary development of religion (cf. Sangharakshita 1975:24). For instance, "Semitic religions" are an expression of a preliminary stage in the process of evolution, of which Buddhism as "Religion-as-Discovery" is the last step. Sangharakshita elaborates on this process, which is not solely "spiritual", in his concept of "Higher Evolution":

> "So Buddhism recognizes two great categories: the category of the ordinary man, and the category of the Enlightened man. [...] What we call the lower evolution corresponds to the whole process of development from amoeba up to ordinary man, or unenlightened man. This is a predominantly biological process, a process that becomes psychological towards the end. The Higher Evolution corresponds to the whole process - the whole course of development which leads from unenlightened man up to Enlightened man [...]."
>
> <div align="right">(Sangharakshita1980:13, 19)</div>

The above strategy consists of the transfer of evolution theory into a stratificatory concept of human beings, in which "biology" is extended by "psyche". Through this, Sangharakshita moves the state of being "Enlightened" outside the biological (i.e. material) sphere and becomes able to 'enchant' a theory of human hierarchy: the "ordinary" versus "Enlightened" human being, a dichotomy which Sangharakshita also describes, almost in Eliadian manner, as "ordinary life" versus "spiritual life" (1980:36-37; cf. Eliade [1957]1990:16-17). In sum, religion as defined by Sangharakshita is a teleological system, based upon individual experience, which is available to those who are already progressing on the evolutionary path (1966a:15).

Sangharakshita places Buddhism within this layer of "religion". As indicated above, Buddhism is regarded as *the* option available to those truly interested in religion.

> "[A]mong the universal religions, the three universal religions, there was a theistic group, and a non-theistic group. The theistic group comprising Christianity and Islam, the non-theistic group comprising simply Buddhism. [...] The language of theism has become meaningless to many of us. We require some kind of religion as the instrument of our own higher evolution, having developed a certain degree of self-awareness. The ethnic religions are not available, are not even accessible to us; among the universal religions, two are ruled out on account of their theistic background, and the only one that remains therefore is Buddhism."
>
> <div align="right">(Sangharakshita 1966b:1)</div>

Here, Sangharakshita, referring in his quote to his talks *Is religion necessary?* (1966b) and *Religion: ethnic and universal* (1966a), creates a taxonomy of "non-theistic", "theistic", "ethnic" and "universal" religions, which is analogous to the constructs of 19th century European liberal theology (cf. Masuzawa 2005:140). In fact, it is his emphasis on distinguishing "universal" (accessible) from "ethnic" (non-accessible) religions, which leaves him with the same problem as 19th century Orientalist scholars: the claim of the universality of Buddhism, and therefore independence from regionally limited religions, against the empirical evidence of immense diversity among the religious traditions grouped under the category of 'Buddhism' (cf. Masuzawa 2005: 138, 144).

Sangharakshita's response to this problem, already introduced above, is consistent with that of Orientalist scholars: first, the textualisation of Buddhism (i.e., to construct a 'true Buddhism'; Masuzawa 2005:131);[19] second, and a subsequent strategy, is Sangharakshita's postulation that Buddhism is underpinned by a universal essence. This essence can be distilled and "integrated" (1992b:3) into different cultures:[20]

> "When Buddhism overflowed the boundaries of India an poured into the surrounding Asian countries it was but natural that those life-giving waters should irrigate the fields of the hearts and minds of their inhabitants through the emotional and intellectual channels already formed there by habits and customs centuries old. Just as a man who goes to live in a foreign country learns its language, so did Buddhism acquire the language of the countries to which its beneficent influence spread, [...]. The soil where from the great tree of Buddhism grew may have been rich or poor, the flowers which is produced, red or white or blue in colour, but the Seed from which it germinated, and the flavour of the Fruit it ultimately bore, were always one."
>
> (Sangharakshita 1975:54)

We learn that Buddhism, the universal "Seed", is encoded in language, not in the literal meaning (1975:51) but in the sense of a medium, in order to spread to different cultures, which Sangharakshita comprehends in regional terms ("soil").

This argumentation becomes particularly important when Sangharakshita (re-)defines English culture (1966c:9-11). He firstly deconstructs notions that equate English culture with Christian culture and secondly demarcates the particular Christian space within "English" culture that is to be replaced by ("distilled") Buddhism:

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19 See also Sangharakshita 1996:23, 35: "Such, then, are the general characteristics of the Theravada, of Pure Land Buddhism, of Zen, and of Tibetan Buddhism, especially in so far as these characteristics constitute for us in the Order, as well as throughout the FWBO, a source of inspiration and spiritual guidance. We derive that inspiration and guidance, however, not so much from these schools in the form in which they survive in the East, and have been introduced in the West, as from a selection of the scriptures on which, in principle, they respectively are based."

20 Here, my analysis of the FWBO differs from Helen Waterhouse's assessment (2001:147).

"[I]n its essence, intrinsically, substantially, Buddhism is really no more Eastern than Western, any more than Christianity is. [...] [T]his will be a sort of test for English Buddhists - whether they're capable of extracting the essence of Buddhism, the non-geographical non-cultural supra-cultural essence of Buddhism, and distilling it as it were, and keeping to just that, and creating out of it their own cultural form."

(Sangharakshita 1966c:11)

In addition, Sangharakshita proposes the replacement of Christianity, constituting a stage of "Lower Evolution", by Celtic Paganism, which is another "lower" stage but the *ethnic* religion of the English:

"[I] feel it is important that people generally, including Buddhists in this country, should try to establish contact with their own pre-Christian past. [...] Personally I wouldn't mind seeing a combination, as it were, of Celtic Paganism and Buddhism - the one, you may say, for the majority and the other for the minority, and each perfectly tolerant towards the other. So that it would be easy to pass, for those who wished, from the one to the other, from the ethnic to the universal, from the Lower to the Higher."

(Sangharakshita 1966a:14-15)

This model incorporates a certain flexibility in that it provides an interface for converts to include whatever they may construct as a 'Celtic' element of 'their' culture.

Moreover, Sangharakshita develops an apocalyptic narrative, which justifies why Buddhism should be brought to the West and why there should be such a thing as "English Buddhism":

"[T]raditional Buddhism is in a state of decline, and [...] committed Buddhists everywhere need to give serious thought to the question of how best to preserve the Dharma for the benefit of future generations. One of the ways in which we of the Western Buddhist Order can help preserve the Dharma is by acquainting ourselves with the general characteristics of the Theravada, of Pure Land Buddhism, of Zen, and of Tibetan Buddhism, especially in so far as these characteristics constitute a source of inspiration and spiritual guidance to us, and it is to the four schools and their scripture we must now turn."

(Sangharakshita 1996:18)

In fact, the above narrative provides a framework for the construction of WBO identity around one basic goal: the preservation of a declining Buddhism, in a singular sense (see also Sangharakshita 1996:23) – achieved by maintaining the "general characteristics" of those Buddhist schools which Sangharakshita identifies as most important.

In my reading of Sangharakshita, the foundation of his construction of Buddhism appears to be a particular notion of evolution theory meshed with the 'Buddhism as a tomato' paradigm (see 2.3.2), which is itself a descendant of a long-prevailing, essentialist phenomenology-of-religions approach. Furthermore, the resemblances to

Victorian discourse on Buddhism, as closely examined, for instance, by Almond (1988), are remarkable: most importantly, the construction of an ideal Buddhism out of scripture, which enables Sangharakshita to judge contemporary Asian Buddhism as decaying (cf. Almond 1988:40); the redefinition of religion in order to compare Buddhism with other systems called 'religion' (cf. Almond 1988:94); the differentiation between Semitic and Aryan religions (cf. Masuzawa 2005:214-215); the differentiation between ethnic/national and universal religions (cf. Masuzawa 2005:137-138); and the concept of evolution and a self-dependent 'soteriology' (cf. Clausen 1975:5-6).

In conclusion, one may characterise Sangharakshita's construction of Buddhism partially as a carrier of Victorian discourse on Buddhism, which has come to life during the second half of the 20th century.

3.2.3   The wider FWBO discourse on Buddhism

Official FWBO publications and FWBO members draw intensively on Sangharakshita's statements. However, according to Vishvapani (2006a:9, 11, 17), Sangharakshita's authority has been contested as a result of outside criticism against the FWBO and the organisational re-structuring of the FWBO after Sangharakshita's retirement. Vishvapani (2006a:20) also mentions that Sangharakshita's writings are less read, but new and previously 'unorthodox' practices have become popular and, what is more, Sangharakshita's evolutionary model has been questioned.

Nevertheless, as indicated in 3.2.1, Sangharakshita's teachings remain a focal point in the FWBO movement and I consider, at least from the limited time I spent with the FWBO in Scotland, the fundamental structures wherein he constructed Buddhism for the movement to be still active. This point can be illustrated by descriptions of Buddhism on the FWBO's official website:

> "The FWBO is an international network dedicated to communicating Buddhist truths in ways appropriate to the modern world. The essence of Buddhism is timeless and universal. But the forms it takes always adapt according to context. Now that Buddhism is spreading around the globe, the task is to create new Buddhist traditions relevant to the 21st century."
>
> (FWBO 2007a)

Again, it is the universal, never-changing essence of Buddhism upon which FWBO 'Buddhism' is constituted – an idea which can be found in various forms within FWBO 'Buddhism' (see, e.g., Vishvapani 2001:13). Furthermore, in other representational texts by the FWBO it becomes clear that the essentialist idea derives from Sangharakshita's construction of Buddhism, which dominates the framework for those who identify with the movement:

> "Bringing Buddhism into an entirely new culture implied to Sangharakshita that we needed to go back to basics — to look at the principles underlying all forms of Buddhism and work out how best to apply them in this new context. So, the FWBO is an ecumenical movement, aligned to no one traditional school, but drawing on the whole stream of Buddhist inspiration. The FWBO has evolved new structures that allow people to live out Buddhist teachings as an authentic Buddhist way of life in the 21st century."
>
> (FWBO 2007b)

This quote claims, again, that Buddhism – on the basis of its common denominator or "principles underlying all forms of Buddhism" – is culturally invariant and can be discovered by a search conducted *backwards*. What is more, the FWBO approach is characterised as "ecumenical" which is an important element in the construction of FBWO identity:

> "[T]he FWBO is what I've called an ecumenical Buddhist movement. [...] We don't say we are Theravadin; we don't say that we are Mahayana; we don't say that we follow Tibetan Buddhism; we don't say that we're a Vajrayana tradition. We don't say any of those things. We say simply that we're Buddhist. That we are Buddhist movement, a Buddhist tradition, if you like a Buddhist lineage."
>
> (Sangharakshita [2002]2007)

Indeed, this quote reveals a basic rule affecting the general discourse on Buddhism: in order to present themselves as "authentic" Buddhism (FWBO 2007b), the FWBO has to construct an identity that acknowledges the plurality of Buddhist groups:

> "[T]he Order, and with it the FWBO, is a branch of the mighty tree of Buddhism which, for more than 2,500 years, has sheltered a considerable portion of humanity, and [...] the same vital juice that circulates in the older, bigger branches of that tree circulates in our younger, smaller branch too, even if it circulates in it a little more vigorously than it does in some of them."
>
> (Sangharakshita 1996:13)

This anchoring of FWBO identity within the wider spectrum of Buddhist groups became necessary after the number of agents participating in the construction of the public discourse on Buddhism increased. Sangharakshita's first attempt to construct a genuinely English Buddhism, a common goal in the beginnings of 'Buddhism' in the UK (see, e.g., Humphreys 1968:54), failed when he was expelled from the *English Sangha Trust* (cf. Mellor 1989:90). Nevertheless, he continued and founded the FWBO with the

intention to be completely independent from what he considered to be traditional Asian Buddhist movements.

