

**Thomas A. Borchert**  
**Professor of Religion**  
**The University of Vermont**  
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## **Education**

Ph.D. University of Chicago, 2006  
M.A. University of Chicago, 1997  
B.A. Swarthmore College, with Honors, 1992

## **Professional Experience**

### ***The University of Vermont,***

Professor of Religion, 2018 to present  
Associate Professor of Religion, 2012 to 2018.  
Assistant Professor of Religion, August 2006 to 2012.

#### Classes:

*Introductions:* "Religions in Asia," "TAP: Religion and Violence," "Religion and Globalization," "Humanities Scholars: Ghosts in the City"  
*Intermediate:* "Interpretation of Religion," "Religious Literacy," "Religion in China," "Religion in Japan," "Buddhist Traditions," "Religion, Law and Discipline,"  
*Seminars:* "Religion, Nation, State," "Religion and Secular Culture," "Religion and the Body"

***Mahidol University***, Bangkok Thailand, International PhD Programme in Buddhist Studies,  
Visiting Research Professor, December 2013-June 2014.

***Institute of South East Asian Studies***, Singapore, Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre  
Visiting Research Fellow, December 2009 to May 2010.

***Loyola University Chicago***, Instructor, Department of Theology, 2004-2005.  
"Introduction to Buddhism"

***The University of Chicago***, Alma Wilson Teaching Fellow in the College, Winter 2004.  
("Buddhism in Contemporary China")

***Wat Chetuphon Buddhist Secondary School***, Chiang Mai, Thailand, ESL instructor, 1994.

***JET Program(me), Hokkaido Board of Education***, Hokkaido, Japan, ESL Instructor.  
Asahikawa North High School; Asahikawa-City, 1993 to 1994; Soya Board of Education,  
Wakkanai-City, 1992 to 1993.

## **Research and Scholarship**

### ***Books***

*Educating Monks: Minority Buddhism on China's Southwest Border.* Honolulu: University of

Hawai'i Press, 2017. (Paper edition 2019)

*Theravada Buddhism in Colonial Contexts* (editor). New York: Routledge, 2018. (Paper 2020)

**Journal Articles (peer-reviewed)**

- "Power and Authority among Monks in the Contemporary Thai Sangha," accepted for publication and in production; *Contemporary Buddhism* (April 2024) DOI: 10.1080/14639947.2024.2344727
- "Monks, the State, and Monastic Governance in Contemporary Thailand." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 90, 3 (September 2022): 654-673, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfac067>
- "A Preliminary Survey of Buddhist Higher Education in Asia: Developing Typologies and Comparing Secularities," *Studies in Chinese Religions* 6 (2020) 327-346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23729988.2020.1865011>
- "Belt and Road Buddhists: Religion-Making and the Rebuilding of Minority Buddhism in the Reform Era," *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* 7 (2020): 92-119. doi:10.1163/22143955-00701005.
- "Bad Gifts, Community Standards and the Disciplining of Theravāda Monks," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 35: 1 (2020). 53-70. Special issue, "Ethics of Religious Giving in Asia," edited by Michael Feener, Keping Wu, Thomas Borchert, and Francis Lim.
- "Political Disrobing in Thailand," with Susan Darlington, Hampshire College. *Buddhism, Law and Society* 3 (2017/2018): 113-156.
- "The Buddha's Precepts on Respecting Other Races and Religions? Thinking about the Relationship of Race/Ethnicity and Theravāda Buddhism." *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 29: 3 (2014): pp. 591-626.
- "Monastic Labor: Thinking about the Work of Monks in Contemporary Theravada Communities." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79: 1 (March 2011): pp. 162-192.
- "The Abbot's New House: Thinking about how Religion Works among Buddhists and Minorities in Contemporary China." *Journal of Church and State* 52: 1 (2010): pp. 112-137.
- "Worry for the Dai Nation: Sipsongpanna, Chinese Modernity and the Problems of Buddhist Modernism." *Journal of Asian Studies* 67: 1 (February, 2008): pp. 107-142. Cited as a "Top 10 most cited article;" April 3, 2011. [<https://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=JAS&tab=mostcited#tab>]
- "Buddhism, Politics and Nationalism in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries." *Religion Compass* 1: 5 (2007): pp. 529-546.
- "Training Monks or Men: Theravāda Monastic Education, Subnationalism and the National Sangha of China." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 28: 2 (2005): pp. 241-272.

