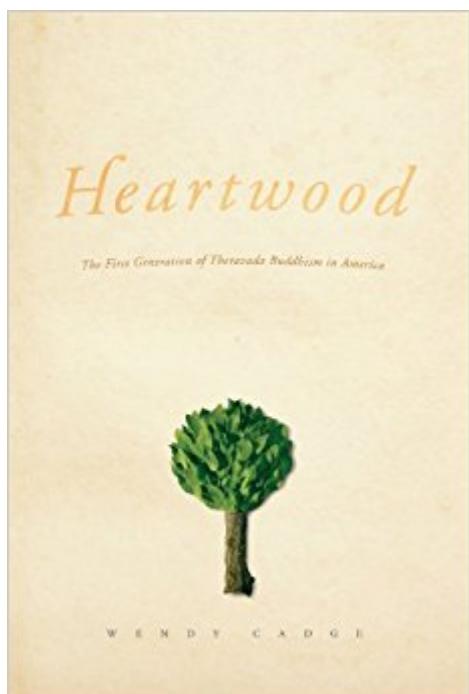


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# Heartwood: The First Generation Of Theravada Buddhism In America (Morality And Society Series)



## **Synopsis**

Theravada is one of the three main branches of Buddhism. In Asia it is practiced widely in Thailand, Laos, Burma, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia. This fascinating ethnography opens a window onto two communities of Theravada Buddhists in contemporary America: one outside Philadelphia that is composed largely of Thai immigrants and one outside Boston that consists mainly of white converts. Wendy Cadge first provides a historical overview of Theravada Buddhism and considers its specific origins here in the United States. She then brings her findings to bear on issues of personal identity, immigration, cultural assimilation, and the nature of religion in everyday life. Her work is the first systematic comparison of the ways in which immigrant and convert Buddhists understand, practice, and adapt the Buddhist tradition in America. The men and women whom Cadge meets and observes speak directly to us in this work, both in their personal testimonials and as they meditate, pray, and practice Buddhism. Creative and insightful, *Heartwood* will be of enormous value to sociologists of religion and anyone wishing to understand the rise of Buddhism in the Western world.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Cadge, assistant professor of sociology at Bowdoin College, presents a carefully considered ethnography examining "how Buddhism arrived in the United States and is... adapting" to its new context. Specifically, she focuses on Theravada Buddhism, the branch practiced in such Southeast

Asian countries as Thailand and Sri Lanka. She begins with an overview of the history of Theravada Buddhism and its establishment in the U.S. by both Asian immigrants and "separately" American-born converts who had studied in Asia. She spends the bulk of the book focusing on Wat Phila, a Thai temple near Philadelphia founded and attended by native Thais, and the Cambridge Insight Meditation Center (CIMC), founded and attended primarily by white Americans. Drawing on extensive field work, Cadge compares and contrasts gender roles in each center, how each center creates identity as a community and how, despite common roots, each defines the "heartwood," or core of being Buddhist, differently. (Wat Phila consciously emphasizes the centrality of ritual, while CIMC consciously de-emphasizes it.) Although Cadge's descriptions of Wat Phila's and CIMC's practices and people are often detailed and her theses are clearly articulated, her approach is academic (the project began as her doctoral dissertation). The result is an informative study that will appeal more to the scholarly set than to rank-and-file Buddhist practitioners. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"A heartening look at American Buddhist institutions whose basic viability seems secure. . . . Readers get a sympathetic yet realistic assessment of the substantial gains dharma has made in the U.S." (Richard Hughes Seager *Buddhadharma*) "Cadge's methodology contributes to the kinds of questions and areas to explore when assessing the different types of Buddhists in North America. This book will appeal to scholars of North American-based Buddhism, and to sociologists interested in non-Christian religious organizations in the United States, especially the transitions and transformations in religious identities." (Janet McLellan *Canadian Journal of Sociology*) "Heartwood" is arguably the most significant publication on American Buddhism in several years. . . . Not since Paul Numrich's path-breaking *Old Wisdom in the New World* (1996) has such a substantial, in-depth ethnography of multiple Buddhist temples in America been produced. . . . *Heartwood* is a study in how to do ethnography in America right, and new researchers preparing to go into the field will find a useful model to emulate in its pages. • (Jeff Wilson *Journal of Global Buddhism*) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Wonderful descriptions of ethnic and convert Theravada followers by an imbedded academic. Fascinating.

Gives the reader a sense of traditional and western theology in Buddhism. Good for comparing and

contrasting meditation in the United States.

it took a while for the book to come, but it came before I had to worry too much so oh well. It's good quality, just has something whited-out on the inside, but that's fine. A couple of black marks on the outside, but, again, no big deal.

Taking an anthropology class about Buddhism. This required text is well-written, interesting.

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