Since the Buddhist landscape has changed in the UK, with more and more Buddhist groups emerging and defining Buddhism in their own ways, the pressure has increased for the FBWO to re-adjust itself within this framework (cf. Waterhouse 2001:120-121). For instance, Sangharakshita delivered six distinctions to demarcate the FWBO from other Buddhist movements (Sangharakshita [2002]2007):

(1) FWBO Buddhism as "ecumenical" Buddhism (cf. Sangharakshita 2007 above), which incorporates all (Buddhist) traditions – that is, of course, all traditions which the FWBO recognises as a Buddhist tradition.

(2) The (construction of an) underlying principle of Buddhism which is the "central act of going for Refuge", i.e. the commitment a person takes for 'taking refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha'.

(3) Social inclusivism and an approach that is applicable to every human being:

> "We're also a unified Buddhist Order in the sense that we accept people from whatever cultural, racial or social background, and we make no distinction between people, also, with regard to sexual orientation."

(4) The application of 'Buddhist ethics' to society and the attempt to create a new, Buddhist society (e.g. 'right livelihood business').

(5) The inclusion of cultural products that the FWBO constructs as art, which is modelled upon a bourgeois conception of art:

> "I came into contact with, especially the poetry of Shelley, Shakespeare, Rilke and Wordsworth; and I was inspired by the great art that I encountered. [...] I'm not saying everybody needs to be widely read or very knowledgeable about the arts — no — but, yes, a poem or a picture can be a source of great inspiration to us [...]. We all know how inspiring we find certain Buddha and Bodhisattva images, thangkas and icons."

(6) The concept of "spiritual friendship" as the fundamentum of the FWBO.

As I noted above, such demarcations may be understood as a reaction to the increasing number of participants in the discourse on Buddhism. To form a singular 'Buddhism' such as 'British Buddhism' or 'English Buddhism', controlled by one group, has not been possible. For instance, Christmas Humphreys' *London Buddhist Society*, which controlled the discourse on Buddhism, at least, until the 1960s, has become a rather peripheral agent today.

By contrast, FWBO 'Buddhism' has survived, now emphasising its special role within the 'Buddhism-in-the-West' narrative. In my opinion, as long as 'Buddhism-in-the-West' is constructed as a continuing journey, i.e. an unfinished business, FWBO 'Buddhism' can be firmly rooted within the public discourse on Buddhism. The success of FWBO 'Buddhism' does not depend on whether FWBO members plausibly present their 'essence of Buddhism', on which the FWBO builds its authenticity. Rather, its impact and influence depends on the degree of its public visibility – a topic the FWBO, in a McLuhanian 'the medium is the message' manner (McLuhan 1964), has addressed most professionally of all institutionalised Buddhist groups in Scotland so far.

3.2.4   Discussion

In short, FWBO 'Buddhism' may be described as a medium preserving parts of the Victorian discourse on Buddhism, basically established through Sangharakshita's teachings, which have been strongly influenced by, what one may call, the 'theosophical Buddhism' of the London Buddhist Society (see, e.g., Humphreys 1968:18).

Applying Marshall McLuhan's (e.g., 1964:23-24) dichotomy of cool and hot media (i.e. media of low and high definition), *Buddhism*, as the imagined object of 'Buddhism', may be considered as currently being in a cool aggregate, compared to, for instance, *Democracy*.[21] The discourse on *democracy* is relatively clear and requires little effort to determine its meaning; in Europe, anybody is able to use it and everybody believes they know its meaning, which is why it is easy to communicate, for instance, in newspapers. In contrast, details of *Buddhism* have been minimally distributed on a public level; a high degree of effort and participation on the recipient's side is required to fill it with data for constructing its meaning. Here, in this process, the FWBO narratives about Buddhism fulfil the role of transforming *cool* Buddhism into *hot* Buddhism; this means, the FWBO delivers data to complement the black box 'Buddhism', which has been inherited from European orientalist scholarship. These data, of course, are a reflection of FWBO members' concerns with their lives and environment.

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21 This, of course, depends completely on the recipient of narratives about Buddhism (i.e., the cool/hot-dichotomy is completely relational).

For instance, the 'construction set' Buddhism can be used to create "Buddhist ethics", "Right livelihood", new sexual morals (Vishvapani 2001:39, 46; Sangharakshita 1966a:14) and other activities and beliefs which are contrasted with a constructed 'other', i.e., Christianity or theism in general. What is more, the 'essence' approach to Buddhism prevailing in the FWBO discourse can be mixed, for instance, with nation-building discourses. As noted above, Sangharakshita constructed a pre-Christian "Celtic Paganism". This has been taken up by Irish FWBO Buddhists, who created a "Celtic Puja", which has also been introduced to Scotland (cf. Nunamaker 2007:1).[22]

Nevertheless, FWBO narratives of Buddhism have been in a 'competitive situation' since other narrators have also been 'warming up' *Buddhism*. Certainly, the FWBO is a "major player in terms of a voice for Buddhism in the UK" (Waterhouse 2001:146). However, other narratives attempt to anchor and emphasise topics such as 'lineage' and tradition, 'monkhood' and 'celibacy' within the public discourse on Buddhism, which are challenging for the FWBO.[23] As I have argued before, it is crucial for the FWBO to remain powerful in presenting Buddhism, so that FWBO 'Buddhism' can still be included in public discourse (see, e.g., Scottish Inter Faith Council, n.d.:4-5)

This also involves demarcation from other discourses, for instance, 'Theosophy', 'New Age' or Philip Mellor's 'Protestant Buddhism' (Mellor 1989, 1991, 1992). Mellor's assessment of the FWBO as one of the Buddhist movements on which "Christian discourses and forms of life continue to have an observable influence" (see 4.2.2) have been heavily criticised by FWBO authorities (Kulananda 1992; Sangharakshita 1992a). In FWBO 'Buddhism', Buddhism must not be a reproduction of Protestantism, i.e. of Christianity; Christianity is 'the other' against which FWBO identity has been constructed. The FWBO has overcome the "lower stage" of Christianity; FWBO 'Buddhism' is based on the claim that "Buddhism does not include the idea of worshipping a creator god" (FWBO 2007c), separating itself from what it considers to be at the centre of its 'other'.

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22 Furthermore, discourse on political identity such as Scottish nationality is taken seriously; e.g., for Scotland there especially exists the FWBO website www.fwboscotland.org (accessed 06/09/2007).
23 Such topics are challenging because the FWBO discourse focuses on the principle of 'going for refuge' (cf. p47). Therefore, there is no dogma of 'monkhood' or 'celibacy'; nor does the FWBO 'Buddhism' built upon a lineage concept, albeit Sangharakshita has published narratives about his teachers (e.g. Sangharakshita 2007)

Likewise, Vishvapani (1994), in his response to a draft version of Denise Cush's *British Buddhism and the New Age* (1996), is concerned with distinguishing Buddhism from (eclectic) practices he finds characteristic for what he defines as New Age:

> "If we simply take what we want from Buddhism we are in danger of ignoring the aspects which are uncomfortable and challenging-in other words, those parts of the tradition which will force one to change. For this reason it is important that Buddhism is presented in a way which makes it clear that it cannot be incorporated into a life which is otherwise unchanged or subsumed innocuously into a New Age mix."

(Vishvapani 1994:18-19)

These reactions become clearer when viewed in the light of another important aspect of FWBO 'Buddhism'. This is its firm embededness in and the extension of the 'Buddhism-in-the-West' myth (see 2.3): the FWBO is seen as distinct from all the other Buddhisms in 'the West', which are viewed as copies of Asian forms of Buddhism (cf. Vishvapani 2001:13). The FWBO does not only provide Buddhism for 'the West' but facilitates the "integration of Buddhism into Western society" (Sangharakshita 1992b:1), resulting in a new (localised) form of Buddhism, namely "Western Buddhism" (Kulananda 1997).[24]

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24 For instance, one *WBO* member explained to me that it may take 100 years or more of integrating Buddhism into 'the West' until a distinct Western Buddhist iconography and vocabulary will emerge. However, in the end, Buddhism will be merged with 'western culture' just as Christianity has been.

3.3   Karma Kagyü Samyé Ling 'Buddhism'

3.3.1   Contextualising Samyé Ling narratives about Buddhism

Located in Eskdalemuir in the Scottish Borders, *Karma Kagyü Samyé Ling*, established in 1967, is commonly presented as the first Tibetan Buddhist centre and monastery in Europe. Its large temple, which received local and national media interest when officially opened in 1988 (e.g. Gill 1988), has become an important landmark within the Buddhist scene in Scotland. In addition, the *Holy Island Project*, launched in 1992 by Samyé Ling's current "abbot", Yeshe Losal, on Holy Island near the Isle of Arran, opened its *Centre for World Peace and Health* in 2003 (Bluck 2006:112; Janson 2007: 26-27; Sutcliffe 2004b:92-93) and is another major reference point within the public discourse on Buddhism in Scotland (see SIFC n.d.:24; Tennant 1995:28; McGinty 2004).