**Book Chapters (peer-reviewed)**

- "Merit, "Corruption," and Economy in the Contemporary Thai Sangha," in *Monks, Money and Morality: the Balancing Act of Contemporary Buddhism*, edited by Christoph Brumann, Saskia Abrahms-Kavunenko, and Beata Świtek, 37-50. Bloomsbury, 2021.
- "Introduction" and "Shifts in Buddhist Authority in Sipsongpanna under Chinese Colonialism," *Theravada Buddhism Colonial Contexts*, edited by Thomas Borchert. Routledge, 2018.
- "'Conscripted' of Chinese Modernity? Transformations of Theravada Buddhism in Southwest

- China." In *Theravada Buddhist Encounters with Modernity*, edited by Steven Collins and Juliane Schober. Routledge, 2018. Pp. 137-149.
- "In Defense of Dharma: Reflections on Buddhism and Politics," co-authored with Ian Harris, for *Teaching Buddhism*, edited by Gary DeAngelis and Todd Lewis. Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 103-121.
- "History and Diversity of Religions," in *On Human Nature: Biology, Psychology, Ethics, Politics and Religion*, edited by Michel Tivyarenc and Francisco Ayala. Elsevier, 2016. pp. 663-675.
- "On Being a Monk and a Citizen in Thailand and China." In *Buddhism and the Political Process*, edited by Hiroko Kawanami. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016. Pp. 11-30.
- "Monk and Boy: Becoming a Novice in Contemporary Sipsongpannā." In *Buddhist Children*, edited by Vanessa Sasson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 247-265.
- "Of Temples and Tourists: The Effects of the Tourist Political Economy on a Minority Buddhist Community in Southwest China." In *State, Market and Religion in Chinese Societies* edited by Joseph Tamney and Fenggang Yang. Leiden: Brill, 2005. Pp. 87-111.

### **Review Essays, Anthologies, Bibliographies**

- "Rendering Visible Monks in the Shadow of Power: a review essay on *The Irish Buddhist and Monks in Motion*," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 54, 2 (June 2023), [doi.org/10.1017/S0022463423000413](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463423000413).
- "Discipline, beyond the Vinaya," *Routledge Handbook of Theravada Buddhism*, edited by Stephen Berkwitz and Ashley Thompson. Routledge, 2022.
- "Nation-state and Monastic Identity," *Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Practice*, edited by Paula Arai and Kevin Trainor. Oxford University Press, 2022.
- "Monastic Education in Contemporary Asia." In *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. Oxford University Press, 2021.  
doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.ORE\_REL-00605.R1
- "The Sangha as an Institution," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, Oxford University Press. September 2017.
- "Buddhism and Religious Freedom: a sourcebook, theological and legal texts." Author of introduction and Commentary. Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University, November 2016.
- "Buddhism." In *Understanding the Religions of the World*, edited by Willoughby H. Deming. Wiley Blackwell, 2015 (61-114).
- "Scratching the Surface of Religion and "Religion" in Contemporary China: A Review of Anthologies on Religion in Reform Era People's Republic of China." *Religious Studies Review*, 38: 3 (September 2012). Pp. 125-135.
- "Sangha," *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Buddhism*. Ed. Richard Payne. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. [peer-reviewed]
- "Buddhisms of French Indochina: Reconsidering Buddhist Modernities and Buddhist Nationalisms in the 19th and 20th Centuries," *Religious Studies Review*, 35: 4 (2009): pp. 247-252.

