



The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia: Second Edition (SUNY Series in Religious Studies)

Donald K. Swearer

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A wide-ranging, readable account of the Theravada Buddhist thought and practice in the Southeast Asian societies of Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka.

An unparalleled portrait, Donald K. Swearer's *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* has been a key source for all those interested in the Theravada homelands since the work's publication in 1995. Expanded and updated, the second edition offers this wide-ranging account for readers at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Swearer shows Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia to be a dynamic, complex system of thought and practice embedded in the cultures, societies, and histories of Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka. The work focuses on three distinct yet interrelated aspects of this milieu. The first is the popular tradition of life models personified in myths and legends, rites of passage, festival celebrations, and ritual occasions. The second deals with Buddhism and the state, illustrating how King Asoka serves as the paradigmatic Buddhist monarch, discussing the relationship of cosmology and kingship, and detailing the rise of charismatic Buddhist political leaders in the postcolonial period. The third is the modern transformation of Buddhism: the changing roles of monks and laity, modern reform movements, the role of women, and Buddhism in the West.

"This valuable update to the 1995 edition is written in light of profound, ongoing changes in the broad spectrum of Southeast Asian culture." — *CHOICE*

Praise for the First Edition

"This book surveys many themes. Although rooted in cultural and religious matters, it is also a good historical review of the Theravada tradition. Buddhism in Southeast Asia is spiritually and culturally very dynamic, but it also has a political importance that makes it a timely theme for those interested in this part of the world—those not necessarily informed about the history and power of religion in Southeast Asia.

"There are many books by notable authorities on the Buddhist world of Southeast Asia. However, these are almost always focused on just one country or culture, while the Swearer book embraces the whole region. I know of no other text in the English language that sets down such a good descriptive analysis of contemporary Theravada practices." — Bruce Matthews, Professor Emeritus of Comparative Religion, Acadia University

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