Photograph 6 Holy Island - main building

Photograph 7: Holy Island - Mandala garden

Nevertheless, academic consideration of the forty year-long existence of Samyé Ling has been marginal. Many academics producing studies within the field of Buddhism in the UK are aware of the Samyé Ling community (e.g. Kay 2004, Henry 2006, Batchelor 1994, Mellor 1989, Rawlinson 1997; Cush 1996). However, to my knowledge, only Ian Oliver (1979), Thessa Ploos van Amstel (2005), Helen Waterhouse (1997) and Robert Bluck (2006) have academically explored this movement, which Bluck (2006:3) describes as the Karma Kagyü representative within the seven largest Buddhist groups in Britain. Nonetheless, no critical history of the entire community has yet been produced.[25]

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25 The only detailed history of Samyé Ling I found was an insider narrative delivered by Khandro (2007).

For the purpose of definition, I shall consider Samyé Ling 'Buddhism' to have begun in 1967 when the Johnstone House community around Ananda Bodhi declined and the two Tibetans Akong Rinpoche and Chögyam Trungpa took over the grounds in Dumfriesshire, establishing their own Buddhist community. It was at this time that the community was dominated by what Bluck (2006:111) calls "'New Age' attitudes" (cf. also Khandro 2007:20; Yeats 1984).

Today, the Samyé Ling community is a global agent and has established some 40 centres around the world under its registered umbrella charity *Rokpa Trust*, which has its headquarters in Switzerland. Outside Europe, the USA and Canada, it has centres in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nepal and India. The focal point, however, remains the UK incorporating c. 44% of its institutionalised groups (Khandro 2007:132-145).

The 'Buddhism' generated by the Samyé Ling community is very much related to Akong Rinpoche[26] and his brother Yeshe Losal, who arrived at Samyé Ling in 1969 and who was ordained in 1980 (Khandro 2007:23, 52). In addition, other Kagyüpa teachers are frequently invited to the community and their writings, for example, those by the 12th Tai Situpa and Ringu Tulku Rinpoche, are recommended in classes.

The concept of lineage, i.e. the idea that a particular form of knowledge is "transmitted" from guru to disciple, is widely accepted. For instance, during my encounters with the community, several sessions and classes started with a Karma Kagyü "lineage-prayer" (dorjé chang thungma), which may be described as a homage to the (fictive)[27] founding gurus of the Kagyü school. Furthermore, at a so-called "refuge ceremony", which for many participants represented a 'conversion'-ritual, it was emphasised that the first refuge must be taken to one's lama and then to the Buddha, dharma, and sangha. This may also explain why Akong Rinpoche and Yeshe Losal appear at the centre of narratives within the Samyé Ling community and why, for instance, during classes I found that my instructors would sometimes literally reproduce what I had just read in one of the brother's books.

Yeshe Losal, also an executive member of the Scottish Inter Faith Council,[28] and other ordained sangha members represent Buddhism to politicians, other religious

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26 For the purpose of simplicity, I will refer to the second Akong Tulku as Akong Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe Losal (aka Jamdrak or Jamphel Drakpa) as Yeshe Losal, even though Yeshe Losal has also received the title of a Rinpoche.

27 From a historico-empirical point of view.

28 http://www.samyeling.org/index.php?module=Pagesetter&func=viewpub&tid=17&pid=9; accessed 13/10/2007.

specialists, school classes, academic researchers and the media. The Samyé Ling community also offers introductions to their 'Buddhism' at their centres, which are continuously spreading. Nevertheless, Samyé Ling 'Buddhism' is not restricted to the monastery or study groups: Long-term members of the Samyé Ling community have published articles in Buddhist journals (e.g. *Tricycle* o r *Dharma Life*); Samyé Ling headquarters and Samyé Dzongs, i.e. centres in cities, provide material on their respective websites; and one can easily find most Samyé Ling narratives also on *Wikipedia.* Samyé Ling's online-shop[29] delivers printed teachings, audio recordings, and meditation material or Tibetan accessories. Thus, Samyé Ling 'Buddhism' is made available through different media independent of any spatial limits.

3.3.2 Yeshe Losal's and Akong Rinpoche's narratives about Buddhism

Since Yeshe Losal and his brother Akong Rinpoche take a central role in the construction of Samyé Ling 'Buddhism', I will briefly introduce some tendencies I observed in their publicly available teachings. Both brothers address the relational space in which Buddhism can be located and specify its connection to 'religion'. However, they do not attempt to define religion or to anchor Buddhism to a grid of religions they have classified before:

> "Nowadays, some people are put off by just hearing the word 'religion', but Buddhism is not so much a religion as a philosophy or a way of life."
>
> (Yeshe Losal 2001:1)

> "I think the main difference between the Buddhist path and others is that Buddhism always says that you have to deal with all obstacles and that you should not try to escape from anything - including yourself."
>
> (Akong Rinpoche 2007; 1997)

The above quotes illustrate that at the centre of their concern is "a way of life" or "path", acknowledging that there are other paths as well. Obviously, the brothers realise (1) that their audience may consider Buddhism as a religion and (2) that this may create a competitive situation with other systems classified as religions. One strategy to counter this is to dissociate their teachings from 'religion' or even 'Buddhism':

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29 www.samyelingshop.com; accessed 10/10/2007.

> "When we talk about Buddhism, we are actually talking about the mind. If you do not want to hear about 'Buddhism', the 'Buddha' or 'enlightenment', we can leave out such words and talk only about the mind."

> "I always remind people that the religion they follow makes no difference. If their *practice* helps them become more humble, better human beings [...], then I think they have achieved their goal!"
>
> (Yeshe Losal, 2001:3; emphasis added)

Thus, "Tibetan teachings for improving your daily life" (Akong Rinpoche 1994) are presented as available to everybody. This inclusivism is constructed upon the idea of the Buddha-nature of all (sentient) beings, as the following quote illustrates:

> "Buddhism teaches about equality: that differences in race, culture, tradition, belief do not really matter. The fundamental teaching in Buddhism is that everybody has the opportunity and possibility to become a Buddha. Every human being has this potential."
>
> (Yeshe Losal 2001:2)

All of these narratives decrease barriers created by social-identity constructs. Hence, the 'other' against which Samyé Ling 'Buddhism' is constructed, is not an already established identity marker such as 'to be Christian' (as in the case of the FWBO), but the "modern materialistic way of life":

> "When people come to realise that this *modern materialistic* way of life is meaningless, I think that they will gradually accept the Buddhist teachings, but I am definitely not trying to make a Buddhist out of anyone. Buddhism is very open and teaches respect for all other beliefs.
>
> (Yeshe Losal 2001:2; emphasis added)

Furthermore, Yeshe Losal creates a contrast between the modern "path" or "ordinary life", characterised by selfishness, and the Buddhist way of life:

> "In ordinary life, everything we do is serving our own interests, whereas in Vajrayana, we practice with selflessness. The path of the Dharma does not have to be the same as the worldly path."
>
> (Yeshe Losal 2001:38)

Of course, this assessment can only be done from the outside. As a self-declared hybrid outsider, i.e. an outsider who also has knowledge of those who (still) live in the materialistic world, Yeshe Losal is able to point at the problems of the "Western people":

> "It is very difficult for Tibetan people to come here and start a European Sangha. Why would Tibetan Lamas actually come here to start a Sangha? In Asia there is a monastic tradition already so it is easy. When I was young I was just living like you. [...] I see now that my experience of your culture was very meaningful and useful. I can now fill the gap and reach Western people, because I can understand what you're going through.

[...] If I had been a monk all my life, if I hadn't had any connection with the Western lifestyle, [...] I wouldn't be able to really help you very much."

<div align="right">(Yeshe Losal 2001:32)</div>

Nevertheless, "Western lifestyle" is not the only 'other' used as a reference point in Yeshe Losal's narrative about Vajrayāna. Since his construction is not "so much a religion" (2001:1) but techniques for "the mind", he needs to demarcate his approach from other 'technical' approaches:

"Right now in the world, there are many schools and many individuals teaching meditation but their aims seem to be very limited. Their main purpose[s] seem to be to find inner peace, or [...] good experiences [...]. Actually this type of meditation doesn't help you at all, on the contrary, it makes your life more miserable."

<div align="right">(Yeshe Losal 2001:37)</div>

"Buddhism has many methods to calm the mind and Tibetan Buddhism in particular has a wealth of techniques that are unique and profound. The speciality of Vajrayana is that we are not trying to by-pass our emotional turmoil, have some sort of little peaceful time and that's all."

<div align="right">(Yeshe Losal 2001:38)</div>

Here, it becomes clear that Samyé Ling 'Buddhism' still needs to operate within the relational framework of 'Buddhism' to not become solely a range of products for 'spiritual well-being'. As for most agents who participate in the discourse on Buddhism, the actual difficulty for Yeshe Losal is to situate his construct within what he (being also involved in interfaith matters) generally perceives as the public discourse on Buddhism.

Structurally speaking, his strategy resembles the approach chosen by the Japanese delegates to the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893. For them the task was to relate their own interests to the framework shaped by Euro-American discourses on Buddhism, which then favoured a 'Pali-source-Buddhism', as Judith Snodgrass points out in her analysis:

"They needed to show that Japanese Buddhism encompassed all of the truth of the Theravada – that is, all those aspects of Buddhism which had attracted contemporary Western approval – but that Theravada, Southern Buddhism, was no more than a provisional and introductory expression of the Buddha's teachings, which were more completely expressed in the Mahayana texts, and specifically in Buddhism as it had been developed in Japan. For the delegates to Chicago addressing a Western audience, this also involved dissociating Japanese Buddhism from the then much maligned Nothern Buddhism, the Mahayana of the Himalayan regions. Eastern Buddhism, a term coined for the occasion, was the culmination of Sakyamuni's teaching, and the most suitable candidate for the universal religion of the future."