### **Recent Book Reviews**

- Alexandra Kaloyanides, *Baptizing Burma: Religious Change in the Last Buddhist Kingdom* (Columbia University Press 2023). *Journal of Religion*, accepted and in publication.
- Brooke Schedneck, *Living Theravada: Demystifying the People, Places, and Practices of a Buddhist Tradition* (Shambhala 2023). *Journal of Asian Studies*, accepted and in publication.
- Richard Payne and Fabio Rambelli, eds. *Buddhism under Capitalism* (Palgrave, 2023).

*Journal of Contemporary Religion* 38:3 (2023)  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2023.2243734>

Uri Kaplan, *Monastic Education in Korea* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2020), book note for *Religious Studies Review*.

J.L. Cassaniti, *Remembering the Present: Mindfulness in Buddhist Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018). *Journal of Asian Studies* 80:1 (January 2021).

### **Public Facing Scholarship**

"Thai Monks who Drink and their Lay Supporters," *Fulcrum* (<https://fulcrum.sg/thai-monks-who-drink-and-their-lay-supporters/>), 6/13/2022.

Guest Speaker on *Keeping it 101: A Killjoys Guide to Religion*, "Episode 414: Buddha's Delight #2" ([keepingit101.com/e414](https://keepingit101.com/e414)). March 2022

"Overlooking official responses: Thai Buddhist institutions and Covid-19," *The Immanent Frame* (<https://tif.ssrc.org/2020/09/03/overlooking-official-responses-thai-buddhist-institutions-and-covid-19/>), 9/3/2020.

"Why Buddhist monks collect alms and visit households even in times of social distancing," *The Conversation.com* (<https://theconversation.com/why-buddhist-monks-collect-alms-and-visit-households-even-in-times-of-social-distancing-128452>), July 14, 2020.

"Silencing the Monks," *The Immanent Frame* (<https://tif.ssrc.org/2019/03/21/silencing-the-monks/>), March 2019

"Monks, Nuns and Sons," posted to Religion@uvm, October 2015

"Imperfect Refuge," *Tricycle* <http://www.tricycle.com/blog/imperfect-refuge>, May 2015

"Monks, Politics and Anti-Politics," posted to Religion@uvm, December 2014

"A Good Gift from –not to– a Monk," posted to Religion@uvm, October 2014

"Bad Gifts," posted to Religion@uvm, October 2014

(<http://blog.uvm.edu/religion/2014/10/05/bad-gifts/>)

"Coups and Conversations," posted to Religion@UVM, June 2014

(<http://blog.uvm.edu/religion/2014/06/>)

"Buddhist Monks and Politics in Thailand," posted to Religion@UVM, May 2014

(<http://blog.uvm.edu/religion/2014/05/>)

"Four Letter Words: Monk," posted to "New Mandala," August 2009

(<http://rspas.anu.edu.au/rmap/newmandala/2009/08/07/monk/>)

"Wat Luang Sipsongpanna: a follow-up report," posted to "New Mandala" July 2009

(<http://rspas.anu.edu.au/rmap/newmandala/>)

### **Manuscripts under review or in progress**

*Monastic Citizens*, book project in progress.

*Theravada Formations of the Secular*, book project in progress

### **Recent Public Presentations**

"A Sangha of their Own? Theravada in China, External Knowledge Creation, and Buddhist Life Cycles among the Dai Lue of Sipsongpanna," Keynote Lecture, *Theravada and East Asia*, Oxford University, June 28, 2024.

"Thai Secularities and Monastic Views of Buddhism as a National Religion in 2010s Thailand," 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Buddhism and Law, SUNY Buffalo, September 29, 2023.

"Barami and Bureacracy: Mechanisms of Monastic Power in Contemporary Thailand," Glorison Lecture in Buddhist Studies, University of Oxford, May 1 2023.

"The First Theravada Buddhist Forum: The Opportunities and Costs of Buddhist Diplomacy

to a Minority Sangha on China's Southwest Border," University of Pennsylvania, Center for East Asian Studies, February 22, 2022. (also delivered to UCLA class on Zomia, 11/2/2023)

"Economic Lives of Monks in Contemporary Thailand: Life Insurance, Dana, and "Corruption," Doll Family Lecture on Religion and Money, Princeton Center for Culture, Society and Religion, November 9, 2021

"Governing Monks in Contemporary Thailand: the Appearance of Centralization and Legal Pluralism," Kings College of London, After the Rains Theravada Studies Talks, January 15, 2021.

"False Monks and Bloody Amulets: Legal Pluralism and Problems in the Governance of Monks in Thailand and Southwest China," Jun Zhou Lecture in Theravada Buddhism, University of Chicago Divinity School, January 14, 2020.

### **Fellowships, Grants and Honors**

UVM Humanities Center Public Humanities Fellowship, "Religion in Vermont: Politics, Publics, and Communities," Co-PI with Vicki Brennan

REACH Grant (UVM) 2023, "Religion in Vermont"

REACH Grant (UVM) 2019-20, "Monastic Attitudes to Islam in Northern Thailand – Islamophobia or not?" [extended due to COVID]

Lattie Coor Faculty Collaboration Grant, supporting speaker series, "Religion and Law," UVM Fall 2018

Foundational Writing and Information Literacy Fellowship for Critical Reading, UVM, 2017-18

Joan Smith Faculty Research Support Award, CAS, University of Vermont, 2017-2018

Lattie Coor Faculty Collaboration Grant, supporting conference, "Buddhism Humanities and Ethnographic Methods," University of Vermont, April 29-30, 2016.

Fulbright Senior Fellowship (Thailand), 2013-14.

Blakemore Foundation Language Refresher Grant 2013 – Advanced Study in Thai, Chiang Mai University, June-August, 2013.

Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, 2003-2004.

Fulbright-IIE (China), 2001-2002.

University of Chicago Divinity School Fellow, 1995-1999.

### **Service**

#### ***University of Vermont***

Faculty Senate:

Senate President (July 2021-June 2025) (President Elect, Spring 2021)

Senator (Spring 2008; 2015-2022); Member Exec Council (Spring 2016; 2019-21)

Academic Reorg Working Group – university resources subcommittee (Spring 2021)

Member, Ad Hoc Committee to Review and Revise Senate Practices (2017-18)

Curricular Affairs Committee Member (2011-13)

College of Arts and Sciences:

Committee Member, CAS Academic Planning and Budgets 2008-2009, 2015-2018.

Committee Member, Ad hoc First-Year Experience Committee, Spring 2016, 2016-17

Assistant Marshall, College of Arts and Sciences graduation, Spring 2017, 2018

Committee Member, Ad Hoc Committee to Review CAS Bylaws, 2014-15.

College Parliamentarian (2015-16)

Religion Department Chair, 2022-2026; Interim, 2018-2019; 2021-22.

### ***Academic Community***

Editorial Board, *Contemporary Buddhism*, 2021-

Advisory Panel, Pew Charitable Trust, Religions of Southeast Asia survey 2020-2021

Advisory Panel, PRX "The World," Religion and Nationalism Project, 2021

Mellon-ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship reviewer, 2020-2021, 2021-2022

Mellon-ACLS Dissertation Innovation Fellowship, 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025

Southeast Asian Buddhism Book Review Editor, *H-Buddhism*, 2009-2022.

### ***Community***

Member, Bixby Free Library Board of Trustees, May 2022 to present, chair Strategic Planning Committee, 2022-2024.

Member, Addison Northwest School District, Board of Directors, March 2016 to March 2022. (Vice Chair, 2017-21; Facilities Committee Chair 2016-2022; member 2022-2023; Chair, Superintendent Screening Committee, 2018).

Expert Witness, Vermont State Senate Judiciary Committee, 33 VSA 4319, Senate Bill, 2023

Expert Witness, Caledonia County District Attorney, September 2018.

Cohort member, "ReOrienting Religious Pluralism," Inclusive America Project, The Aspen Institute, May 2021

### **Languages**

Modern Chinese, Thai and Dai-lue; Pali, Sanskrit, French (Reading); Japanese (survival)