<div align="right">(Snodgrass 2003:9-10)</div>

Of course, time has changed and the "much maligned Northern Buddhism" is no longer defamed but 'ancient wisdom', distributed by 'globe-trotting' lamas. Nevertheless, Samyé Ling 'Buddhism' needs a distinctive place within the plurality of Buddhist groups and approaches. Therefore, terms such as 'Tibetan Buddhism' or 'Vajrayāna' create the necessary space wherein the Samyé Ling community can operate. This may also be illustrated by Akong Rinpoche's response to the question of how much of Tibetan 'culture' is actually contained in Tibetan Buddhism:

> "I don't think it matters very much. [...] From the Buddhist view, the Buddha taught many different techniques - 84,000 different teachings - in order to help different sorts of people. *Tibetan Buddhism passes on to us these teachings* on how to help and how to benefit. [...] Every teaching - all 84,000 - contains something positive and the Tibetan approach, the Vajrayana approach, is included [i]n these. But the presentation doesn't really matter."
>
> (Akong Rinpoche 2007; emphasis added)

Thus, the "Tibetan approach" becomes a question of style, a representation of mental techniques which have been passed on to humankind through the centuries. This lineage-aspect of Samyé Ling 'Buddhism' is particularly important in that it clearly highlights the position of the personal teacher, in contrast to, e.g., simply reading about Buddhism or performing an online-ritual for becoming a Buddhist (see Lee [1999]2004):

> "Lineage means that you have to have the lineage of transmission. Lineage of transmission means that the transmission of the ceremony does not pass through tape recorders, nor through radio or television but from human to human, person to person. When the teacher who gives you Refuge does so in the lineage, then you can trace your own receiving of Refuge, from teacher to student, right back over two and a half thousand years, from this country to Tibet, from Tibet to India, unbroken, right back to the Lord Buddha himself"
>
> (Akong Rinpoche 2007; 1997)

3.3.3 The wider Samyé Ling discourse on Buddhism

> "In fact, the Tibetan language contained no word for Buddhism. Tibetans, traditionally, did not think of themselves as Buddhist [...]. The West, with its systematic accounts, has played a significant role in the invention of Buddh-*ism*, as opposed to the religion practiced by those who follow the religion of the Buddha, and whose beliefs and rituals merge indefinably into their local folk customs."
>
> (Bishop 1993:17; emphasis in original)

During my fieldwork in Scotland, the tension between a 'western' systematic view of Buddhism versus a 'Tibetan way of life' view, as implicated by Peter Bishop above, has

often been apparent to me. Community members, ordained and non-ordained, seem to have two different methods of interpreting the teachings by Akong Rinpoche and Yeshe Losal, especially when it comes to "Tibetan mythology". Some take a Buddhist modernist stand and dissociate themselves from such narratives by using phrases such as "what the Tibetans say" or "according to traditional Tibetan mythology".[30] Others accept the narratives as elements of the 48,000 teachings of the Buddha, all contained within Tibetan Buddhism but universal and independent from Tibetan cultural influences:

> "Although the Tibetans did an excellent job of codifying and commenting on the Buddhism of India, they added little to its actual content. Tibetan Buddhism should not be seen as some exotic backwater of Buddhism, as some might expect, but as the cream of Buddhism, in its most complete form found anywhere in the world. Within its manifold teachings, one finds all that is found separately elsewhere as Theravada, Zen etc. as well as many teachings that only remained extant in Tibet."
>
> (Holmes 2007b)

Here, Kenneth Holmes, a long-term member and teacher of Samyé Ling, reproduces the myth of Tibet as a pristine conservator of Buddhadharma to solve a common problem of 'Buddhism' in Europe: the plurality of Buddhisms. Thus, Tibetan Buddhism becomes the "most complete form", encompassing all teachings of other Buddhadharma-containers – as Saymé Ling's offical website clearly states:

> "There are three different levels of Buddhist teaching and practice [...]. The first level is the Hinayana or 'Basic Vehicle'; the second level is the Mahayana or 'Greater Vehicle'; and the third is the Vajrayana or 'Indestructible Vehicle'. [...] Sometimes people mistakenly believe that they are different sects of Buddhism that are in opposition to one other. This is not correct. They are all interrelated parts of a single body of teachings given by the Buddha over his lifetime. All three vehicles have been preserved within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition."
>
> (Kagyu Samye Ling 2007)

The "Tibetan Buddhist tradition", therefore, is not universal because it is (just) another form of universal Buddhism but because it has preserved the universality of the Buddhadharma in its entirety. Peter Bishop (1993:83) holds that such arguments are expressions of the myth of the spiritual superiority of 'the East', i.e. 'the East' as the treasury of 'ancient wisdom'. According to Bishop, this particular myth has been extended to the version that 'the East' already had what 'western science' has only

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30 Nevertheless, no-one I talked to questioned the historical existence of past lineage holders of the Karma Kagyü lineage.

recently discovered: the philosophical dimension of Quantum physics, particle physics, astronomy, etc. were already encompassed in 'Eastern' thought (Bishop 1993:84). During my fieldwork, I was often confronted with narratives building upon this myth: "Einstein's [special] theory of relativity", "Quantum physics" and so on, became (unexplained) terms which my Samyé Ling class 'teachers' used in order to authorise, for instance, narratives about "emptiness". It was assumed that everybody was familiar with the implications of the theories behind such terms, and that everybody placed trust in and gave authority to such knowledge.

As Bishop (1993:85-86) has pointed out, such constructions have two sides: first, Buddhist doctrine is rationally legitimised by translating it into scientific vocabulary; and second, science is constructed as an object, rather than an ongoing process. What is more, the myth of a scientific Buddhism has produced concepts such as "spiritual technology", corresponding to the "mechanical technology" achieved by 'the West' (Bishop 1993:84). Akong Rinpoche's and Yeshe Losal's language also contain such mechanistic metaphors (e.g. "technique") and 'psychologised' concepts ("therapy"). These reflect the impact and success of 'scientific Buddhism' and other narratives, such as Buddhism as a "mind science" or "religion of reason", on 'Tibetan Buddhism' (cf. Lopez 1998:38, 77, 168). To illustrate one of these 'techniques', we can turn to Akong Rinpoche's "Visualising the Sky-Blue Light Overcoming Stupidity" exercise:

> "Look within your mind and see where there is complacency, dullness and stupidity. See its manifestations in your day-to-day life and all its effects, both physical and emotional. [...] This blue light streaming in makes it possible to identify, understand, accept and let go of these feelings, which are then transformed into a dark-blue smoke that dissolves one foot away from the body. [...] At the end of the session, after feeling that the dullness and stupidity is washed away, let the light got out first to those you know and then to all others. Then visualise the blue light returning to the sphere."

(Akong Rinpoche 1994:175)

This therapy exercise is one element of a larger programme, developed by Akong Rinpoche for a wider public. The programme, which comes with a strictly structured timetable (cf. 1994:97), is just one of many provided by Akong Rinpoche.

Holmes is another example of the mechanistic 'metaphorisation' of "Tibetan teachings"; he compares the lineage with a key that opens the door to the experience of compassion:

> "We have a pure lineage through time, where the whole meaning, and in a depth of this practice, has been maintained through the centuries until Akong Rinpoche and the other masters today, who hold it. Now, amongst other things, they hold a key. We all have compassion, and the potential for compassion, within ourselves. But somehow when you receive empowerment, (jick), it opens up the key. So when you do the practice, it actually bears fruit. And if you did the same technique and practice without the empowerment, somehow it doesn't work so well. This is why we need to receive an empowerment from a pure lineage and a good lineage master."
>
> (Holmes 2007a)

This excerpt from Holmes' lecture reflects a major tendency in Samyé Ling 'Buddhism'. The power of the lineage, imagined as a key, the power of the Tibetan language, encompassing the mental achievements of past masters, and the healing effects of Tibetan texts are all frequently repeated elements in the narratives upheld by those Samyé Ling community members I met and whose works I read. They all operate in a mechanistic picture, pointing to the same claim: that it works.

> "Actually, the bottom line is that it works. It's like my telephone number; I won't give it you, but if you had it, you just go beep, [...] beep, beep, and I'm on the other end. [...] You dial any other number, you won't get me. You dial that number, you're through to me. When we set our mind in the way that these visionaries have seen, and we use our imagination and our prayers and many other things in the right way, it attunes us to a compassion that we never experienced before."
>
> (Holmes 2007a)

3.3.4 Discussion

Having introduced parts of Samye Ling 'Buddhism', I would like to highlight two aspects I regard as particularly important for its construction:

(1) The existence of "fantasies" and "imaginations" (Bishop 1993[31]; Lopez 1998) about Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism, ancient wisdom, powerful lamas, etc., which have been cultivated in Scotland (and other countries) and which are continuously nourished and conserved by public media, scholars and Tibet romantics.

(2) Akong Rinpoche's and Yeshe Losal's self-perception, gained through their socialisation as religious elites in Tibet and India and reinforced by their exile situation: namely, to really represent and embody Tibet and to be truly leading figures of a genuinely 'Tibetan way of life'.

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31 Bishop uses the term "fantasy" as a psychoanalytical term.

Without aspect one, the establishment of and support for Samyé Ling is hard to imagine. Supposedly, in Europe there are hundreds or thousands refugees, from all over the world, who postulate knowledge about "non-falsifiable realities" (Cox 2007:83), healing techniques, ancient wisdom and non-worldly but spiritual ways of life. I would like to argue that European 'fantasies' about Tibet function as a selective process, or 'selection pressure', and privilege some narrators of spiritual stories over others.

Indeed, as the case of Samyé Ling suggests, if positive imaginations towards the 'Tibetan Way' are not present, not only indifference but even negative reactions may arise. As Andy Murray reports, locals from Dumfriesshire, the area where Samyé Ling monastery was built, have not always been sympathetic to the plans of the Samyé Ling community, fearing that the Tibetans might "tak[e] over the valley by stealth", "impos[e] an alien culture" and buy "every possible square inch of land in the area" (Murray 1989:41).

Furthermore, a 'selection process' had taken place even prior to the arrival of Tibetans in the UK. Englishwoman Gelongma Palmo (Freda Bedi) had not only taught Chögyam Trungpa and Akong Rinpoche English and educated them in her Young Lamas Home School in Delhi, but she had also helped to organise their trip to England and Trungpa's scholarship for the University of Oxford.[32] Certainly, one may ask why an English woman in the 1960s would choose to particularly support young Tibetan religious specialists. What is more, Christmas Humphreys' fascination with the Tibetan situation had been an important factor why he met Chögyam Trungpa in Tibet (Humphreys 1968:61-62, 68, 80) and provided the Tibetan immigrants with a forum for their construction of 'Tibetan Buddhism' in the context of the English Buddhist scene of the 1960s.

However, without aspect two, all European imagination would have been without direct object and therefore less powerful. Both Akong Rinpoche and his brother were educated within the Tibetan monastic system after Akong had been recognised as a *tulku*. Therefore, they have been exposed to narratives of religious elite and leadership from a young age. This is particularly interesting since Bishop (1993:96) reminds us that "[w]hen Tibetan Buddhism came to the West, only a fraction of this religious structure, this social network of spiritual power, made the journey." According to Bishop

32 Rawlinson 1997:181-182; Fugard 1984:40; Gimian 2004:xxiii.

(1993:93), narratives about Tibetan Buddhism actually became narratives about the monastic system – as is also demonstrated by Yeshe Losal's wish for creating a European sangha (2001:32).

Indeed, Samyé Ling narratives about Tibetan Buddhism hardly reflect more plurality than acknowledging the so-called four main schools of 'Tibetan Buddhim'[33]. For instance, Pure Land beliefs, which Bishop (1993:87) testifies have a large popularity in Tibet, are not mentioned in the "Tibetan teachings" (Akong Rinpoche 1994).

As Lopez remarks (1998:185), when the Tibetan refugees fled from Tibet and arrived in 'the West', 'Tibet' was already there. The task then was to enter the discourse on Tibet and Buddhism as the actual objects of the discourse and to give it shape by the authority of 'the native'. In a way, Kenneth Holmes' instructions to the audience, preceding an empowerment[34] given by Akong Rinpoche, provide a metaphorical illustration and, at the same time, data about the process I have outlined above: the meshing of imaginative 'receptivity' and the received 'internalisation' of the myth of lineage:

> "So, it's an empowerment in that sense, and the way the empowerment works, is through your openness and receptivity, on your side, and through the fact that the lama who gives it really is what we call a lineage holder. In themselves they have the realisation and they have received this transmission from their teacher, got it from his teacher, there is a pure unbroken line from the Buddha."
>
> (Holmes 2007a)

My overall impression is that the agents propagating Samyé Ling 'Buddhism' do not attempt to *create* a new Buddhism, e.g., for the people in Scotland. Instead, they build on the idea that they *provide* Buddhism to the people in Scotland and elsewhere.

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33 Nyimgmapa, Kagyüpa, Sakyapa and Gelugpa.
34 An empowerment is an initiatory ritual for allowing (i.e. 'empowering') the student to study and practice, for instance, a particular text.

3.4   Wat Dhammapadipa 'Buddhism'

3.4.1   Contextualising Wat Dhammapadipa narratives about Buddhism

In reviewing the available literature I have found scarce academic interest in the 'Buddhism' of Thai Buddhists in Scotland and the UK in general. Whilst traditions such as the Thai Forest Sangha, which became popular for 'westerners' under the American-born Ajahn Sumedho, have received relatively more attention (e.g. Bluck 2006; Mellor 1989), studies on immigrants with a Thai Buddhist identity, such as Paul Numrich's *Old wisdom in the New World* (1996), are rare. In fact, there is hardly any publicly available knowledge on even visible aspects such as the Thai wats in Britain (e.g. Oliver 1979; Humphreys 1968). In principle, to my knowledge, there are no larger studies on Thais in the UK, although the *Runnymede Trust* has recently launched a research project on British Thai communities.

Therefore, my data for Wat Dhammapadipa comprises of only selective information I gained whilst conducting fieldwork with the 'group' and from their leaflets and websites. As I have no sufficient competence in the Thai language, my interviews with and exploration of the group have been significantly restricted.[35] However, I maintain that this very limited data is still interesting within the context of how 'Buddhism' is constructed in Scotland. I shall therefore briefly introduce some of my observations.

Wat Dhammapadipa, located in Edinburgh and often called *Dhammapadipa Temple*, is the first and only Thai wat in Scotland, founded in 2003 and officially established in Edinburgh as a charity in 2005. Scottish property regulations complicate the use of the building as a *temple*,[36] consequently, Wat Dhammpadipa can only officially provide housing for monks[37]. Belonging to the *Mahānikāi*[38] of Thailand, it is a branch of the London Thai wat, *Wat Buddhapadipa*, which was established in 1965/66 (as *Buddhapadipa Vihara*) with the help of the Thai government and which has been presented as Europe's only "formal temple according to Thai tradition" since 1982 (Buddhapadipa

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35 Nevertheless, a journey to Thailand, of which the monks were very supportive, and my own status as a foreigner in the UK helped me to become integrated within the 'group' to a certain extent.

36 According to the Thai-Scottish Association, one would have to buy an old church building which could then be transformed into an official temple in Edinburgh.

37 I use the term 'monk' for these religious specialists because they refer to themselves as 'monks'.

38 *Mahānikāi*, an umbrella school comprising various traditions, and *Thammyutnikāi* constitute the two main schools in Thailand's institutionalised Buddhism.

2007, cf. Humphreys 1968:63). Both wats are considered to be branches of the Bangkok Wat Mahathat (Yuwarajarangsarit Rajaworamahavihara).

According to the Thai-Scottish Association (est. 1997), the wat functions as a cultural node, keeping the c. 400-500 strong Thai community in Scotland (and Northern England) together. In general, there are significantly more females in the community.[39] Furthermore, I was informed that in consulation with Wat Buddhapadipa there had been made plans in 2005 for establishing Wat Dhammapadipa since the distance between Scotland and London hindered many Thais in Scotland from attending Thai festivals and ceremonies in Wat Buddhapadipa.

At present, three monks live in the wat: (Phramaha) Visit Panyawatdhano, the 'abbot' of Wat Dhammapadipa, (Phramaha) Saworn Sangvaro and (Phramaha) Watana Yasawatdhano. Like all Thai monks in the UK, they have completed a special dhammaduta programme in Thailand, which allowed them to receive a four year visa. Therefore, they call themselves "dhammaduta monks" or "missionary monks".

Photograph 8: Wat Dhammapadipa - 'shrine' room

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39 The Thai-Scottish Association explains the higher proportion of females as a result of the strict entry modalities for the UK, although these can be bypassed by marriage. According to my informants, this is something considered by Thai women deciding to marry British men (therefore, the name '*Thai-Scottish*' Association).

In general, it is primarily the monks who produce narratives about Buddhism within the Wat Dhammapadipa context. They offer Sunday classes to children and adults, mainly to teach Thai and give religious instructions. Monks may also represent their 'Buddhism' outside the wat, for example, in the Dharma Society of the University of Edinburgh (see 1.3.1). Aditionally, Wat Dhammapadipa runs its own website in Thai and partially in English, distributes leaflets (Thai and English), books and booklets from teachers that have been ordained in Thai Buddhist traditions, for instance, Ajahn Chah.

Furthermore, following the community's first public fund-raising events (e.g. Thai dancing) the local media has shown interest in the plans to build a Thai style wat. However, as far as I can see, the degree of influence of Wat Dhammapadipa narratives on the public reception of Buddhism has been nominal at best.

3.4.2   'Buddhism' in Wat Dhammapadipa

> "[T]o the Thai nation as a whole, Buddhism has been the main spring from which flow its culture and philosophy, its are and literature, its ethics and morality and many of its folkways and festivals."
>
> (Kusalasaya 2001:23)

This quote is taken from a book I found in a Bangkok book store and which is aimed at a non-Thai readership (supposedly, at a Lankan and Indian readership). It may serve as an illustration of the discourse on Buddhism I encountered at Wat Dhammapadipa, maintained both by the monks and the lay people. Indeed, one of my informants explained the character of the Thai community this way: "As Thai, we are tied together with culture, custom and religion, especially Buddhism; so with those, we come together everywhere we are."

In fact, this 'we' and 'coming together' are major elements in Wat Dhammapadipa 'Buddhism' – the wat is primarily presented as a cultural centre where the Thai community can meet. Indeed, whilst Europeans may wish to categorise Thai boxing as sport, Thai flags and photographies of the royal family as civil religion and the monks as maintainers of Buddhism, for the Thais there is only one thing: a wat.

Furthermore, in direct conversation or in 'class' the monks did not necessarily construct Buddhism as a system. The term 'Buddhism' was only used to classify certain

beliefs and behaviour. The actual overall-category was Buddha-dharma, the teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, besides chanting, blessings and *vipassanā* meditation, I mostly heard stories from the Pali canon, almost like in the genre of a *Bildungsroman*, or was introduced to the Thai Forest tradition of Ajahn Chah. The talks I heard were different from talks in the FWBO and Saymé Ling community in that the monks did not attempt to interpret the content by using 'scientific' or 'psychologised' metaphors.[40] By contrast, logical fallacies in a text were not addressed or even noticed. Rather, the importance of practice, i.e. the studying of texts and meditation, was emphasised.

Another aspect of Wat Dhammapadipa 'Buddhism' also captured my attention: apart from some information about the history of Wat Dhammapadipa, all material was in English. Moreover, most of the material at Wat Dhammapadipa has not been manufactured by Wat Dhammapadipa or Wat Buddhapadipa, but instead has been mass-produced in Thailand and can also easily be found, for instance, in Bangkok. I suppose that the reason why some material is distributed and multiplied so often is to do with language: it is English. In fact, at present, the representation of Buddhism outside Thailand is much dependent upon English speakers. However, this dependency on English speakers, who in the UK context are mainly British, may function as a filter for the way in which the topic 'Buddhism' is addressed. The following two quotes, taken from Buddhapadipa's official website and the *Basic Buddhism Guide* distributed at Wat Dhammapadipa, illustrate the type of content found in these English language materials.

> "Buddhism is different from many other religions in several ways. For example, there is no Buddhist god or creator."
>
> (Lake 2006)

> "Science is knowledge which can be made into a system, which depends on seeing and testing facts and stating general natural laws. The core of Buddhism fits into this definition, because the Four Noble truths [...] can be tested and proven by anyone."
>
> (White 1993)

The above quotes reveal a modernist discourse shining through these narratives about Buddhism, as has already been observed in FWBO and Samyé Ling 'Buddhism'. Buddhism is scientific and without a god. We may ask: Whom does this information

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40 As I learnt from one monk, who told me his biography, many Thai monks are recruited from the rural areas of Thailand, where farming is more important than education. Nevertheless, in the monastic educational system, studying for Pali degrees is, of course, much more important than studying European 'science' and its structure of argumentation.

address? If there is no god in Buddhism, why should a Buddhist be concerned with the issue of god(s)? Indeed, these English quotes target people socialised in 'the West'. Thai narratives cannot simply enter the public discourse on Buddhism, which is maintained and preserved in English concepts and language; therefore, it is these English texts which eventually publicly present 'Thai Theravāda Buddhism' in the UK and Scotland. However, the distribution of talismans and the interaction between monks and spirits are neglected, even though such activities equally represent the realities of practising Buddhists within the same Thai Theravāda Buddhist group.

Paul Numrich, in his study of American Theravāda Buddhist temples, has called this phenomenon "parallel congregations" (1996:63). This means that two groups of Buddhists, whose understanding of Buddhism differs significantly, practice under the same roof, but are separate in terms of space (different rooms) and time (different weekends). For instance, whilst one group may engage more in what Numrich calls a "ceremonial from of Theravada Buddhism" the other group may be more concerned with the "philosophical and meditative form" (1996:76). Numrich (1996:70) also observed that the separation occurred along 'ethnic' and linguistic lines. Leaflets even advertised some events for "English Speaking Friends" and others for "Thai and Laotian Friends".

Nevertheless, the groups are united through the focus on the religious specialists: the monks. In the case of Wat Dhammapadipa, one Christian Thai explained that the role of the monks is so interwoven with everyday life in Thai 'culture' that most Christians, even though they may have been told at school not to do so, will accept the wat as nexus for ceremonies and exchange with other Thais.

In fact, the focus on the wat is so strong, that the Thais I interviewed were not aware of any other Buddhist groups in Scotland or nearby. Some Thais knew of other Thai Buddhist institutions in the rest of the UK but even the monks had only heard of Samyé Ling. Thus, there are no links between Wat Dhammapadipa and other groups, even though the FWBO's Edinburgh Buddhist Centre lists it on its website. When I asked for the reasons, the Thai-Scottish Association and one monk explained that they had been contacted by some groups; however, they rejected the offers to participate in networks and contribute to interfaith events. As I found out, these reactions were mainly related to language difficulties and particular perceptions of Islam in Thailand.

The monks did not wish to get involved in discussions on faith and feared they may be asked about their views of Islam.

Therefore, an awareness of the pluralistic Buddhist scene in Scotland and the resultant pressure to position Dhammapadipa 'Buddhism' within this pluralistic field, is currently not present. Indeed, I found nothing more in Wat Dhammapadipa 'Buddhism' than the distinction between Theravāda and Mahayāna – which in their final assessment, as I was told, are not separate but belong together.

3.4.3   Discussion

As noted above, Wat Dhammapadipa 'Buddhism' is mainly delivered by dhammaduta monks, who have undergone a special programme in Thailand prior to their arrival. According to Somboon Suksamran (1977:67), Thailand's sangha had been subject to the political modernisation process of the 1960s – or as Charles Keyes put it:

> "[T]he very success of the integrative revolution of Culalongkorn made the Thai Sangha a national structure of such significance that the temptation to use it for such purposes has in recent years become irresistible."
>
> (Keyes 1971:559)

Thus, Thailand's government established several modernisation programmes in the 1960s. One of these programmes was the *phra thammathūt* programme (from Pali *dhammaduta,* 'dhamma ambessador'), which was launched in the 1960s to strengthen the position of Buddhism as a unifying ideology for Thailand's plural population. Thailand's political elite had been afraid of the communist ideology undermining the foundation of the nation-state (Suksamran 1977:93-94). Therefore, the *thammathūt* programme was initiated to train selected monks who were then sent to the respective districts of Thailand to provide villagers with food and medicine and to teach them *Buddhism.* Of course, the agenda underpinning this programme has changed since the 1960s; however, as far as I could deduce from my interviews, the procedure has remained highly selective and competitive.

Therefore, the term 'dhammaduta' reminds us that the narratives about Buddhism which arrive via the monks in Scotland have already been filtered. This, of course, is not exceptional, but particularly obvious in the case of Wat Dhammapadipa (and Wat

Buddhapadipa). The interplay between the Thai sangha, Thai governmental structures and UK visa regulations result in a distinct pattern for the selection of missionary monks. Thus, there are only *Mahānikāi* monks in Scotland, but not, for instance, monks from the controversial Dhammakāya temple (cf. Scott 2006:226-227).

Furthermore, at Wat Dhammapadipa, Thai flags and photographies of Thai royals are omnipresent. One monk also described Thailand as "the land of the Buddha" and was visibly glad to have been incarnated there. This, of course, is not remarkable in itself. Why should there not be any national symbols or national pride? However, I regard this, in combination with the dhammaduta selection procedure, as expressions of the nationalist narrative of what constitutes Thailand or the 'invention of Thai-ness' (cf. Keyes 1995:150). This means that in Thailand there is a centralised force determining what counts as Buddhism and what does not; and this force, institutionalised for instance in the form of the *thammathūt* programme, also determines which narratives about Buddhism eventually arrive in Scotland as 'Thai Buddhist tradition' or (Thai) 'Theravāda'.

What is more, the case of Wat Dhammapadipa illustrates that the financial situation, education and social capital of a group are major factors in directing which narratives may successfully enter the public discourse on Buddhism. Limited resources, language barriers and a mere concentration on the Thai community results in low visibility. To slightly overstate my argument: School classes may prefer to visit Samyé Ling, where a native English speaker is able to present Buddhism as a system, more or less in accordance with their religious education textbooks, rather than to listen to an allegedly exotic 'dhamma-talk' in broken English at Wat Dhammapadipa.

Overall, I would like to characterise Wat Dhammapadipa 'Buddhism' as based upon six pillars: (1) a nationalist conception of Buddhism, which continuously re-constructs Thai identity – far away from geographical Thailand; (2) anchored in a lay/monk-dichotomy; (3) encompassing 'magical'/ talisman elements and, therefore, entirely dependent on the presence of religious specialists, who distribute such elements; (4) modernist tendencies; (5) susceptible to forming a 'parallel congregation' (Numrich) and (6) very restricted in its influence on the public discourse on Buddhism.

4 Conclusions

4.1   Mechanisms in the construction of 'Buddhism' in Scotland

4.1.1   The diversity of narratives about Buddhism in Scotland

Throughout this study, I have been drawing together accounts which, in one way or another, contribute to the discourse on Buddhism. Besides scholarly accounts, I selected three (institutionalised) discourses on Buddhism, which I had found coexisting within a spatially graspable region, Scotland. All three share a common feature: they are embedded in a Buddhist modernist discourse (see 4.2.2); i.e., the construction of Buddhism (principally) as a religious or spiritual endeavour, which does not need the concept of god or gods, which emphasises meditation and provides a narrative framework for shaping personal identity.

Moreover, I found that 'western' Buddhists, primarily in the FWBO but also in the Samyé Ling community, tend to communicate their narratives of Buddhism on the basis of metaphors of psychological states and (spiritual) techniques. One may regard this as another expression of the Buddhist modernist discourse, which represents Buddhist practice as "a rational attempt to alter our perception and response to the world, rather than a 'magical' attempt to alter the world as such" (Sharf 1995:267). Both Samyé Ling 'Buddhism' and FWBO 'Buddhism' are modelled upon what Robert Sharf (1995:269) described as a distinction between experience as a "superior form of knowledge" and "'second-hand' knowledge" (e.g. knowledge from texts). By contrast, at Wat Dhammapadipa, certain blessing rituals and the selling of talismans appear to be more 'magical'.

Of course, the groups' narratives differ also in other respects. FWBO 'Buddhism', as a grandchild of Humphrey's theosophical 'Buddhism', encompasses the notion of "ecumenical" Buddhism, whereas Samyé Ling 'Buddhism' stresses tradition and lineage – which is now (also) open for 'westerners'. The Thai community, however, already 'possesses' Buddhism, which is seen as native to Thai culture. This is also reflected in rituals aimed at establishing Buddhist identity: both the Samyé Ling community, in their refuge ceremonies for 'converts', and the FWBO, in their ordination ceremonies, give their members new Tibetan, Sanskrit and Pali names. By contrast, such rituals do not exist at Wat Dhammapadipa and even senior European members of the *Lay Buddhist Association* of Wat Buddhapadipa (still) use 'European' names.[1]

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1   The FWBO creates unique composite nouns using Sanskrit and Pali terms for their new WBO members' names. When asked why she uses a Sanskrit name, a FWBO member turned the tables

What is more, as has been shown, Samyé Ling 'Buddhism' includes the idea of preserving the (old) 'Tibetan Way' and what is considered to be "the most complete form of Buddhism" (see 3.3.3). Similarly, but in in a different context, Wat Dhammapadipa 'Buddhism' preserves what the community considers to be essential to Thai culture and thus provides a framework for creating a network for Thais in Scotland. Samyé Ling and Wat Dhammapadipa offer Buddhism *to* 'the West'. The FWBO, however, does not have another 'culture'. Since FWBO 'Buddhism' is based upon the construct of 'western culture', members have to change their own culture. They do not simply offer Buddhism to 'the West', but they attempt to integrate Buddhism *into* 'the West'.

Moreover, there is a diversity of activities which can be justified by the respective constructions of Buddhism – as illustrated in the table below.[2]

Group	Wat Dhammapadipa	Samyé Ling	FWBO Scotland
Activity	Money tree	Chanting in Tibetan; Tibetan names for members	Celtic puja
Point of reference for the activity	Thai Buddhism; merit-making through the donation of money	Vajrayāna Buddhism; the energy of great teachers prevails in the Tibetan language	Western Buddhism; the universal dharma can be injected in any culture
Legitimising narrative	Thailand is the land of Buddhism; therefore, Thai Buddhism is a pure and important form of Buddhism	Vajrayāna Buddhism is the highest form of Buddhism encompassing all other Buddhisms	As shown throughout history, the dharma is universal and not dependent on cultural baggage. Sangharakshita has identified and applied this core to Western culture

Table 2: Diversity of Buddhist activities in Scotland

For instance, a 'Celtic puja' (as conducted by members of the FWBO) is hardly imaginable in Wat Dhammapadipa 'Buddhism'. Thai culture *is* Buddhist culture; therefore, no special relationship between 'culture' and 'religion' needs to be constructed. On the other hand, if taking an FWBO approach to Buddhism, one does not need to believe in the energy of Tibetan prayers and chants or the preservation of this energy in the Tibetan language, for the dharma is thought to be transferable to non-

asking why she should use a "Christian name"; as a Buddhist, she consequently should have a "Buddhist name".

2   The table is based on my fieldwork findings of the three groups.

Asian culture. Moreover, the Samyé Ling community is engaged in interfaith activities and experienced in fund-raising campaigns, in contrast to Wat Dhammapadipa; therefore, the community is not solely dependent on its members' belief in dāna[3].

Another difference is how effectively groups can anchor their narrative of Buddhism in the public discourse on Buddhism. As seen, the FWBO is highly professionalised in influencing the public discourse on Buddhism. The Samyé Ling community, has also been very successful while working within the Scottish interfaith network.[4] For instance, they were able to raise huge funds for their activities in Edinburgh; according to Vallely (2006), *Kwik-Fit* owner Tom Farmer supports the project for a large interfaith centre in Edinburgh, whose ground floor will be for the Samyé Ling community. Apparently, only Buddhist groups who are sympathetic towards interfaith ideology will make use of structures such as the interfaith network of the Scottish Inter Faith Council. However, if a group does not want to engage with other 'faith groups', as the case of Wat Dhammapadipa demonstrates, it is less likely for that group to gain access to the resources provided by governmental-supported interfaith structures and it is less likely to anchor its 'Buddhism' in the public discourse.

Overall, the public discourse on Buddhism, which thus is both a product of as well as a 'guideline' for the respective Buddhist group narratives in Scotland, may be outlined referring to the following three important characteristics: (1) Buddhism is a (peaceful) *religion*, with high moral standards,[5] amongst other religions.[6] (2) The notion of god(s) must be downplayed. (3) Buddhism, healing the ('western') wound between religion and science, is modern, scientific, rational and concerned with 'the mind'.

On the other hand, the diversity of approaches and narratives found within contemporary 'Buddhism' in Scotland illustrates the interplay between 'junior' narratives conserved in the respective Buddhist groups and the function of the public discourse: everything is possible, but not everything is (currently) imaginable and communicable.

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3 The belief in dāna means a belief that generosity, donations, etc. have a positive effect on the donor – in terms of merit as well as character transformation.

4 The *Scottish Inter Faith Council* has direct contact with Scotland's First Minister, which resulted, for instance, in the *Time for Reflection* ritual in the Scottish parliament (see also Sutcliffe 2004b)

5 'Moral' is defined here in terms of the norms system prevalent in Scotland. The perception of Buddhism as closely corresponding to, or even exceeding, such norms can be deduced from the reaction, for instance, by the media, when Buddhist groups transgress the borders of prevalent norms. For example, see reactions to sexual misconduct in the FWBO movement (Bluck 2006:187; Bunting 1996) or in the Samyé Ling community (Mendick 2000:13; Meredith 2000:10).

6 Since Buddhism has the status of a religion, a Buddhist group can present itself more widely than, for example, a Yoga group.

4.1.2   'Buddhism' contrasted: the case of Indonesia

The structures underpinning the construction of 'Buddhism' in Scotland become particularly visible when we contrast narratives in Scotland, not only with each other but also with a very different construct found in Indonesia.

Scholars such as Edith Franke (e.g. 2005a, 2006) and Iem Brown (e.g. 1987, 2004) have shed light on the shaping of a monotheistic 'Buddhism'. Franke (2006:72) identifies ideas of religious and national harmony and the state ideology of *pancasila* as major causes of its construction. In short, the *pancasila* ('five principles') is a compromise between 'secularists' and advocates of a Muslim state, who were both involved in the formation of Indonesia in 1949 (Franke 2006:70, 77). Strongly influenced by the dominance of Muslim identities in Indonesia, it encompasses (1) belief in the one and only god,[7] (2) a just and civilised humanity, (3) Indonesia's unity, (4) (*pancasila*) democracy and (5) social justice.[8] Since the *pancasila* is not institutionalised law but a state philosophy, it is propagated in educational institutions and consistently developed. Therefore, the *pancasila* may be regarded as a civic-religious, muslim-nationalistic discourse that has created a particular 'selection pressure'[9] on Buddhist groups.

This selection pressure strengthened Buddhist groups such as the movement around the Indonesian bhikkhu Ashin Jinarrakhita. To comply with the *pancasila* ideology, Jinarrakhita's Buddhayana movement produced a distinct discourse on *Sang Hyang Adi Buddha* (Brown 1987:111), who was constructed as the highest god of Buddhism – as the group's explanation of the Ādi Buddha principle demonstrates:

> "1. The One Supreme God is Adi Buddha
>   2. The Prophets are Buddha Gotama and the Bodhisattvas
>   3. The Holy Books are 1) *Tipitaka*
>   2) *Dhammapada* [...]
>   3) *Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan*"
>
> <div align="right">(Brown 1987:113; emphasis in original)</div>

However, not all Indonesian Buddhist groups necessarily agreed with this principle; for instance, one Theravāda group proposed nirvana as the highest principle of Buddhism (Franke 2005a:396). Nevertheless, all debates pursued the framework of *pancasila* and

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7   The term used is *ketuhanan* and has been preferred to *allah* since it refers to an abstract concept of a 'supreme god', which was to allow non-Muslim and non-Christian groups to also identify with the first *sila* (Franke 2005a:392-393).

8   Cf. Republic of Indonesia: http://www.indonesia.go.id/en/index.php/content/view/112/336/, accessed 30/09/2007.

9   I.e., a directed force onto a group which presses the development of this group in a particular direction (see 2.2.4).

nativistic concepts of 'Indonesian Buddhism', which under nationalistic pressure – similar to the Meiji-Japanese discourse on Buddhism – attempted at viewing Buddhism as something not imported but genuinely Indonesian (Brown 2004:53). This brief example from Indonesia reminds us that it is the negotiated framework, the actual discursive environment, mirroring the concerns of those in power, which shapes the categories and thinking patterns in which other participants in the discourse are situated.

Of course, this mechanism is not restricted to the discourse on Buddhism, but is a common feature of constructing religious identities, as is demonstrated, for instance, by Harjot Oberoi's analysis of Sikh identities (1997[1994]). His work investigates the interplay between British colonial rule and the Tat Khalsa group within the Singh Sabha movement, which under colonio-administrative selection pressure in 19th century Punjab transformed loose Sikh identities into (re)-defined Khalsa Sikh identities (Oberoi 1997[1994]:24-25, 71, 424-425; Fenech 2003:148, 150).

Translated into the case of Scotland, this means that those Buddhist groups which meet the reference points of a prevailing discursive framework (i.e. 'Buddhism') will – in the long term – succeed in (1) qualifying as representatives of Buddhism and (2) gaining the power to reproduce and shape 'Buddhism' within a Brede-Kristensenian society, where the believer is always right.[10]

Hence, groups which do not meet the expectations of the public discourse will either have to invent and – with much effort – promote new reference points, which sufficiently broaden the public discourse for the inclusion of their views,[11] or such groups will experience immense public pressure, as is demonstrated, for instance, by the case of the New Kadampa Tradition in the UK (Kay 2004:44-52; Bluck 2006:131-132), which received extremely negative media coverage when criticising the Dalai Lama. Furthermore, such pressure might lead to the lack of funding and, finally, to the diminishing of the group.

Indeed, the Ādi Buddha construct is at present not thinkable within the public discourse on Buddhism in Scotland. For instance, the Indonesian concept of Ādi Buddha would very much violate the limits of a 'Buddhism' as it is propagated by the FWBO, which stresses Buddhism's lack of the concept of a (creator) god to dissociate itself from what it holds as the ideological focal point of 'Western culture', Christianity.

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10 Kristensen (1960:14): "For the historian only one evaluation is possible: 'the believers were completely right.'"

11 Cf. 3.3.2: the coining of the term 'Eastern Buddhism' by Japanese delegates to the World's Parliament of Religions.

4.2 'Buddhism' and the European history of religions

4.2.1 The *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* paradigm

The concept of *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* (European history of religions) is a relatively recent paradigm which can be outlined by at least two major characteristics:

(1) It does *not* refer to additive histories of religions in Europe, i.e. the sum of all positive religions in a regio-political space called Europe (Gladigow 2006:§1).

(2) In contrast, it aims to provide a historiography of the "full spectrum of religious orientation"[12] (Gladigow 1995:24), i.e. "the European 'market of meaning supply'"[13] (Gladigow 1995:22), which has also been exported, for instance, to North America (Auffarth 2006[1999]:650).

According to Burkhard Gladigow (2002:61), the *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* approach operates "not (exclusively) idealistically, singularisingly, reductionisticly" but "raises the complexity of religious phenomena itself as [its] subject".[14] As a result, *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* is concerned with

> "the religions of the various European traditions, as well as the religions of migrants, as well as religions as epiphenomena of academia, and religions which are passed on only within the medium of scholarship."[15]
>
> (Gladigow 2002:62-63)

For Gladigow (2006:§1), this includes 'underground currents' ("*'Unterströmungen'*"), suppressed patterns ("*verdrängte Muster*") as well as 'heresies' ("*'Häresien'*") and (ideological) 'alternatives' ("*'Alternativen'*"). In addition, as Kocku von Stuckrad (2005:86-87) notes, *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* pays attention to constructions of 'the other', even if not always institutionalised in Europe, such as 'the Islam' or 'Zoroastrism', against which 'own' religious identities have been constructed for a long time. Thus, *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* abandons the world religions paradigm, which it regards as a product of 19th century missiology (cf. Gladigow 2002:62, 65).

The concept of *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* became necessary because prior historiographies of religious discourses in Europe had been formulated only in terms of

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12 "Gesamtspektrum an religiösen Orientierungen"
13 "der europäische 'Markt an Sinnangeboten'"
14 "[Es] ist eine andere Religionsgeschichte, die nicht (nur) ideengeschichtlich, singularisierend, reduktionistisch operiert, sondern die Komplexität religiöser Phänomene selbst zum Gegenstande erhebt [...]."
15 "[...] Religionen der verschiedenen europäischen Traditionen, als auch Religionen der Migranten, als auch Religionen als Epiphänomen von Wissenschaften, und Religionen, die nur im Medium von Wissenschaft tradiert werden."

Christian church histories or had defined Christianity as Europe's own religion (cf. Gladigow 1995:24). Non-Christian groups, for instance, currents commonly subsumed under the categories of 'Esotericism', 'New Age' or 'UFO religions', as well as the sciences as suppliers of meaning had been omitted. What is more, the dominance of Christian church history and the heritage of missiology (*Missionswissenschaft*) had assigned *Religionwissenschaft* solely to the non-European context, whereas Christian theology had been in charge of Europe (Gladigow 2002:50).

According to Gladigow, the professionalisation (*Professionalisierung*) of Christian religion within the milieu of the Roman Empire had established its own definition of religion based on 'singularisation' (*'Singularisierung'*) (Gladigow 2006:§20). This 'singularisation' raised questions about true and false religion on a juridical level (Gladigow 2002:57); it created 'polytheisms', a polemic term for all non-monotheistic systems, which existed in the religion discourse solely as suppressions (cf. Gladigow 2002:57); and it produced the exclusivist idea that one person can have only one religion (Gladigow 2006:§20-21)

Since the *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* paradigm operates on a 'broad' definition of religion,[16] it attempts to free itself from this 'singularisation' discourse on religion, which has been introduced by one powerful religious group dominating the discourse from their institutionalised chairs of knowledge. Instead, it aims to establish a scholarly framework for *Religionswissenschaft,* paying particular attention to the plurality and coexistence of religious discourses, meaning suppliers and religious innovations, which steadily emerge, live and die out.

4.2.2 'Buddhism' as an element of *Europäische Religionsgeschichte*

In my introduction, I have argued that 'Buddhism' can only be understood within a relational framework. Here, I would like to suggest that this relational framework may be best imagined as the *Europäische Religionsgeschichte*, with all its models of institutionalisation, dichotomies and other thinking patterns.

Of course, the major challenge on a theoretical level lies in integrating the phenomena we currently group under the term 'Buddhism' into the *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* framework, leaving behind missiological world-religions typologies.

16 It is broad when compared to a Christian theological definition of religion.

Promising work has been presented by Philip Mellor, who produced the controversial article *Protestant Buddhism? The cultural translation of Buddhism in England* (1991).

Mellor's concept builds on but must be distinguished from Kitsiri Malalgoda's (1976), Richard Gombrich's and Gananath Obeyesekere's "Protestant Buddhism" (1988), or what Heinz Bechert (e.g. [1984]2002:341) called "*buddhistischer Modernismus*" ('Buddhist modernism'). The "Protestant Buddhism" thesis in the Asian context aims at comprehending the phenomena of Buddhist 'revival', which introduced formerly unknown elements such as lay meditation, socio-politically-active bhikkhus, the representation of Buddhism as scientific/rational and the introduction of English-language concepts into Asian languages (cf. Gombrich 1988:191-192, 194). It was called "Protestant Buddhism" because Buddhists copied Protestant Christian missionary structures (Sunday schools, book printing, etc.) and simultaneously protested against colonial foreign rule and Christian missionaries (cf. LeVine/Gellner 2005:17-18).

However, in his application of the Protestant Buddhism thesis to England Mellor does not only refer to lay meditation and Buddhist protest against Christianity. He also argues that Buddhism in England, and I consider this to be applicable to Europe as a whole, is not necessarily "at odds with western religious traditions" (1991:73); in addition, he rejects the concept of a Buddhist essence moving from culture to culture (1991:88) and suggests that Buddhism has not been transplanted but rather "translated" into an already existing milieu that he describes as (liberal) "Protestant Christian discourse" (1991:90):

> "Buddhist groups in England are a 'significant new cultural development' not because they divert western culture into new religious channels, but because they explore the existing religious channels in new ways. Their significance rests in their ability to create new religious forms within liberal Protestant culture."
>
> (Mellor 1991:90)

Mellor's findings, which were immediately attacked by the FWBO members Kulananda (1992) and Sangharakshita (1992a), have been widely discussed (e.g. Bluck 2006:161-162; Kay 2004:8-9, 136, 218-221; Waterhouse 1997:21-25; McAra 2007:19, 26-27, 32).

Some scholars, I think correctly, express concerns about his selection of sources (Waterhouse 1997:24-25), whereas others reproduce untenable FWBO accusations towards Mellor (see McAra 2007:19, 32) or take positions which are questionable on historical grounds and almost Buddhist-apologetic (Kay 2004). David Kay, for instance, claims to deliver a "long-overdue critique of the Protestant Buddhism thesis" (2004:221,

10), which he bases on the problematic notion of "deeply traditional" continuities. [17] According to Kay, those phenomena which Mellor and others scholars (e.g. Sharf 1995:250) would identify, on the basis of historical context and appearance, as Protestant Buddhism/Buddhist modernism are actually rooted in "deeply traditional precedents"[18] and are therefore not "Protestant" but (authentically) "Buddhist" (Kay 2004:219).

In addition, Stephen Prothero (1995:282, 296-299) points at a major weakness in the Protestant Buddhism thesis in general; he argues that it has been constructed against a non-differentiated image of Protestantism, which is to some extent also true for Mellor's account. Prothero, therefore, contributes to the debate his term 'creole Buddhism', emphasising "deep structures"[19] (1995:281-182) which determine the perception and organisation of knowledge (cf. 2.2.4).

I would like to suggest that the intersection between Prothero's "deep structures" and Mellor's "existing religious channels" can actually be understood as the dominant 'plot', or the 'grammar', within the *Europäische Religionsgeschichte*. In other words, the complex interaction between religious currents, academia as a curator and itself a medium of (religious) meanings, various ideological patterns and, particularly importantly, the professionalisation of Christian discourses, producing 'singularisation', strongly affected and still affect the fact that and the way how people communicate about *Buddhism*: (1) This created the discourse on Buddhism, constructing a box called 'Buddhism' with the size of 'religion' determining its content. (2) Recursively, [20] i.e. being its cause and effect at the same time, the box changed its size and, thus, selected new items for its content, depending now on its new size (cf. also Almond in 2.2.1).

Moreover, if we conceive of *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* as a narrative about the supply of meaning, orientation, (religious) knowledge, etc. in Europe, the relation between 'Buddhism', as the story about Buddhism, and *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* becomes clearer: *Buddhism* is only thinkable within this narrative; it is one of its

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17 For a problematisation of Kay see Prohl 2006:5-7.
18 I.e., "traditionally Buddhist forms and structures that have developed quite independently of Western cultural contact" (Kay 2004:221). Kay, however, fails to provide a historical examination of what constitutes these "deeply traditional precedents".
19 I.e., Chomskyan 'deep structures'.
20 In mathematics, a recursive function is a function which is defined through itself (e.g. the factorial function: $n! = n \cdot (n-1)!$, for $n>0$). If there is no terminating condition, any application of the recursive function will result in an infinite loop. As for the time being, there does not appear to exist a noteworthy 'terminating condition' for the recursive character of the box of Buddhism in particular and religion in general (cf. Beyer 2006).

protagonists, whose entering of the scene I have been trying to trace in chapter 2 and which fulfils the particular role that is permitted by its surrounding discourse.

For instance, as a result of 'existing religious channels', Buddhism has been constructed as a foreign, 'exotic' religion – since 'Christianity' has already been assigned to 'Europe's own religion'. Indeed, all those metaphors of transplantation and acculturation are direct expressions of the 'grammar' that administrates the products of what Jonathan Z. Smith calls "an explosion of data" under colonialism (1998:275).

By contrast, in Indonesia or Thailand (see 3.4.3) discourses of nationalism created a selection pressure, resulting in nativistic constructions of Buddhism. It is not that such constructions did not exist in Europe. For instance, Donald MacKenzie (1928) attempted to anchor Buddhism within Britain's Celtic history (cf. Ferm 1929; *The Scotsman* 1928:2); furthermore, similar narratives about Aśoka's Buddhist missionaries, resulting in constructions such as Graeco-Buddhism, can still be found in the repertoire of the European history of religions (see, e.g., Batchelor 1994, Vassiliades 2004). However, in Scotland or the UK in general, as noted in 4.1, the Buddhist groups in power have produced narratives along the limits of the public discourse on Buddhism. The result may perhaps at present be described as 'Protestant Buddhism' and its impact on the 'western' perception of Buddhism is summed up succinctly by Donald Lopez:

> "When we read the claims of Hindu fundamentalists that locomotives and rocket travel are described in the Vedas or that the beam of light emitted from Śiva's brow is really a laser, we smile indulgently. But when we read Buddhist descriptions (products of the same time and the same culture that produced the Vedas and Śiva), descriptions, for example, of a universe that moves through periods of cosmic evolution and devolution, we assume that this is simply something that physicists have not yet discovered."
>
> (Lopez 1998:76)

When adopting such a narratological approach to the *Europäische Religionsgeschichte*, we are brought back to the question 'What does a particular narrative do?'. Following this question, one may find that the practice of speaking about religions, classifying religions, organising religions into 'theirs' and 'ours' (cf. J.Z.Smith 1998:276) has itself become an aspect of *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* .

Indeed, the ongoing narrative about *Buddhism*, as well as its child *Buddhism in the West*, may have started in the 19th century, yet, it is still told today in schools, the media and universities. It continues to provide orientation and meaning when being told and, at the

same time, functions as a preserving medium of particular (religious) knowledge. Nevertheless, it has been extended; now, it includes narratives of identity and helps to create chairs in a discipline called 'Buddhist Studies'. Reflecting upon this, I consider the framework of the *Europäische Religionsgeschichte* as broad enough to take into account of all these developments.

What is more, such a perspective allows for a plurality of histories within the historiography of the "full spectrum of religious orientation" (Gladigow 1995:24) since it enables us to traverse 'nodes' of naturalistic knowledge[21] in various ways. For instance, we may apply von Stuckrad's matrix of "claims of higher knowledge" and "ways of accessing higher knowledge" (2005:88, 91) and arrive at a set of what he calls "esoteric discourses", which are not restricted to currents currently subsumed under 'Esotericsim'. As a result, we can overcome the use of insider narratives as analytical tools (cf. Mellor 1991:88-89). For instance, the separation between 'systems' we currently classify as 'Theosophy' versus 'Buddhism', as observed by Denise Cush (1996), is indeed hard to defend on historical grounds, for instance, for the 1920s. Of course, the aim would not be to replace a history of 'Buddhism' or 'Theosophy' by a history of 'Theobodhi'. Rather, it would be to provide a framework where different academic, socio-historical or socio-cultural narratives can exists as *pares inter pares*.

The application of such a dynamic framework provides one with the possibility to easily construct new narratives out of the critical analysis of our older narratives, without having to continuously de-construct the entire framework. For a metaphorical illustration of these challenges and chances which lie within such an approach, I shall conclude with Donald Lopez' critical reflections on his fieldwork at a Gelugpa exile monastery in Karnataka, where he had studied with a retired lama:

> "Before departing from the teacher, it is traditional that the student not bow down, as he would at the end of the day's teaching, signifying that the teaching has not ended, but is only interrupted. This suggests the possibility (or at least the dream) of someday returning to the monastery to read once again, having stopped believing in the nostalgic meta-narratives, both theirs and ours, that have so far captivated us all."

> (Lopez 1995b:288)

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21 I.e., non-metaphysical knowledge; e.g., the existence of a source, the meeting of a group, the writings of a particular person, the invention of a media device, the incident of an earthquake, the introduction of a particular law, the deaths of hundreds of people.

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